

## Message from the Advocate

Happy Spring!

Although snow is still on the ground in many parts of the Island and in Labrador, daylight is slowly extending and the nights are getting lighter. Winter can be a challenging time for seniors, so we certainly welcome Spring and look forward to the flowers blooming and warmer air.

This Spring, my Office will once again be visiting communities throughout the Province. I deeply value the opportunity to meet with seniors and their organizations and I extend thanks to the various community members who assist in all of the planning that goes into these outreach sessions. A list of the communities and dates can be found in the Public Engagement section.

Again this year, my Office forwarded a Budget Submission to the Department of Finance, ahead of the Provincial Budget 2024-25. I was pleased to see some of the recommendations made by my Office included in the provincial budget, including the free enhanced flu vaccine for people 65 years and older, and the commitment to advance a poverty reduction plan for seniors. Refer to the Advocacy Actions section in this newsletter for more information. I will continue to bring forward the concerns around financial hardship and the impact of the rising cost of living on seniors through my Office's advocacy work.

On a closing note, March is Fraud Prevention Month. This month, and every month, I strongly encourage seniors to remain vigilant against fraud and scams. A useful website with tips to help you protect yourself can be found by [clicking here](#).

Have a wonderful, healthy Spring!

*Susan*

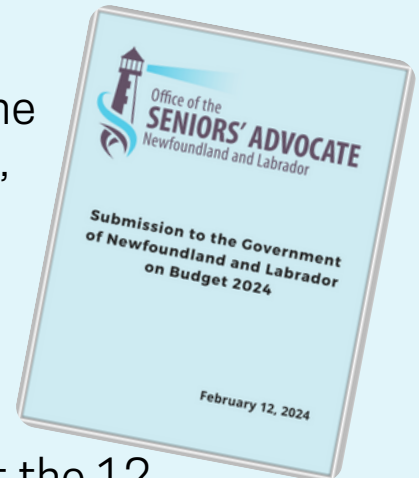


# ADVOCACY

## ACTIONS

**Issue:** The rising cost of living continues to be a concern for many seniors. To inform the Department of Finance on the needs of seniors as government developed the 2024-25 Budget, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate made a written submission.

**OSA Action:** Once again this year, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate provided a Budget Submission, which was informed by the Offices' previously published reports, national and international research, and significant consultation with community organizations and seniors.



It was recommended that government implement the 12 recommendations the Seniors' Advocate made in the What Golden Years? report and advance the Poverty Reduction Plan for Seniors.

Recommendations include:

- 1) Indexing the NL Seniors' Benefit;
- 2) Reviewing both the maximum family net income threshold to receive the full NL Seniors' Benefit and the phase out rate;
- 3) Exempting seniors in receipt of GIS from having to pay for their required home supports;
- 4) Exempting households with a family net income of less than \$29,402 from having to pay for their required home supports;
- 5) Implementing the Food First NL recommendation for a shared food delivery service to ensure food can be delivered to seniors if necessary;

# ADVOCACY

## ACTIONS

- 6) Increasing the amount of money per kilometer people traveling for medical appointments are eligible to receive through the Medical Transportation Assistance Program (MTAP); and
- 7) Providing all people age 65 years and older free access to the high-dose influenza vaccine.

**Response:** On March 21, 2024 the Provincial Government released the 2024-25 budget. The Seniors' Advocate is pleased to see that the recommendation made by this Office for people aged 65 years and older to have free access to the enhanced immune response influenza vaccine has been included in this budget.

The Advocate is also pleased to see the commitment to introduce the Seniors' Well-Being plan, which we assume is the Poverty Reduction Plan for seniors. This plan will include the introduction of the seniors' care grant. Snow clearing and grocery delivery are a few of the challenges seniors have brought forward to our office, so we look forward to hearing more about how the implementation of this grant will support low income seniors and seniors with disabilities by providing additional benefits to support services such as these.

There remains many recommendations still outstanding from our What Golden Years report and the Budget Submission. Our Office will continue to advocate to government for implementation of these recommendations and will report back governments response in our annual Status Reports on Recommendations, as seniors' continue to voice concern around the cost of living.

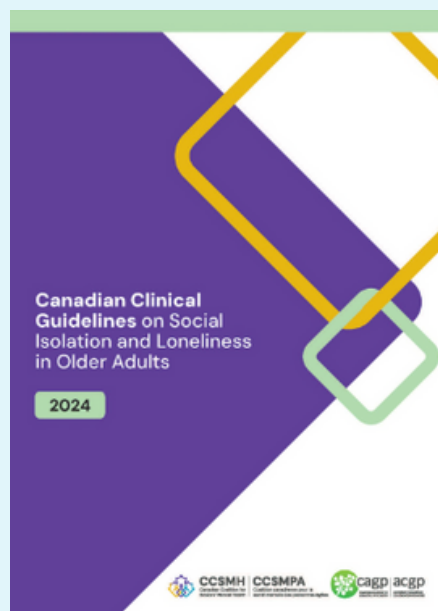
# ADVOCACY

## ACTIONS

**Issue:** Social isolation and loneliness has increasingly become a concern for seniors. It is important for health professionals to recognize the significant physical and mental health impacts both have on seniors and know how to address this.

