

Message from the Advocate

Hello everyone!

Another summer has past, and what a beautiful, sunny and warm summer it was!

I want to send my sincere thank you to everyone who participated in our social media campaign on ageism in June. The uptake in the campaign exceeded our expectations with 37 seniors highlighted and hundreds of comments, likes and shares, it certainly helped to combat ageist thoughts!



I'm happy to share that our Office has grown! In August, we welcomed Rose AuCoin to our small but mighty team. Rose's work will focus on research, data analysis and tracking how seniors in NL are doing. At this point in time, the position is only funded for a few months, but i am hopeful we may secure permanent funding for this critical position in 2025/26. You can read more about Rose in the Welcome section.

Last month, we sent out a survey to seniors on our email list seeking their experience and thoughts on Aging Well at Home. We had over 1,000 responses, thank you to all that responded. We are now analyzing that data and will certainly keep everyone updated on the results.

This month I once again attended and presented at the annual NL 50+ Federation's AGM in Marystown. Another great turnout and a wonderful opportunity to connect with 50+ club members.

We are looking forward to another busy Fall, with more town hall sessions, the release of our annual Status Report on Recommendations and a new report on the key indicators of seniors health and well-being in the Province. So be sure to stay tuned!

Susan

Susan Walsh
Seniors' Advocate NL

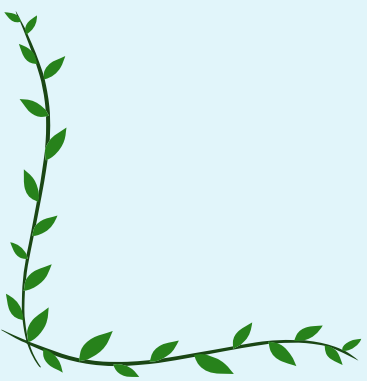


Addressing Ageism Through Highlighting Seniors - Social Media Campaign

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate embarked upon a social media campaign throughout the month of June for Seniors' Month. The intention was to combat ageist stereotypes by showcasing seniors throughout the Province, highlighting their interests, community contributions and the many possibilities that come with aging.



The campaign was a huge success! We received 37 submissions from seniors eager to help combat ageist views. We also had 196 “shares” of the posts on social media by people of all ages, thereby ensuring people across diverse backgrounds could see all the great things seniors in NL are doing. It was wonderful to see the high interest in the campaign, and to receive such positive feedback from those who participated and those who enjoyed the posts.

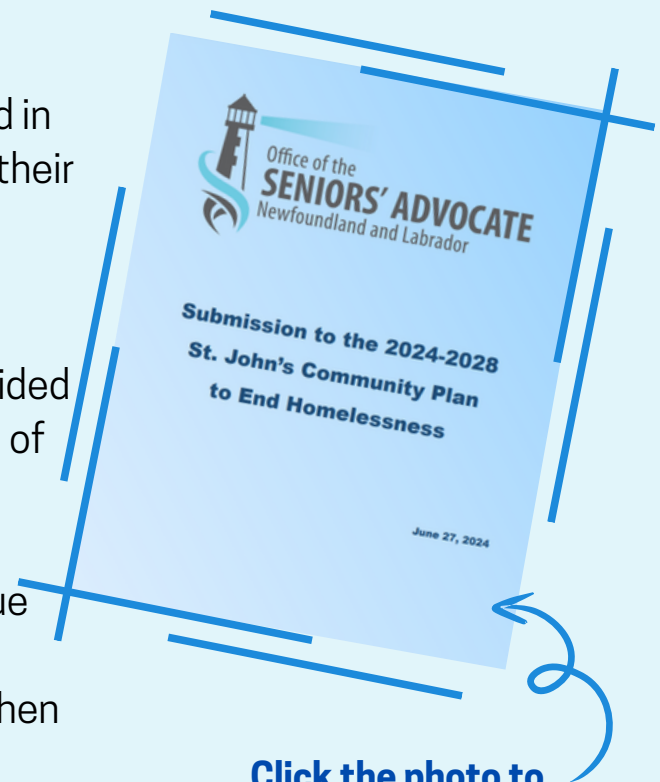


ADVOCACY

ACTIONS

Issue: Housing insecurity and homelessness has been a growing concern for seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador, and therefore, for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate. We have heard directly from seniors and from community organizations about seniors who are experiencing homelessness for the first time in their lives, or those who are at significantly high risk of becoming homeless due to the rising cost of living. We have also heard from seniors struggling to find affordable, safe housing and long waitlists to be considered for a rental subsidy.

