

Annual Performance Report 2023-2024



MESSAGE FROM THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE

I am pleased to present the 2023-2024 Annual Performance Report for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate (the Office). This report has been prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** provisions for a Category Three entity.

This Annual Performance Report reflects on the progress of the Office in achieving the year one objectives outlined in our Activity Plan 2023-2026. It provides details on the indicators outlined in our lines of business – Systemic Advocacy, Research and Reviews, and Education and Public Awareness.

As you will see in this report, 2023-2024 was another extremely busy and productive time for the Office. We continued our commitment to hear from seniors throughout the province to inform our advocacy work. We visited 23 communities and had over 400 seniors attend our town hall sessions. In addition to our town halls, we connected with over 1000 seniors through community events, phone and in-person conversations, and emails.

In November 2023 we released the **What Golden Years?** report with recommendations on how government can help seniors who are struggling with the impact of the rising cost-of-living. Other publications aimed at providing the perspective of seniors to policy and program makers, and to educate the community on issues impacting seniors in the province, included: the annual **Status Report on Recommendations 2022-2023**, quarterly newsletters, submissions, and news releases. We have remained committed to collaboration with community partners on a variety of issues including housing and homelessness, food insecurity, poverty, and safety.

While this has been a successful year for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate in meeting our year one indicators, there continues to be many systemic issues and much work to do. I remain committed to raising up the voices of Newfoundland and Labrador seniors and fulfilling my legislated responsibility to advocate for the programs and services necessary to meet their needs.

Sincerely,



Susan Walsh, MSW RSW
Seniors' Advocate



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OVERVIEW

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate was created through the **Seniors' Advocate Act (the Act)** which came into force on July 2, 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

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.



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 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 **Seniors' Advocate 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 endeavors 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.

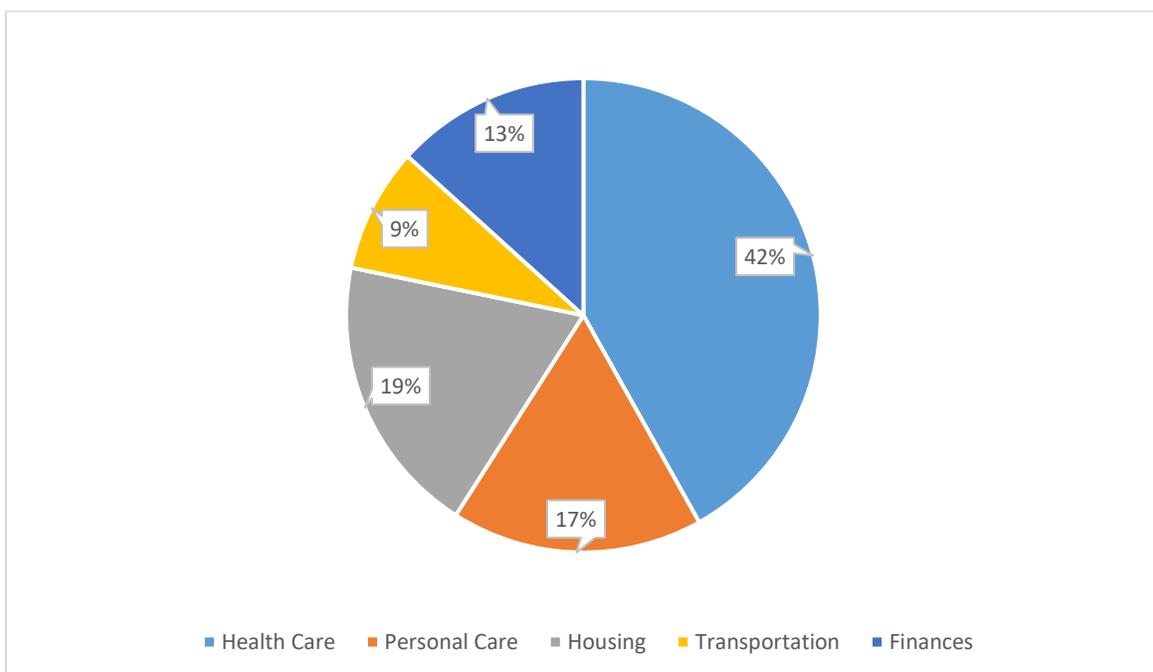


HIGHLIGHTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

During the reporting period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate engaged in many activities including systemic advocacy, education, outreach and public engagements. Highlights of this time period include:

Individual Advocacy Requests:

- Individual issues are tracked to detect trends that identify systemic issues. These issues have consistently related to five overarching categories as outlined in the **Act**: health care, personal care, housing, transportation and finances. Health care continues to be the major area of concern for seniors and stakeholders. Housing concerns were higher this year than previous years as well. Although this chart depicts financial concerns are lower for our individual advocacy requests, the systemic issue and the impact of the high cost of living on seniors has consistently been a top concern for seniors in engagement sessions and survey results. It is also important to note that the below chart only depicts the primary concern of the intake, and that many concerns are interconnected.
- The Office received 748 requests for advocacy from seniors, family members/caregivers and/or service providers, organized as follows:



*This chart only reflects new intakes received at our office, and the primary concern of the intake.

