

Message from the Advocate

As the year draws to a close, I reflect on what has been an exceptionally meaningful and productive 2025 for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate (OSA). This year, the OSA released two recommendation reports. **An Ounce of Prevention Is Worth a Pound of Cure** recommended actions for preventative supports and aging well at home, while **From Review to Action: A Continuum of Care Approach** provided a clear structure for government to respond to recommended improvements for long term and personal care homes. We also coordinated with community organizations and released a formal submission as part of the second phase of consultations for government's **Decision-Making Framework**, released the **2024–2025 Status Report on Recommendations**, and marked Seniors' Month with the **Growing Bolder** campaign and a youth art contest celebrating positive aging.

And most importantly, we had valuable conversations with hundreds of seniors, community organizations and service providers in every nook and cranny of this beautiful province.

Looking ahead to 2026, we remain committed to ensuring that seniors in NL are heard, respected, and supported. On behalf of my small but mighty team, I wish you a peaceful, healthy, and joyful holiday season. Merry Christmas!

Susan

Susan Walsh
Seniors' Advocate NL



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- **Seniors' Report 2025: What You Need to Know**
- **National Recognition**
- **Advocacy Actions**

SENIORS' REPORT 2025

VOLUME 2

The OSA released the second volume of the Seniors' Report, an annual review of seniors' wellbeing in NL.

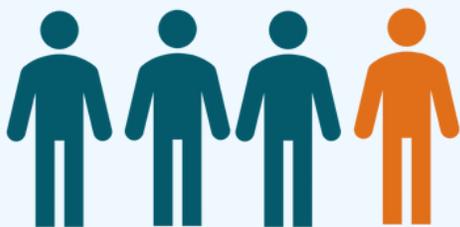
This year's report examines 6 key areas that shape the lives of older adults: Individual Health, Health Care, Finances, Housing, Transportation, and Safety and Protection.

Newfoundland and Labrador continues to experience significant population aging. During 2024, seniors represented 24.6% of the population, the highest proportion in Canada, with 4.9% aged 80 and older. By 2034, projections suggest that 27.8% of residents will be 65+ and 7.6% will be 80+, heightening the urgency to ensure adequate and appropriate community programs, supports, and health services so people can age in the right place.



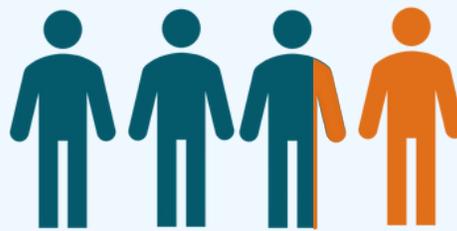
Monitoring Key Indicators of Seniors' Wellbeing in Newfoundland and Labrador

CURRENT DEMOGRAPHICS



➤ 24.6% are seniors

ANTICIPATED GROWTH (2034)



➤ 27.8% will be seniors



**CLICK HERE
TO READ
THE REPORT**

SENIORS' REPORT 2025

KEY FINDINGS

Individual Health

- 13% of seniors are moderately or severely food insecure, the highest in Canada
- 50% of seniors rate their health as very good/excellent.
- 46% of seniors live with 3+ chronic conditions.

Health Care

- NL has the lowest rate of seniors with a primary health care provider in Canada, and the gap is widening.
- The rate of hospitalization and emergency visits per 1,000 seniors increased by 1.6% and 2.4% respectively.
- Less than half of the cataract and hip surgeries and 1/3rd of knee surgeries are completed within the appropriate wait times.
- ALC waits increasing: average stays are 30 days, ranging from 16 (Eastern-Rural) to 46 (Western).
- Higher-than-average rates of pain, restraints, and inappropriate antipsychotic use in LTC.

Finances

- In 2023, the median income of NL seniors was \$29,710 - the lowest in Canada.
- NL seniors have the highest dependency on GIS, in Canada at 44%
- A 12% increase in employment participation in the last 5 years for seniors 65 to 69 years of age.

Housing

- 6.1% of NL seniors have a core housing need and 30% of seniors who rent and live alone have a core housing need.
- 21% of people using emergency shelters were aged 55 or older.
- 9% of people experiencing homelessness reported experiencing it for the first time after turning 55.

Transportation

- Transportation accounts for about 20% of household consumption; approximately 95% of this is on private transportation.
- In 2024, 89% of all seniors in NL had an active driver's license.

Safety & Protection

- A 64% increase in violations against seniors over the last 5 years.

Advocacy Actions



Issue

OSA Action

Response

International Day of Older Persons and National Seniors Day

To mark this important day, the Seniors' Advocate released a video message emphasizing the theme "Older Persons Driving Local and Global Action: Our Aspirations, Our Well-Being, Our Rights." The Advocate highlighted the leadership of older adults, their critical role in communities, and the importance of ensuring their rights and aspirations are recognized and upheld.

The message reinforced the OSA's commitment to amplifying the voices of older adults and advancing their rights, dignity, and participation across the province. By sharing this message through public channels, the OSA encouraged broader recognition of older persons' contributions and continued dialogue on creating inclusive, intergenerational communities. The message was made available through social media to ensure wide accessibility and engagement.