OSA Action: On June 14, 2024, OSA participated in End Homelessness St. John's consultations for their 2024-2028 St. John's Community Plan to End Homelessness, where we shared what we have heard regarding seniors facing homelessness or housing insecurity. Furthermore, the Office provided a written submission to inform the development of the community plan. The submission contained concerns we have heard, the many challenges seniors face and how these challenges are unique to seniors, as well as an extensive list of considerations for the committee to consider when developing their plan.



**Click the photo to
read the submission**

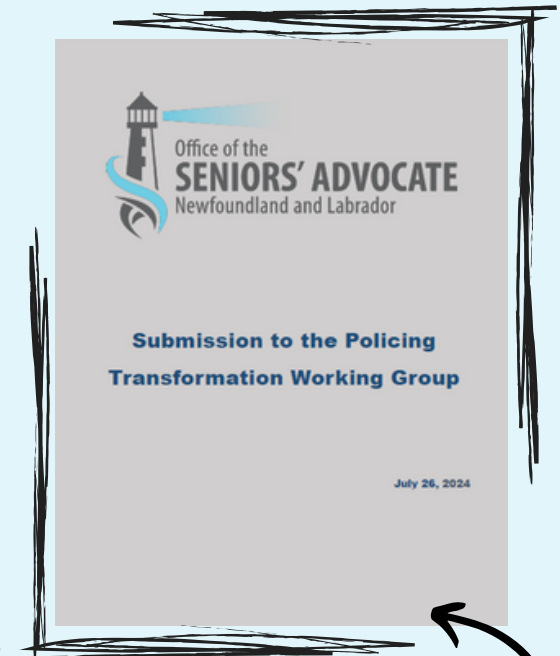
Response: End Homelessness St. John's has not yet released their community plan. However, the written submission by OSA is available on our website, or by clicking the photo above.

ADVOCACY

ACTIONS

Issue: The Department of Justice and Public Safety announced the establishment of the Policing Transformation Working group in November 2023, to evaluate the current policing model in Newfoundland and Labrador. Submissions were invited.

OSA Action: The Office of the Seniors' Advocate's submission discusses the unique interactions and experiences of seniors with policing services in the province. Seniors are often targeted for abuse and scams/frauds due to poor health, frailty, age-related conditions, limited technology experience and fewer social supports.



**Click the photo to
read the submission**

The Office shared what we have heard regarding policing services in communities, particularly rural and remote communities. Seniors discussed the absence of regular police presence in their communities and the impact that has had on policing services, leading to a reduced confidence in the ability of police to serve and protect.

The submission concluded with several improvement opportunity considerations, including more education on certain illnesses and age-related conditions and on the unique circumstances of seniors, increasing knowledge on community resources and supports, ongoing community education and awareness raising sessions for seniors and establishing a community policing model.

Response: It is our understanding that the Policing Transformation Working group will consider this input as it continues its work. The submission provided by the Office is available on our website or by clicking the above photo.

ADVOCACY

ACTIONS

Issue: The Office of the Seniors' Advocate has heard from many seniors and family members that the cost of ambulance services is high, and that in some cases, seniors are refusing to call for ambulance service because they cannot afford the bill. Other situations have occurred where seniors are having to return to the emergency department multiple times for an issue to be resolved thereby requiring ambulance service several times, this has resulted in numerous bills in a short period. Seniors have said this is very stressful and, at times, impossible to pay on their low fixed incomes.

OSA Action: The Seniors' Advocate met with the Deputy Minister for Health Transformation, Dr. Pat Parfrey, and the Deputy Minister for Health and Community Services, John McGrath and brought forward the concerns we have heard from seniors regarding the ambulance service. The Advocate discussed the work the Office completed researching this issue, including the jurisdictional scan of other provinces and what they offer for ambulance services.