**OSA Action:** In 2022, our Office was asked to participate in the development of clinical guidelines with the Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health (CCSMH) Social Isolation and Loneliness project. These guidelines are the first Canadian guidelines on social isolation and loneliness. Our Systemic Advocacy Consultant, Tanya Billard, represented Newfoundland and Labrador on the national panel to develop these guidelines. The guidelines are for all health professionals, and highlight risk factors, screening tools and interventions.

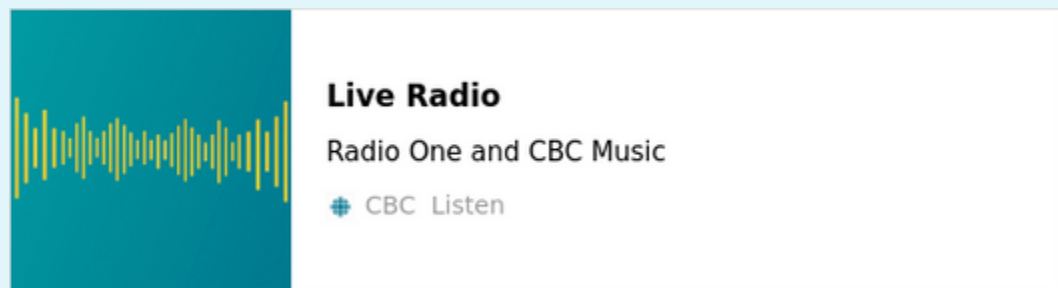
**Response:** On February 28, 2024, the Canadian Clinical Guidelines on Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults were published. They can be found on the CCSMH website (<http://ccsmh.ca>) or by clicking on the photo below.



# Media Interviews

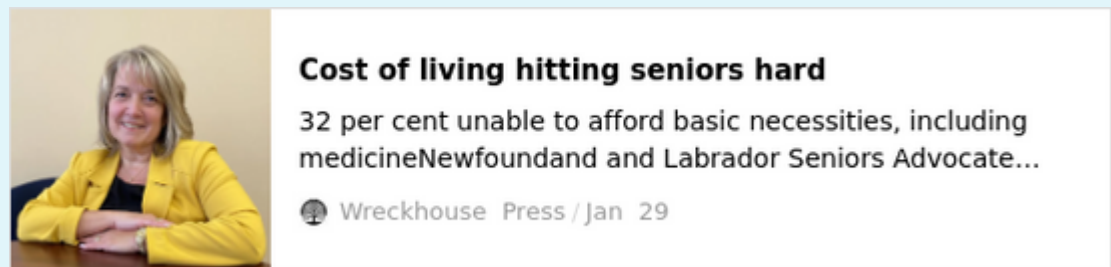
On January 22 the Seniors' Advocate was a guest on CBC's The Signal with host Adam Walsh. The work of the Office was discussed as well as the issue of loneliness and seniors. The number of seniors experiencing loneliness is increasing and this is having a detrimental effect on well-being.

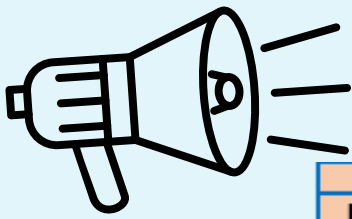
*Listen here!*



Jaymie White of Wreckhouse Press interviewed the Advocate on January 23 about how the high cost of living is impacting seniors, with a special focus on the West Coast of the province.

*Read here!*





## Town Hall Meetings with the Seniors' Advocate

Eastern			
Date	Time	Organization	Location
April 4	1:30 pm	Masonic Park	Masonic Park
April 9	1:00 pm	Makinson's 50 Plus Go Getters Club	Makinson's
April 15	2:00 pm	Toe of the Boot 50+ Club	Lamaline
April 15	7:00 pm	Seniors 50+ Club ( <i>members only</i> )	Grand Bank
April 16	10:00 am	Lions Golden Age 50+ Club & Placentia West 50+ Club ( <i>members only</i> )	Marystown

Western			
Date	Time	Organization	Location
May 6	1:00 pm	Westport 50+ Club	Westport
May 7	10:00 am	By the Bay 50+ Club	Hampden
May 7	2:00 pm	Hampton Junction Seniors' Club ( <i>members only</i> )	Hampton Junction
May 8	10:00 am	Reidville 50+ Club	Reidville
May 8	2:00 pm	Golden Seabreeze 50+ Club	Mclvers
May 9	10:30 am	Golden Sunset 50+ Club & Golden Meadow 50+ Club	Meadows

