

Schulte named Minister of Seniors

By Mark Pavilons

Seniors in the riding of King-Vaughan have a stronger ally.

MP Deb Schulte was welcomed into Cabinet by Prime Minister Trudeau last week, as Minister of Seniors.

Schulte said she's both honoured and privileged to serve in this capacity. She did work on seniors' issues in the early years of the previous government so she's no stranger to issues facing our seniors.

Her duties won't detract from her connection with the King-Vaughan community and she'll continue to work for her constituents. "The riding, she said, "is where the rubber hits the road."

She's looking forward to getting feedback from seniors and stakeholders in the community as she moves forward in her ministry.

The post is under the larger umbrella of Employment and Social Development Canada, which also includes Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion Minister Carla Qualtrough; Families, Children and Social Development Minister Ahmed Hussen and Labour Minister Filomena Tassi.

While the mandate letters have yet to be issued, the Minister of Seniors typically deals with the needs of Canadian seniors and ensure that programs and services are developed that respond to Canada's aging population. Priorities have traditionally included work on seniors programming, including the New Horizons for Seniors Program and benefiting from the work of the National Seniors Council.

In conjunction with the ministers of Finance and Families, Children and Social Development the seniors' minister brings forward options to improve financial security for Canada's seniors and those most in need.

This should include a particular focus on our commitments to index Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement payments to a new Seniors Price Index, and work with provinces and territories to ensure adequate and coordinated support programs to address seniors' poverty.

It has also included supporting the implementation of national pharmacare.

Schulte's appointment drew praise all around from her colleagues in King.

"Deb has always shows great compassion and is extremely well suited for this is very important portfolio," said Mayor Steve Pellegrini. "King has an aging demographic and to have the Minister of Seniors as our Member of Parliament will ensure a great quality of life in King."

"Deb's appointment to Cabinet and the specific Ministry is very positive for Canada," said Councillor Debbie Schaefer. "Given Deb's background as an environmentalist and having had a career in the corporate world Deb will be valuable asset at the cabinet table. The wisdom of appointing her to Ministry of Seniors is very clear: for three years during previous term she led the Liberal caucus for Seniors. I know how Deb works: she listens, she studies and she assesses; once she has determined how to proceed she is relentless to achieve her goal. And as she pursues that goal she is respectful of others. Whenever I see Deb I am impressed with how grounded she is in daily reality."

Councillor Avia Eek also had nothing but praise for Schulte.

"Deb Schulte has demonstrated her commitment to our community, as the strong federal partner we needed in King Township. She has worked with me to resolve issues brought forward by constituents and I observed Deb facilitate opportunities for funding from the federal government for a number of important King Township projects. Deb Schulte has earned my trust and confidence, and is a strong, active, and non-nonsense voice for her King Township constituents.

"To say that I am happy that our Prime Minister chose Deb to sit as a Cabinet Minister, as Minister for Seniors, in his 'inner circle' would be an under-statement. I know Deb will continue to work hard for our residents, as she has already proven she is capable of doing the hard work required to achieve the results we expect. Deb understands the importance of collaboration with all levels of government, and will be a great asset to all of us, in her new role.

Vaughan Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua echoed those sentiments:

"I am confident she will continue to serve the citizens of King-Vaughan and Canada with the same passion, commitment and dedication she has demonstrated throughout her public life."