Response: The information was well received by the Deputies, and a commitment was made to look into the issue. The Office will reconnect with the Department of Health and Community Services to explore if any movement has been made on addressing the concerns around ambulance cost or if a more formal recommendation on the issue is required.





ADVOCACY

ACTIONS

Issue: The Office of the Seniors' Advocate received several inquiries from seniors who said they were either charged by their family doctor to complete their driver medical forms or the doctor had indicated there would be a charge. When seniors were reaching out to the Department of Health and Community, the dedicated Driver's Medical Examination Reimbursement phone line and email address were no longer active.

OSA Action: The coverage of drivers medical forms under MCP was a recommendation made by this Office in 2019. In August of 2023, the provincial government accepted this recommendation and physicians were directed to bill MCP directly for this service. The OSA followed up with the Department of Health and Community services on this most recent concern and inquired about the telephone line and email address, which had been handling inquiries and reimbursements.

The concern around doctors continuing to charge patients was also raised to the Deputy Minister for Health Transformation and the Deputy Minister for Health and Community Services.

Issue: The Department of Health and Community Services responded quickly to the Office's inquiry and both the telephone line and email address were reactivated. The Department also advised that if a senior has been inappropriately charged a fee for the driver's medical examination which is required due only to their age, the senior can lodge a complaint to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of NL.

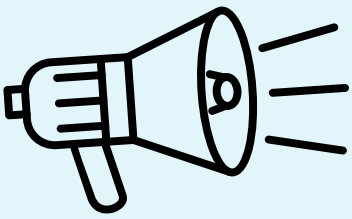
Contact:



Driver's Medical Examination Reimbursement:

Telephone: 1-833-864-0223

Email: DriversMedicals@gov.nl.ca



Town Hall Meetings with the Seniors' Advocate



This Fall, the Seniors' Advocate will be completing a number of community engagement sessions, to network with seniors, provide an update on our work and seek input from seniors on her current and future recommendations to government. Sessions are open to the public, unless noted otherwise.

If your organization/group would like to meet with Susan in the Spring of 2025, please call 709-729-6603, 1-833-729-6603 (toll free) or email: seniorsadvocate@seniorsadvocatenl.ca. The schedule books up quickly, so be sure to reach out as soon as possible!

Date	Organization	Location
Thursday, Nov 21 10:00 am	Earhart's 50+ Seniors Club	Harbour Grace <i>(location to be confirmed)</i>
Thursday, Nov 21 1:00 pm	North River 50+ Friendship Club	South River Knights of Columbus
Thursday, Nov 28 1:00 pm	St. John's Seniors' Advisory Committee	St. John's City Hall <i>(committee members only)</i>



Public Engagement



From March 2023 to June 2024, the Office has visited 32 communities and met with over 600 seniors. During these visits, we captured the concerns and solutions that seniors share with us. The following themes summarized what we heard during our town hall sessions.

Housing

- Cost of, and accessing someone to do, Snow removal & lawn care
- Cost of Home heating
- Cost of Home repair
- Lack of accessible, affordable housing

Home Support

- Cost of home support
- Unavailability of home support & staffing
- Quality of home support services