Issue

OSA Action

Response

Advancing national dialogue on the establishment of Seniors' Advocates across Canada

The Advocate delivered a presentation to over 250 members of RTOERO, outlining the role, mandate, and impact of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate NL and contributing NL's experience to the broader national discussion.

The session generated meaningful engagement among participants and strengthened interest in NL's Seniors' Advocate model. The shared insights are expected to support other provinces and territories in pursuing and securing this important resource for older adults.

Issue	OSA Action	Response
<p>Changes in Provincial Government Leadership</p>	<p>Following the recent changeover in government, the Seniors' Advocate has formally requested meetings with newly appointed Ministers. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss outstanding recommendations from the OSA, outline ongoing issues impacting seniors throughout the province, and share the OSA's current priorities. The Advocate also seeks to understand each Minister's priorities and portfolios as they relate to seniors.</p>	<p>The OSA has already met with some Ministers and continues to emphasize the importance of sustained attention to seniors' needs during transitions in government. By engaging early with new leadership, the OSA aims to ensure continuity, maintain momentum on unresolved issues, and support collaborative approaches to improving programs and services for older adults. This process reinforces the OSA's commitment to elevating seniors' voices and advocating for timely follow-through on recommendations.</p>

Issue	OSA Action	Response
<p>Status on Changes to the Provincial Home Support Program</p>	<p>The Office of the Seniors' Advocate has recently written to the Departments of Health and Community Services and Seniors outlining the issues heard throughout the province regarding home support and requesting an update on government's progress in implementing the Deloitte Review recommendations to improve this system, particularly those related to training standards, curriculum content, and workforce readiness.</p>	<p>The OSA is awaiting a response from both departments.</p>

Issue	OSA Action	Response
<p>Seniors' Report 2025</p>	<p>Following the release of the report, the OSA provided copies to all MHA's, highlighting key findings and areas requiring attention. The Advocate also undertook extensive media engagement to publicly share the report's findings and emphasize the need for increased community-based services for seniors.</p>	<p>The report's findings have been widely shared and discussed, helping to raise awareness among decision-makers and the public.</p>

Issue

OSA Action

Response

Adult Protection Act (APA) Concerns

The OSA wrote the Departments of Health and Community Services outlining specific issues encountered when attempting to make APA referrals. The Advocate requested clarification on reporting processes, safeguards to ensure quality clinical practice, and accountability for meeting legislated timelines. The OSA also requested detailed provincial data on APA referrals, evaluations, investigations, and system performance for 2024–25.

The Department of Seniors acknowledged the seriousness of the concerns and provided a detailed written response, including the requested data. It was highlighted that work is ongoing to strengthen the adult protection system and improve responsiveness. Opportunities for system improvements were identified, including enhanced documentation, policy development, and future data tracking. The Department committed to continued collaboration with NL Health Services and ongoing monitoring of compliance with the Act.



Issue

OSA Action

Response

Provincial Hearing Aid Program (PHAP)

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate raised concerns about the PHAP financial assessment process through formal recommendations back in 2019 and continued advocacy. Most recently, the Advocate met with the Minister of Health and Community Services and identified the PHAP assessment requirements as a priority issue requiring alignment with income-based eligibility.

The Department of Health and Community Services advised the OSA that changes to the PHAP financial assessment will take effect January 6, 2026. These changes move the program to an income-based assessment and expand eligibility for financial assistance. The OSA welcomes this progress and will continue to monitor implementation to ensure improved access and fairness for seniors requiring hearing aids.

SUSAN WALSH RECEIVES

RTOERO Award



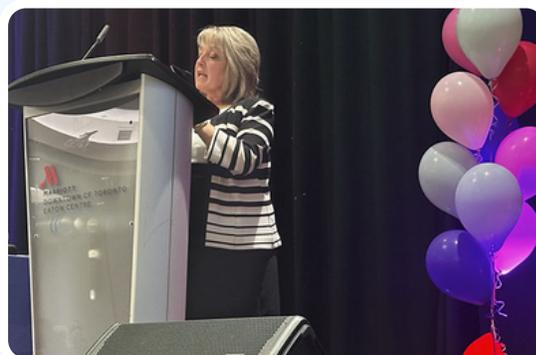
Celebrating a National Honour:

The OSA team is proud to share that Newfoundland and Labrador's Seniors' Advocate, Susan Walsh, has been named the second-ever recipient of the RTOERO Award for Eminent Contribution to Seniors in Canada.

This prestigious national award, presented by the RTOERO Board, recognizes a non-member who has demonstrated exceptional leadership and impact in supporting seniors provincially or across the country.

As part of the award, RTOERO provides a \$5,000 donation to a charitable organization chosen by the recipient. Susan selected the **Canadian Red Cross 2025 Newfoundland and Labrador Wildfires Appeal**. Thanks to RTOERO's quick processing, the donation qualified for matching funds from the provincial and federal governments, bringing the total support to an incredible \$15,000.

Congratulations, Susan! This recognition reflects your unwavering advocacy, leadership, and commitment to improving the lives of older adults throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. We are extremely proud to celebrate this achievement with you.



