

Office of the  
**SENIORS' ADVOCATE**

**Activity Plan**  
**2023 - 2026**



## MESSAGE FROM THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE



I am pleased to present the 2023-2026 Activity Plan for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate. This Office is a Statutory Office of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador. It has been designated as a Category Three entity as per the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. As such, this Office is required to prepare an Activity Plan that sets clear direction for its activities for the next three years.

This plan is written in consideration of the Legislative authority of this Office under the **Seniors' Advocate Act**. As the Seniors' Advocate for Newfoundland and Labrador I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and achievement of the objectives.

In developing this plan my staff and I reflected on our past, reviewed the significant data we have acquired through the sharing of so many seniors and their families, considered our mandate and determined our direction for the next three years.

Even with our province's recent population growth, as of July 1, 2022, the fact is 23.6% of the province is 65 years of age or older and 47.1% is 50 years of age or older. The Median age is 47.8, meaning half of the population is under this age and half is over this age. Further, we know that Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest proportion of older people with three or more chronic illnesses. Finally, with the ever rising cost of living, the 2022 research conducted by my Office found that about one-third of seniors do not have enough income for their basic needs (32% of 913 senior respondents to the survey). The Office of the Seniors' Advocate NL received over 900 requests for advocacy in 2022-2023, with an average of 86 requests per month since my becoming the Seniors' Advocate in June of 2022. It is evident that the need for an Advocate for seniors is more critical now than ever, and this is projected to not only continue but increase.

This 2023-2026 Activity Plan outlines the direction of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate NL for the next three years and is our commitment to the seniors of Newfoundland and Labrador!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Walsh". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Susan Walsh, MSW, RSW  
Seniors' Advocate NL

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW .....	1
PERSONNEL .....	1
FINANCIAL INFORMATION .....	1
VISION .....	2
MANDATE .....	2
VALUES .....	3
PRIMARY CLIENTS .....	3
LINES OF BUSINESS .....	4
SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY .....	4
RESEARCH AND REVIEWS .....	5
ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC AWARENESS .....	5
ISSUES .....	6
CONCLUSION .....	8
CONTACT .....	9

## OVERVIEW

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate was created through the **Seniors' Advocate Act** (the Act) which came into force on July 5, 2017. The purpose of the Office is outlined in the Act, as well as the powers and duties of the Seniors' Advocate.

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate is an independent statutory office of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador, and therefore not under the authority of any government department.

Each year the Seniors' Advocate must report to the House of Assembly on the exercise and performance of her/his powers and duties under the Act. For more details, please visit [www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca](http://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca).

## PERSONNEL

The Seniors' Advocate is appointed for a term of six years with the possibility of reappointment for a second term of six years. The Advocate is an officer of the House of Assembly and reports directly to the Legislature through the Speaker of the House.

The Office has three permanent staff: two Systemic Advocacy Consultants and one Administrative Officer. These staff are members of the Public Service of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The 2023-24 budget for this Office is \$594,800 (*source: 2023-24 Estimates*).

Salaries	\$ 461,200
Employee Benefits	5,700
Transportation and Communications	61,900
Supplies	5,000
Professional Services	9,000
Purchased Services	44,000
Property, Furnishings and Equipment	8,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 594,800</b>

## VISION

Seniors aging well and living their best lives in age-friendly communities: healthy, engaged, connected, supported and fulfilled. Financially secure seniors with options to choose where they live (geographically and the type of living arrangement) and access to the programs and services they need.

## MANDATE

The Office is established to identify, analyze and address systemic issues impacting seniors. Systemic issues are those which are found within an overall system, rather than a specific or individual concern.

This Office identifies and addresses systemic issues and makes recommendations for improvements to seniors' services and programs provided to seniors living in Newfoundland and Labrador. This Office has the authority to conduct interviews, surveys, consultations and make information requests. From this, the Seniors' Advocate can decide to make recommendations for improvements to seniors' services and programs. All recommendations are monitored for progress and the results are reported publicly on an annual basis. All incomplete recommendations will continue to be monitored, and reported on.

While the Office of the Seniors' Advocate does not have legislative authority for individual advocacy, the Office receives hundreds of requests for advocacy. Through engagement and public awareness, research, reviews and systemic advocacy, this Office ensures that the collective voices of seniors are heard.