Health Care

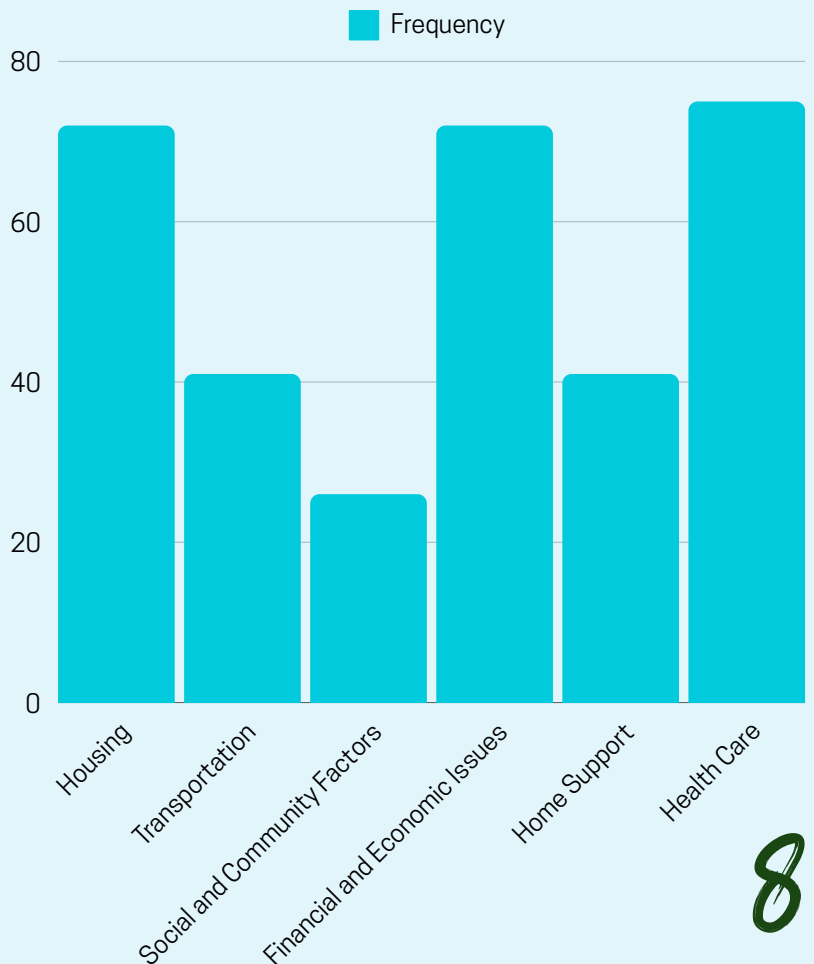
- Unaffordability of health care
- Unavailability, access and system efficiency
- Quality & access to Long-Term Care
- Quality, cost & access to Personal Care Homes
- Cost of traveling to get health care

Transportation

- Access to transportation
- Cost of transportation

Financial and economic issues

- Cost of living
- Lack of government supports
- Food insecurity



This chart represents the frequency of which an issue was discussed at the meetings. For example, health care was discussed at 75% of the 32 meetings.



Public Engagement

Some regional differences:

- In Western and Northern regions, the cost of wood was of higher concern
- In smaller rural communities, access to affordable, quality food was a concern - many communities only having a general store, not a grocery store.
- The lack of public transit, and the impacts of this such as attending appointments and social events, and accessing food, was especially heard in smaller communities.
- Concerns around accessing specialized medical services was heard in rural communities, including the cost for travel, particularly for those in rural communities that are further away from large health care centers.
- In Southern Labrador, travel for medical appointments was an even bigger issue. Air ambulances cannot fly in bad weather as easily as commercial planes, and the commercial planes only fly in/out 3 days/week, which could increase the cost of accommodations, food etc.

Next steps:

The OSA has spent the months following each town hall session analyzing the information we received and researching the concerns, including if government is already addressing the concern.

Some concerns we have moved forward on without making formal recommendations, many of which we have detailed in our Advocacy Actions section of our Newsletters. For example, we heard much about the challenges with snow clearing and small home maintenance tasks, and how these tasks can affect a seniors ability to age in their own homes. The Advocate wrote the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development to inform him of what we were hearing and suggest that the money go to the town/municipality, as seniors would prefer to see someone hired to do this work as they struggle to find someone to do it. We were pleased to see that government listened, and now the Seniors' Health and Well-Being Plan includes an Aging Well at Home Grant. While the money did go directly to seniors, we will monitor to determine if this proves successful.

Keep watching the Advocacy Actions section of our newsletters to stay up to date on some of the issues we bring forward to government for resolution!



