

Minister Tassi in King to discuss pharmacare

By **Mark Pavilons**

Seniors in King City received details on the national pharmacare proposal from some high-profile visitors Monday morning. King-Vaughan MP Deb Schulte welcomed The Honourable Filomena Tassi, Minister of Seniors to King Township for a seniors forum, to highlight the federal government's commitment to support seniors in the riding.

Too many seniors are facing a financially insecure future, are isolated and lonely, and are having trouble accessing the services they need after a lifetime of hard work. The federal government, Schulte said, understands the challenges facing seniors and is working to help make retirement more financially secure for Canadians. With Budget 2019, the government is helping Canadian seniors keep more money in their pockets, receive the benefits they are entitled to, protect their workplace pensions and stay active and involved in their communities.

Minister Filomena Tassi also shared the government's intention to move forward on the foundational elements of a national pharmacare plan, which would make prescription drugs more affordable and more accessible to more Canadians. This was the message both Tassi and Schulte delivered, as they engaged with seniors and stakeholders at King City Arena. The seniors' forum provided an important opportunity for local residents to share their concerns and for the government to showcase its commitment to supporting Canadian seniors.

"The new Canadian Drug Agency will help lower the cost of prescription drugs for Canadians, and a national approach will help make some of the most expensive drugs more accessible for Canadians with rare diseases. These measures mark important first steps on the way to a system that helps all Canadians get the medicine they need," said Minister Tassi.

The Canadian Drug Agency would assess the effectiveness of new prescription drugs and negotiate drug prices on behalf of Canada's drug plans. By negotiating better prices, this could help lower the cost of drugs for Canadians by up to \$3 billion per year in the long term.

"It was a wonderful opportunity to have the Minister in my riding to hear the community's priorities firsthand in relation to seniors' issues, while she also had an opportunity to share all the work already done on behalf of seniors," added Schulte.

The government plans to take steps toward the development of a national formulary—a comprehensive, evidence-based list of prescribed drugs. Ottawa will work in partnership with provinces, territories and stakeholders to develop this list, which would provide the basis for a consistent approach to formulary listing and patient access across the country.

The federal government hopes to co-develop a plan to ensure that patients with rare diseases have better and more consistent coverage for treatments.

These measures are an important first step in expanding drug coverage and moving forward on implementing national pharmacare.