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Government of Canada and National Seniors Council listening to seniors

News Release

Winnipeg, Manitoba, March 20, 2008 - Today in Winnipeg, Mr. Steven Fletcher, Member of Parliament for Charleswood-St. James-Assiniboia and Parliamentary Secretary for Health, on behalf of the Honourable Marjory LeBreton, Leader of the Government in the Senate and Secretary of State (Seniors), and members of the National Seniors Council met with seniors' organizations and service providers to better understand the challenges faced by seniors living on low incomes, particularly women.

"We want to improve the lives of seniors so it is important to hear their concerns," said Mr. Fletcher. "While we are making good progress, grassroots meetings like these are an important part of the process."

"These roundtables give the Council a great opportunity to get to know people working on the front lines of seniors' issues," said Mr. Jean-Guy Soulière, Chair of the National Seniors Council. "Hearing these views will help us to give the government our best advice to ensure that the evolving needs of Canada's aging population can be met."

The current roundtables follow the Council's cross-Canada meetings on elder abuse held in the fall of 2007. The Report of the National Seniors Council on Elder Abuse, released in December 2007, can be found at www.seniorscouncil.gc.ca.

The Government of Canada is working hard to help all seniors live with dignity and respect. And Budget 2008 brings progress on many fronts—from tax relief and stretching retirement savings to assisting older workers, building safer communities and protecting our most vulnerable seniors.

In Budget 2008, the Government of Canada announced funding of \$13 million over three years to help seniors and others recognize the signs and symptoms of elder abuse and to provide information on what support is available.

Budget 2008 also included an important measure to assist low-income seniors. It enhances the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) by exempting the first \$3,500 of earnings, the average amount of earned income by working GIS recipients. Seniors who choose to work will be able to keep more income without any reduction in GIS benefits.

The federal government is addressing the needs of Canada's seniors through these and other important measures that include:

- funding 1,690 projects in hundreds of communities across Canada under the New Horizons for Seniors Program over the last year, inspiring seniors to bring their leadership, energy and skills to projects that benefit our communities;
- enabling 1.6 million low-income seniors to benefit from increased monthly benefits available under the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and to make a one-time application for GIS. As long as they file income tax returns every year, they will never have to reapply;
- providing more than \$1 billion in tax relief to Canadian seniors and pensioners in Budget 2007;
- enabling seniors to build their retirement savings in Registered Pension Plans and Registered Retirement Savings Plans for an extra two years until

age 71; and

- raising the amount seniors can claim under the age credit on their tax returns for 2007. With less income taxed, seniors save more. Today's roundtable is one of a series being held across Canada. In February and March, roundtables were held in Quebec City, Quebec; St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador; Woodstock, New Brunswick and Peterborough, Ontario. Between now and April 24, roundtables will be held in Nanaimo, Maple Ridge and Vernon, British Columbia; and Whitehorse, Yukon.

Established in March 2007, the National Seniors Council advises the Government of Canada on all matters related to the well-being of seniors and helps to ensure that federal government policies, programs and services continue to meet the evolving needs of Canada's aging population. For more information on the National Seniors Council, please visit the following Web site:

www.seniorscouncil.gc.ca.

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For more information (media only), please contact:

James Maunder

Office of the Secretary of State (Seniors)

613-943-0756

Media Relations Office

Human Resources and Social Development Canada

819-994-5559

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Date modified:

2008-03-20