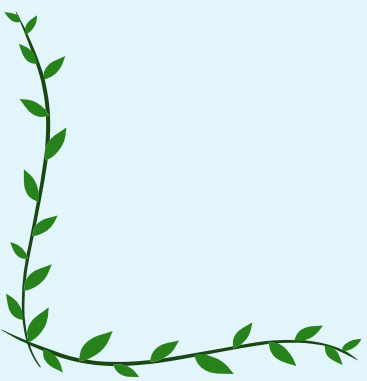
Public Engagement



During the week of June 11, the Advocate visited Southern Labrador to complete public engagement sessions.



On June 18, Advocacy Consultant Tanya Billard and former MSW Student Hayley Hillier participated in the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP NL)'s Seniors on the Go event at MUN's beautiful Botanical Gardens.



Public Engagement



During the week of August 12th, the Advocate visited New Brunswick to meet with the two other Provincial Seniors' Advocates: BC Advocate Dan Levitt and NB Advocate Kelly Lamrock. Shared concerns were discussed, including tax benefits impacting seniors, caregiver benefit and UN convention.

The Advocate attended the NL 50+ Federation's annual convention in Marystown during September 10-13 and was pleased to address the over 350 attendees. It is always wonderful to attend this annual event and a great opportunity to provide an update on the accomplishments of our Office in the last year and the issues we are exploring to such a large group of connected, engaged seniors!

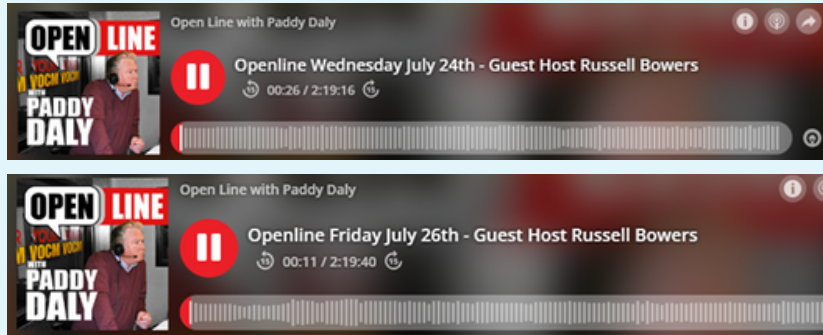


Media Interviews



On July 26 & July 28, 2024 the Seniors' Advocate spoke with Russell Bowers on VOXM Open Line. The work of the Office was discussed as well as Seniors' Health and Well-Being plan.

Listen here!



VOXM completed a news article on July 28 based on the Advocate's concerns for the impact on seniors of the high cost of living.

Advocate Calling for More Support for Seniors Struggling with High Cost of Living



Read here!



Welcome



We would like to welcome Rose AuCoin to our Office! Rose has been hired in a temporary position as Program and Policy Development Specialist.

Rose joined the Office of the Seniors' Advocate on August 19, 2024. She worked for over 30 years with the Provincial Government and has extensive experience with research, data analysis and report writing. Rose enjoys reading, walking and spending time with family – especially her grandson!

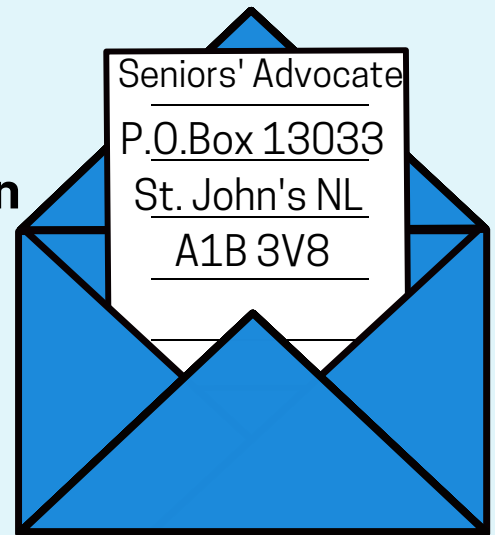




Our Team

Susan Walsh, Seniors' Advocate
Tanya Billard, Advocacy Consultant
Pamela Dawe, Advocacy Consultant
**Rose AuCoin, Program and Policy
Development Specialist**
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. If you prefer to receive our reports in paper form, please contact the office and we can mail them to you.



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Seniors Advocate NL