Northern Peninsula			
Date	Time	Organization	Location
May 28	2:00 pm	Forever Young 50+ Club	St. Lunaire Griquet
May 29	10:00 am	Golden Oldies PS 50+ Club	Port Saunders
May 29	2:00 pm	The PAC 50+ Club & Hawkes Bay 50+ Club	Port au Choix
May 30	10:00 am	Straits 50+ Club	Flowers Cove

Central			
Date	Time	Organization	Location
June 5	10:00 am	Fortune Bay North Shore 50+ Club	Belleoram
June 5	2:00 pm	New Haven 50+ Club	Hermitage
June 6	1:00 pm	New Triple Seniors Inc.	Milltown, Lions Club

Labrador			
Date	Time	Organization	Location
June 11	6:30 pm	Two Rivers 50+ Club	Marv's Harbour
June 12	10:00 am	Silver Fox 50+ Club	St. Lewis
June 12	3:00 pm	Blow Me Down 50+ Club	Port Hope Simpson
June 13	2:00 pm	Community Session	Charlottetown

The Seniors' Advocate is continuing Town Hall Meetings throughout the province this spring to network with seniors, provide an update on our work and to seek input from seniors on her current and future recommendations to government. While the schedule is now full for the Spring, we are beginning to develop our Fall schedule. If your organization/group would like to meet with Susan in the Fall of 2024, please call 709-729-6603, 1-833-729-6603 (toll free) or email: [seniorsadvocate@seniorsadvocatenl.ca](mailto:seniorsadvocate@seniorsadvocatenl.ca) by June 30, 2024.

Sessions are open to the public, unless otherwise noted on the chart. Keep checking our website, social media or contact our office to learn more about upcoming sessions!



# Public Engagement

On January 16, 2024 the Seniors' Advocate presented to Social Workers in the province, through the NL College of Social Workers, about advocacy and the role of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate and the role of advocacy in social work practice.

On January 26 the Seniors' Advocate met with members of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons NL (CARP NL) as they gathered for their Annual General Meeting in St. John's. It was a pleasure to share information on the work of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate and discuss issues of importance to seniors.



# Public Engagement

During the week of January 29, the Advocate met with the current BC Seniors' Advocate, Isobel Mackenzie and incoming Seniors' Advocate Dan Levitt to discuss shared issues. As well, Susan was invited to address BC's Office of the Seniors' Advocate's Council of Advisors. This meeting focused on challenges that many seniors are facing in rural communities across the province and country, for a coast to coast perspective. There were many other learning opportunities including a session from Dr. Gloria Gutman, gerontologist, professor at Simon Fraser University and founder of the Gerontology Research Centre.





# Welcome

We would like to welcome Arlene Mullins to the role of Office Administrator with the Office of the Seniors' Advocate. Arlene joined our small but mighty team on March 19, 2024. She brings many years of experience through her past work with the Provincial Government and most recently, with the City of Mount Pearl. Arlene enjoys walking and spending time with her young grandchildren. If you call our office, you will be greeted by Arlene.



## Meet the Student



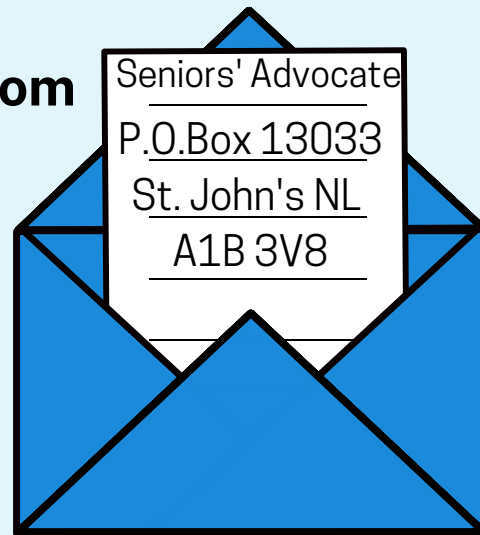
Autum is a graduate student at Memorial University in her final year of her Applied Psychological Science program. She is completing her last work placement with our Office and has been invaluable in helping the Office develop key indicators to monitor and report on the status of seniors in our province. Autum comes to us with experience in mental health advocacy, program evaluation, and research. Autum is a great fit for our Office as she believes in using data to inform decision making. She is excited to apply her skills and background in psychology to better support seniors. While Autum is originally from Nova Scotia, she has spent much of her time since moving here traveling around the province and has grown to love the island and the people on it. She enjoys camping, crafting, and taking her cat, Sunny, on the occasional excursion to the beach. Autum hopes to continue her work in applied science and moving the needle forward in creating a better life for the people in her community.



## *Our Team*

**Susan Walsh, Seniors' Advocate**  
**Tanya Billard, Advocacy Consultant**  
**Pamela Dawe, Advocacy Consultant**  
**Arlene Mullins, Office Administrator**

**To receive updates and information from the Office of the Seniors' Advocate, contact us to be added to our email list.**



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