



Statement from the Seniors' Advocate Regarding Unclaimed Deceased Seniors

Susan Walsh, Seniors' Advocate for Newfoundland and Labrador, today provided the following statement regarding unclaimed deceased seniors.

"When NL Health Services opened their website Notification of Unclaimed Deceased Persons and provided the names and ages of the unclaimed deceased persons in the province, people many, including myself, were surprised to learn that the majority of these people are seniors. Many in the community and media reached out to me regarding this.

As the Seniors' Advocate for Newfoundland and Labrador and aligned with my systemic advocacy duties outlined in the **Seniors' Advocate Act**, I have reviewed this matter to ensure that the best interest of these deceased seniors is being met. I met with, and questioned, the senior officials of NL Health Services responsible for the respectful and appropriate burial of these people. I have reviewed the process followed to locate and contact family of the deceased individuals, confirmed NL Health Services agreement to work with extended community networks, and ensured that the wishes of the deceased individual, if known, are met.

I have ensured that NL Health Services will be returning these deceased people to their community of origin for burial, confirmed that a permanent marker with the person's name will be erected at the grave site, that more social work staff are being hired to complete this work, and that a list of Questions and Answers will be added to the NLHS website to better inform the public. Further, with the new process and timelines outlined in legislation, this unfortunate situation should be resolved going forward. I wish to advise that in respect for the people and families involved, given the very sensitive nature of this issue and the challenging social and emotional issues for some families of the deceased, I will not be speaking publicly on this matter.

I can assure the community that I will continue to monitor this situation to ensure that the burial of deceased unclaimed seniors under the responsibility of NL Health Services is being managed in a respectful and appropriate manner. I wish to thank all those concerned for the welfare of these souls. Our compassion and humanity as a province are always evident, it is who we are! Thank you."

Susan Walsh
Seniors' Advocate Newfoundland and Labrador

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