

I support, and encourage, the passage of LD 814 An Act to Provide Funding to Area Agencies on Aging for Community-based Services and Programs because of the importance these services are to Seniors.

I have been the Secretary to the Fort Kent Senior Center Club (Elderly Social Action Council) for more than 10 years. The Club currently has 770 paid members. During this time, I have been actively involved with the Center's Aroostook Agency on Aging Congregate Meal Program, the Fort Kent Center Monthly Meal, and the Center's FUN Bingo.

Prior to Covid, the Agency offered Congregate noontime meals, 5 days a week, at the Fort Kent Senior Center. At that time, there were 30-45 seniors that came to eat each weekday (11am sharp). When Covid hit, the Congregate meals stopped as did all Center activities. However, this did not stop the requests from Seniors for the return of these activities.

Last November (2024), The Center approached the Aroostook Agency on Aging asking for the return of their Congregate Meal Program. Because of limited funding the Agency could begin to offer the Program, but on a one-day-a-week basis and only to a maximum of 30 people per meal. The offer was better than nothing and starting in March 2025, an Agency Congregate Meal is offered each Monday at the Fort Kent Senior Center. This past Monday, March 24, twenty-eight people came to eat.

But the noontime meals are more than providing a balanced, nutritious meal, it is a social occasion for seniors. Although serving begins at 11am, the seniors begin to arrive at 10:15am, sit at tables, and socialize. By 11:30am, they have eaten but remain chatting until 12:30pm. For Seniors, the meal is more than food, it is an opportunity to get out and be with people.

One interesting observation about the noontime meals. The majority of Seniors coming to the noontime meals were, and continue to be, men. Why? Traditionally, especially among the French and Acadian population of the St. John Valley, men's roles were outside the house. They were not involved in the preparation of food. As a widower, their home cooking skills were, and are, limited.

Thank you for supporting LD 814.
Donald Raymond
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