Section 3 of the **Seniors' Advocate Act** outlines that the Office of the Seniors' Advocate is established to:

- identify, review and analyze systemic issues;
- work collaboratively with seniors' organizations, service providers and others to identify and address systemic issues; and
- make recommendations to government and government agencies respecting changes to improve services to and for seniors.

## VALUES

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate believes strongly in its role as an independent voice for seniors in this province. Every effort is taken to ensure that the integrity and core values of this Office are reflected in its service to the public and in its internal activities.

Value	Action Statement
Fairness	Powers and duties will be applied in an open, unbiased manner. There will be no conflict of interest or undue influence during any stage of a review. Every effort will be made to provide timely, accurate and fair recommendations for improved seniors' services.
Respect	In achieving its mandate, differing perspectives and opinions will be heard, valued and considered in all the work of this Office.
Diversity	Every person is unique and the seniors' population, as a group, are not all alike. Diversity will be recognized and welcomed.
Empowerment	Through education and information sharing, this Office encourages seniors to self-advocate. Further, seniors will know their influence on seniors' services as this Office lifts up the voices of seniors to have systemic issues addressed.

## PRIMARY CLIENTS

The Act defines a "senior" as an individual **who is 65 years of age or older, or less than 65 years of age and receives seniors' services. Seniors' Services are defined in the legislation as programs, services or systems of support, prescribed in the regulations, that are related to health care, personal care, housing, transportation or finances that are used by or associated with seniors.**

Given the definition of seniors in the Act, this Office is also responsible to advocate for people under 65 years of age. In practice, the Office typically serves people 50 years of age and older, which is 47.1 per cent of the province's population, according to most recent data.

## LINES OF BUSINESS

### SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY

Systemic issues impact large numbers of people. These systemic issues are brought to the attention of the Office through input from individuals, organizations, and service providers; as well as research and media reports. The Office collates all issues under subcategories of five broad categories: health care, personal care, housing, transportation or finances.

The Office can use a variety of methods to advocate including, meeting with officials to discuss the matter, writing to seek resolution of a matter, working with government and community to address the issue, making recommendations, or completing a systemic review and/or releasing a report.

Systemic reviews may include research, consultations and information requests. Conclusions drawn from reviews may form the basis of recommendations to government, government agencies, service providers and community groups respecting legislation, policies, programs and services impacting seniors. The Advocate will closely monitor all recommendations to assess how they are implemented.

This Office cannot advocate for individual seniors' issues; however, all individual concerns are addressed to the best of our ability which may mean a referral is made to an appropriate program, service or resource.

**Section 16 of the Seniors' Advocate Act**, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate may:

- (a) receive and review matters related to seniors;
- (b) initiate and participate in reviews related to seniors;
- (c) conduct research related to seniors, including interviews and surveys;
- (d) consult with seniors, service providers and the public;
- (e) request information, other than personal health information within the meaning of the **Personal Health Information Act** and personal information within the meaning of the **Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015**;
- (f) make recommendations to government, government agencies, service providers and community groups respecting legislation, policies, programs and services impacting seniors; and
- (g) inform the public about the Office of the Seniors' Advocate and promote awareness of systemic issues related to seniors.

## **RESEARCH AND REVIEWS**

The value of research is its ability to inform action, provide evidence and contribute to developing knowledge. Research can be broad and include literature reviews, conversations, engagement and consultative processes, and models of best practices. As well, research informs the development of recommendations and annual reports as part of our monitoring processes. Regular discussions with the other provincial seniors' advocates (presently established in British Columbia and New Brunswick) informs our research and knowledge and provides opportunities to speak as one voice and raise issues important to all Canadian seniors.

Seniors bring forward their concerns for the consideration of the Seniors' Advocate. When concerns are systemic, the Office's thorough research practices ensure that strong recommendations are made. The Act provides the authority to complete reviews, request information and release reports with recommendations.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC AWARENESS**

The Seniors' Advocate listens to seniors and encourages seniors to use their voices; this Office makes sure that the collective voices of seniors are heard. All information gathered by this Office informs public policy on many levels including: municipal, regional, provincial and national. While the powers and duties of the Seniors' Advocate are provincial in scope, there are occasions for national and international input and to inform national policy via consultations, committee membership and partnerships with national seniors' advocates.

The Advocate has committed to ongoing provincial outreach to gather information and to share what we learn with seniors and policymakers. The Office endeavours to connect with as many people as possible through its website, emails, quarterly newsletter, social media and the publication of reports, which may not necessarily be the subject of a report made to the House of Assembly under our Act. Regular meetings with community organizations and groups provide opportunities to promote education and awareness on topics of importance to seniors.