Town Hall Meetings with the Advocate



The Office of the Seniors' Advocate regularly meets with organizations/groups.

If you would like to arrange a session :



1-833-729-6603



seniorsadvocate@seniorsadvocatenl.ca

The schedule books up quickly, so be sure to reach out as soon as possible!

07/12



Office of the
SENIORS' ADVOCATE
Newfoundland and Labrador

Public Engagement



Invited by Task Force Health Care in the Netherlands, the Advocate joined 55 international leaders to explore innovative global perspectives on health and social care. This gathering brought together participants from more than 20 countries to learn about the Dutch approach to integrated, person-centred care and to share experiences from their own jurisdictions.

As part of this international exchange, the Advocate was honoured to serve as a panelist on Healthy Aging, speaking to an audience of more than 200 attendees from around the world. This panel provided an opportunity to highlight the work happening in Newfoundland and Labrador, learn from global best practices, and strengthen connections that support improved outcomes for older adults at home and abroad.

In October, the OSA had a booth at the City of St. John's Seniors Day at the Paul Reynolds Community Centre. Team members connected with attendees, shared our reports and information, and handed out OSA swag. It was a great opportunity to hear directly from seniors and learn about the issues that matter most in the community.



Public Engagement



Also in October, the OSA visited the Random Age Friendly Seniors' Information Fair at Clarendville Middle School. Staff spoke with local seniors, distributed resources, and shared information about the work of the OSA in advocating for older adults throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. The event offered a valuable chance to engage with seniors and hear their perspectives.

In November, the OSA participated in the Seniors & Science event at the Johnson GEO Centre. Visitors stopped by our booth to chat with the team, learn more about our programs and advocacy work, and pick up informational materials and goodies. It was a fun and educational day that allowed the OSA to connect with seniors.



The OSA presented to MUN MED 6137 students on "Advocacy and Influencing Public Policy." The session highlighted the role of the Seniors' Advocate, how advocacy shapes programs and services for older adults, and the importance of amplifying seniors' voices in policy and healthcare decision-making.

Over the past few months, the OSA has been actively engaging with community partners and stakeholders throughout the province. The office met with several groups for updates and discussion, including the NLMA Family Practice Renewal Program and Family Practice Networks, Connections for Seniors, Stella's Circle, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, and the Community Foundation of NL.

Public Engagement

The Seniors' Advocate also connected with counterparts across the country, meeting with Kelly Lamrock, the Seniors' Advocate in New Brunswick, for a touchpoint on emerging issues, and with the newly appointed Seniors' Advocate for Manitoba, Leigh Anne Caron, to provide information on the NL experience as they work to establish their office.

The Office also presented an overview of the Seniors' Report 2025 and its data to the Coalition of Public Pensioners, supporting continued dialogue on the challenges and opportunities facing seniors in our province.

These conversations help strengthen collaboration and ensure seniors' voices and needs remain central in systems and policy discussions.



Media Interviews

With the acceptance of a national award and the release of the Seniors Report 2025, the Seniors' Advocate has been busy in the media, speaking about key issues and the experiences of older adults across Newfoundland and Labrador. Below you'll find links to some of the Advocate's recent interviews.

Listen Here

[Click Here for Toronto Today: RTOERO Award](#)

[Click Here for VOXM Open Line: RTOERO Award](#)

[Click Here for the Release of the Seniors' Report 2025](#)

[Click Here for VOXM Tim Powers Show: Seniors' Report 2025](#)

[Click Here for CBC Newfoundland Morning: Seniors' Report 2025](#)

[Click Here for NTV Issues and Answers: Seniors' Report 2025](#)

Read Here



N.L. seniors older, poorer, worse off than rest of Canada, says advocate | CBC News

Newfoundland and Labrador's seniors' advocate Susan Walsh says seniors in the province are worse off than their Canadian counterparts, and better funding is necessary to correct the course.

CBC / Nov 20



'Our seniors are hurting': Half of NL seniors live in poverty, seniors' advocate warns

Seniors' Report 2025 shows that half of NL's seniors earn less than \$29,710 a year, forced to choose between food and meds

pniatlantic / Nov 21



"NL has the oldest, poorest, unhealthiest seniors in Canada," says Seniors' Advocate

Susan Walsh says half of all seniors here have an income below \$29,710, which is the lowest median income in...

100.1 BayFM



New report reveals stark realities facing seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador

Newfoundland and Labrador's Seniors' Advocate has released her second annual comprehensive report, and the findings show a troubling picture of the challenges facing older adults in this province. According to the...

NTV / Nov 20



National award shines spotlight on NL's seniors' advocate model

Susan Walsh says the honour reflects her team's research-driven approach

pniatlantic / Nov 28



N.L. continues to fail its seniors, province's advocate concludes in annual report

Seniors' Advocate Susan Walsh says Newfoundland and Labrador has the "oldest, poorest and most unhealthiest seniors in Canada," in report that paints a grim picture of what life is like for many residents 65 and older

The Independent / Nov 21



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To receive updates and information from the Office of the Seniors' Advocate, contact us to be added to our email list. If you prefer printed copies of our reports, let us know, and we will mail them to you.

