

## Schulte gets direction from PM on ministry

By Mark Pavilons

King-Vaughan MP Deb Schulte will play an integral role in helping this country's seniors. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau released the mandate letters recently for all ministers, which outline their duties and responsibilities. "Canadians sent the message that they want us to work together to make progress on the issues that matter most, from making their lives more affordable and strengthening the healthcare system, to protecting the environment, keeping our communities safe and moving forward on reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. People expect Parliamentarians to work together to deliver these results, and that's exactly what this team will do," the Prime Minister wrote. He vowed that his government will continue to "deliver real results and effective government to Canadians. "I also expect us to continue to raise the bar on openness, effectiveness, and transparency in government. This means a government that is open by default. It means better digital capabilities and services for Canadians. It means a strong and resilient public service." As Minister of Seniors, Schulte will help the government better understand and make decisions on the needs of Canadian seniors and ensure that programs and services are developed that respond to Canada's aging population. She will support ministers on initiatives across government that impact seniors. This will provide Canadian seniors and future retirees greater security and a better quality of life. In particular, Schulte will:

- Increase the Old Age Security pension by 10 percent for seniors when they turn 75, indexed to inflation thereafter.
- Support the Minister of Finance to increase survivor benefits in the Canada Pension Plan and Quebec Pension Plan by 25 percent.
- Work with the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to strengthen Canada's approach to elder abuse.
- Lead work within Employment and Social Development Canada on seniors programming, including the New Horizons for Seniors Program, benefitting from the work of the National Seniors Council.
- Support the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry and the Minister of Finance in the implementation of further efforts to enhance consumer protections, such as the creation of a new Canadian Consumer Advocate, to ensure they respond to the unique needs of seniors.
- Promote healthy aging by learning from and building on federally supported programs that have proven successful in supporting the needs of seniors and their families, as well as ensuring the government's investments in-home care, palliative care and community care is well-coordinated and are having the intended impacts.

Schulte pointed out the government restored the age of eligibility for Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) to 65 from 67 years and launched an automatic enrollment program for GIS to ensure eligible seniors receive this benefit at the same time they begin receiving their OAS. They also increased the GIS to \$947 for single seniors and invested more in improving health outcomes with the provinces and territories. "Many of you spoke about the impacts of aging and the cost of living. You said this is a big concern on a fixed income. Our government has made great strides to help seniors in Canada over the last four years, especially our more vulnerable seniors. However, we know more needs to be done to help seniors have a secure and dignified retirement. "But you told us there is more work to do, especially for older seniors who have fewer sources of income and increased medical needs. "That is why the Prime Minister has asked me to develop a plan to increase the OAS by 10 percent for seniors when they turn 75, indexed to inflation, and work with the Minister of Finance to increase the Canada Pension Plan Survivors Benefit by 25 percent. "The high cost of drugs is an important issue for Canadians. That's why we created the Canada Drug Agency to work on a national drug formulary and negotiate lower drug prices across the country." Schulte has been asked to work with the Minister of Health and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to complete the next step to improving seniors' health care. "I will be working with my colleagues to develop a national pharmacare program with the provinces and territories so that no one in Canada has to choose between buying the medicines they need and paying other important bills. "We have all seen the stories in the news and may know of incidents in our own lives about seniors' abuse. We have taken some steps to remedy this abuse by mandating the CRTC to report on aggressive and misleading sales tactics by the telecom companies and come up with solutions to end these practices." The government has committed \$11 billion over the next 10 years for a home, palliative and mental health care. Schulte admitted, however, that we know more needs to be done in this area. "Our government has a strong plan to improve the health, safety, quality of life and financial security of seniors in Canada and I am

excited to get started. "I look forward to delivering on these important initiatives for seniors, while also serving you as your MP and working with you to enhance our community." With the support of the Minister of National Revenue and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Schulte's office will lead a review of the government's capacity to connect seniors to benefits and programs for which they are eligible. She will represent the federal government at the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors Forum. Her ministry supports the Minister of Health in the delivery of health care commitments of relevance to seniors and aging, including ensuring that every Canadian has access to a family doctor or a primary health care team and setting national standards for access to mental health services. Having a family doctor that you can trust is very important to keep your family happy and healthy, finding one in your local area like a [family doctor Windsor](#) if you are in Colorado, or check your local listings for one closer to you.