## ISSUES

### Issue 1: Systemic Advocacy

Systemic advocacy means addressing issues that impact large numbers of seniors. For the next 30 years, the province's population will continue to age which will force a societal paradigm shift, compelling policy-makers to consider the needs of older adults. This Office will continue to focus on systemic advocacy to ensure policies, services and programs meet the demand as dictated by seniors.

**Objective 1:** By March 31, 2024 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to advocate on behalf of seniors to address systemic issues and strengthen seniors' services in NL.

#### Indicators:

- Enhance procedures and protocols to identify and monitor systemic seniors' issues.
- Receive and review matters related to seniors.
- Consult with seniors, service providers, community organizations and the public.
- Release reports with recommendations.
- Complete status reports on recommendations.
- Utilize a variety of methods to advance improved seniors services.
- Inform the public.

**Objective 2:** By March 31, 2025, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to advocate on behalf of seniors to address systemic issues and strengthen seniors' services in NL.

**Objective 3:** By March 31, 2026, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to advocate on behalf of seniors to address systemic issues and strengthen seniors' services in NL.

### Issue 2: Research and Reviews

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate conducts research and completes systemic reviews to inform positions of this Office and to support recommendations made to government, government agencies, service providers, and community groups. Regardless of how the research is used, the information gleaned will be utilized and the learnings made available to the public. When research leads to recommendations to enhance seniors' programs and services, the public will be informed of all reviews, findings and any actions resulting.

**Objective 1:** By March 31, 2024, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to conduct research and initiate required reviews and inform strong recommendations for improved seniors' services.

**Indicators:**

- Collect and analyze demographic information.
- Analyze health seniors-related data.
- Analyze financial seniors-related data.
- Conduct research.
- Consult with seniors, service providers, community organizations and the public.
- Inform the public.

**Objective 2:** By March 31, 2025, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to conduct research and initiate required reviews and inform strong recommendations for improved seniors' services.

**Objective 3:** By March 31, 2026, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to conduct research and initiate required reviews and inform strong recommendations for improved seniors' services.

### **Issue 3: Engagement and Public Awareness**

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate will continue to engage seniors, families, stakeholders and community organizations to identify and discuss systemic issues and solutions. The Office will take a leadership role in educating the public on matters of importance to seniors and supporting community organizations in their challenges to meet the varied needs of seniors. The Office will continue to promote public awareness of the systemic issues impacting seniors as well as findings and/or recommendations of systemic reviews undertaken by the Office.

**Objective 1:** By March 31, 2024 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to increase opportunities to engage and inform seniors, educate the public and support seniors' community organizations on issues impacting seniors.

**Indicators:**

- Engage seniors, seniors' organizations, community organizations, municipalities, governments and others.
- Collaborate with and support seniors' community organizations.
- Develop and distribute promotional materials.
- Participate in media interviews and public presentations on matters of importance to seniors.
- Issue news releases, reports, newsletters and information of public interest.

**Objective 2:** By March 31, 2025 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to increase opportunities to engage and inform seniors, educate the public and support seniors' community organizations on issues impacting seniors.

**Objective 3:** By March 31, 2026 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have will have continued to increase opportunities to engage and inform seniors, educate the public and support seniors' community organizations on issues impacting seniors.

## CONCLUSION

Seniors know what they need in order to live their lives as they wish; they want to be supported to live healthy and productive lives. The Office of the Seniors' Advocate has been given a clear mandate to listen to seniors, research evidence, and find ways to improve seniors' programs and services. While this three-year plan cannot possibly detail all of the work we will engage in, the overarching strategic issues have been outlined and will be at the centre of everything we do.

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate is fully committed to enacting positive change for seniors and raising their collective voices. This work is challenging but critical because it ultimately impacts every single person who is privileged to grown into old age.

## CONTACT



(709) 729-6603 1-833-729-6603 (toll free)



[seniorsadvocate@seniorsadvocatenl.ca](mailto:seniorsadvocate@seniorsadvocatenl.ca)



[www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca](http://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca)



SrsAdvocateNL



seniorsadvocateNL



P.O. Box 13033  
St. John's, NL A1B 3V8



Office of the  
**SENIORS' ADVOCATE**  
Newfoundland and Labrador