



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

OFFICE OF THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE

# ACTIVITY PLAN 2026-2029

MAY 2026



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



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Message From

# THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE



I am pleased to present the 2026-2029 Activity Plan for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate (OSA). The OSA 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, it is required to prepare an Activity Plan that sets clear direction for its activities for the next three years.

This Activity Plan is written in consideration of the legislative authority of the OSA under the **Seniors' Advocate Act**. As the Seniors' Advocate for Newfoundland and Labrador, I am accountable for its preparation and realization of the objectives.

This Activity Plan is a promise to the seniors of Newfoundland and Labrador. Its purpose is to identify the major areas of focus over the next three years. It does not include the daily work undertaken by the OSA, nor can it forecast issues and work which might emerge. It is a high-level representation of our overarching goals, objectives and anticipated action necessary to achieve the objectives of this Activity Plan.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that the OSA will undergo significant changes over the coming months, and certainly before the time-period covered by this Activity Plan. Firstly, I will be retiring in May 2026 which means that when a new Seniors' Advocate is appointed, they will be tasked with completing any remaining work outlined in this Activity Plan, even though they will have had no input into the direction as laid out in this document. This can be challenging. Secondly, there is a Bill before the House of Assembly which will replace the current **Seniors' Advocate Act**. If/When this Bill receives Royal Assent and becomes the new **Seniors' Advocate Act**, it is anticipated to greatly expand the mandate of the OSA. If the mandate is expanded, the objectives of this Activity Plan may need to be amended and new objectives considered. If this happens, an entirely new Activity Plan may be required and tabled before this one has expired. To that end, it might be more accurate to consider this Activity Plan to be an interim plan for work during this time of transition.

*Susan*

Susan Walsh  
Seniors' Advocate NL

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# OVERVIEW

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

The OSA 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 their 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 OSA has four permanent staff: two Systemic Advocacy Consultants, one Data Analyst and one Administrative Officer. These staff are members of the Public Service of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The 2025-26 budget for the OSA is \$706,000 (source: 2025-26 Estimates).

Salaries	\$576,400
Operating Employee Benefits	5,700
Transportation and Communications	61,900
Supplies	5,000
Professional Services	9,000
Purchased Services	44,000
Property, Furnishings and Equipment	4,000
Operating Accounts	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$706,000</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 OSA advocates for the rights, interests and wellbeing of all seniors living in Newfoundland and Labrador. The OSA is established to identify, analyze and address systemic and individual issues impacting seniors. Systemic issues are those which are found within an overall system as opposed to individual concerns which may be specific to a person.

The OSA identifies and addresses issues and makes recommendations for improvements to seniors' services and programs provided to seniors living in Newfoundland and Labrador. The OSA 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 until they are implemented or otherwise resolved.

While the OSA does not have legislative authority for individual advocacy, the OSA receives hundreds of requests for advocacy each year. Through engagement and public awareness, research, reviews and systemic advocacy, the OSA ensures that the collective voices of seniors are heard.

Section 3 of the **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 OSA 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 the OSA 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 the OSA.
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, the OSA encourages seniors to self-advocate. Further, seniors will know their influence on seniors' services as the OSA 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.**

Present data places the 65+ component of NL's population at 25.2 per cent of the overall population. Given the definition of seniors in the **Act**, however, the OSA is also responsible to advocate for people under 65 years of age. This means, in practice, the OSA typically serves people 50 years of age and older, which is 47.3 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 OSA through input from individuals, organizations, and service providers, as well as research and media reports. The OSA collates all issues under subcategories of five broad categories: health care, personal care, housing, transportation or finances.

The OSA 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.

The OSA 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, Manitoba 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 OSA'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 & PUBLIC AWARENESS

The Seniors' Advocate listens to seniors and encourages seniors to use their voices; the OSA makes sure that the collective voices of seniors are heard. All information gathered by the OSA 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 OSA 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. Newfoundland and Labrador's population is experiencing the fastest aging rate in Canada, a trend that is projected to continue for at least the next two decades. This will force a societal paradigm shift, compelling policymakers to consider the needs of older adults. The OSA 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, 2027, 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:**

- 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, 2028, 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, 2029, 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 OSA conducts research and completes systemic reviews to inform positions of the OSA and to support recommendations made to government, government agencies, service providers, and community groups. Beginning in 2024, the OSA has released an annual Seniors' Report which examines seniors' wellbeing in the following six broad areas: Individual Health, Health Care, Finances, Housing and Safety and Protection. All research and data collected and analyzed by the OSA will be utilized to inform our

advocacy work, 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, 2027, 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 seniors' demographic information.
- Collect and analyze seniors' health-related data.
- Collect and analyze seniors' financial-related data.
- Collect and analyze seniors' housing-related data.
- Collect and analyze seniors' transportation-related data.
- Analyze seniors' safety and protection-related data.
- Conduct research.
- Consult with seniors, service providers, community organizations and the public.
- Inform the public.

**Objective 2:** By March 31, 2028, 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, 2029, 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 OSA will continue to engage seniors, families, stakeholders and community organizations to identify and discuss systemic issues and solutions. The OSA 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 OSA 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 OSA.

**Objective 1:** By March 31, 2027 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 OSA 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, 2028 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, 2029 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.



# CONCLUSION

The mandate of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate is critically important given the age demographics of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the continued poor wellbeing of this province's seniors. We must listen to seniors, families and stakeholders, conduct research, study the literature, gather data, explore best models of practice and make solid recommendations to improve the programs and services to enhance the lives of NL seniors.

This three-year Activity Plan outlines the overarching strategic issues which will be at the centre of all the work we do.

It is an honour to work for the seniors of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we look forward to implementing the objectives in this Activity Plan to improve seniors' programs and services. Each of us has a vested interest in making life better for seniors.





# CONTACT US

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