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October 1, 2018

Greetings to everybody who has gathered in the territory of the Nuu-chah-nulth people to address the priority issues and challenges facing rural communities in becoming more age-friendly.

I regret that I am unable to join you for this important meeting due to my parliamentary duties.

Thanks to the WC Seniors Hub for organizing this event and for your ongoing work to resolve issues on accessibility and affordability for seniors.

I have worked hard in the House of Commons in partnership with my colleagues Rachel Blaney and Don Davies, our Critics for Seniors and Health respectively. While we were pleased that the federal government announced a National Housing Plan last year in response to our urgent requests for action over many years, we were very disappointed that the most important provisions of the policy were scheduled for implementation after the next federal election in 2019. The truth is that too many Canadians, especially seniors, simply cannot wait. The time for action is now. This is particularly true in light of the very quick action that the new Provincial government has taken so shortly after being elected. We need all levels of government to pull together on affordable and attainable housing. Secondly, we have been working hard to convince the Liberal government to act now on pharmacare. I am hearing daily from seniors in Courtenay-Alberni, including many on the west coast, that they too often have to make choices between rent, food and their prescription medication. Canada is the only country in the developed world with a public health system that doesn't include pharma and dental care. While the government finally agreed to move in this direction during the last federal budget, it wasn't nearly far enough. Instead of direct and immediate action, it has initiated yet another study.

As your Member of Parliament, I promise to keep pushing for these and other actions that are critically important for seniors, including transportation, home care and measures that will address the high cost of living for seniors living in rural communities. I look forward to hearing a report of your discussions at this Seniors Hub meeting and encourage everybody to contact my office directly if you have comments or concerns that will better equip me to bring your voice to Parliament. Thank you.

Gord Johns  
Member of Parliament  
Courtenay-Alberni