Reports:

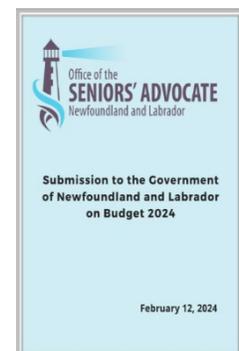
- Released a recommendation report titled [What Golden Years?](#) The report is a first step in attempting to address the cost of living challenges identified by seniors through an extensive public engagement consultation process that heard from approximately 1,400 seniors. It contains 12 recommendations to four government departments.
- Released the second annual Status Report on Recommendations 2022-2023 report.
<https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/StatusReportOnRecommendations2022-23.pdf>



Submissions:

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate completed the following submissions this fiscal year:

- Submission to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador on Budget 2024
<https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/BudgetSubmission2024.pdf>
- Submission to the Review of Statutory Offices of the House of Assembly
<https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/OSANLSubmissionMay15-2023.pdf>



News Releases:

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate released the following six news releases this fiscal year:

- Recognition of Seniors' Month
- Recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
- Release of **Status Report on Recommendations 2022-2023**
- Recognition of International Day of Older Persons and National Seniors' Day
- Statement regarding the rate increase for private-paying residents in personal care homes (PCH), requesting PCH operators to pause the rate increase to allow residents to either have a reassessment and/or explore their options.
- Release of **What Golden Years?** report

Advocacy Actions:

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate employs a variety of methods to advocate for systemic improvements to programs and services for seniors and to provide education around issues impacting seniors. These actions are reported in our quarterly newsletter so that seniors can see the action of the Office and the response of those entities with authority to make the required change. Some actions in 2023-24 include:

- Wrote the City of St. John's regarding concerns with seniors having to pay "accommodations tax" (also known as tourism levy) imposed by the City on hotels, motels etc. The City noted some hotels offer reduced rates for people attending medical appointments and this was shared with seniors.
- Wrote Minister Sarah Stoodley, Digital Government and SeniorsNL, and Minister Osborne, Health and Community Services, outlining concerns regarding seniors who do not have access to a family doctor and require the drivers medical forms to be completed. Budget 2023 announced an allocation of \$1.3 million to ensure physicians will bill MCP directly to cover the cost of completing driver medicals for seniors aged 75+, which began April 1, 2023.
- The Advocate worked with community partners to address a concern we were all hearing about – seniors having unwanted individuals living in their home who they are fearful of and having no avenue to force them to leave. The Advocate coordinated a meeting with the Minister of Women and Gender Equality to begin the process of a legislative solution to this issue.
- The Advocate, along with the British Columbia Seniors' Advocate, met with the Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Minister responsible for seniors to discuss issues impacting seniors in Canada including national dental care program, home supports, housing needs and cost of living.

- The two Advocates also met with the National Seniors Caucus Chair, MP Joanne Thompson, to discuss issues of importance to seniors to inform the national agenda.
- Following concerns raised regarding the high increase in private pay rates for residents of Personal Care Homes (PCH), the Advocate released a [news release](#) asking PCH operators to pause rate increases and asked that residents receive a minimum notice of 90-days before PCHs implement the new rates.
- Wrote several businesses to inform them of concerns raised by seniors with ageism in their public communications and provided education on ageism. This was well received, and appropriate changes were made.
- The Office, with End Homelessness St. John's, wrote the provincial government and requested the establishment of a stand-alone All-Party Committee on the housing crisis, with an immediate focus on the importance of housing for seniors. This request was supported by nine additional community organizations. Subsequently, the government developed the task force on homelessness.
- The Office participated in the development of the Canadian Clinical Guidelines on Social Isolation and Loneliness with the Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health (CCSMH). The guidelines are the first in Canada, and our Office represented Newfoundland and Labrador on a national panel to develop the guidelines.



Engagement & Public Awareness:

- The Advocate and staff completed 24 community engagement sessions with over 400 seniors and community members to hear their concerns and solutions. These community sessions were held throughout the province in the Eastern, Central, Western and Labrador regions, enabling the Office to gain an understanding of regional and provincial issues impacting seniors.
- The Advocate and/or staff engaged in public awareness either through presentations, panels or information booths to the following groups/events:
 - George Street United Church
 - Parkinson Society NL
 - National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence consultations
 - Mews Library
 - Placentia Age-Friendly Expo

- Cabinet Committee on Seniors
- Retired Teachers of Ontario/Les enseignantes et enseignants retraités de l'Ontario (RTOERO)
- 50+ Federation Convention
- Town of CBS Seniors' Expo
- Seniors' Day with the City of St. John's
- Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- APPTA Panel on Abuse Towards Older Adults
- MUN Critical Issues on Aging course
- Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW)
- The Advocate participated in 17 media interviews to make the public aware of issues impacting NL seniors and advocate for appropriate policy, programs and services.
- The Office engaged with several community organizations and agencies, including:
 - Bridges to Hope
 - Health Accord
 - SeniorsNL
 - Food First NL
 - End Homelessness St. John's
 - Connections for Seniors
 - Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) NL branch
 - Mount Pearl Seniors Independence Group
 - Researcher from Grenfell Campus
 - Older Workers NL
 - Federation des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador
 - Dr. Cheryl Forchuk, PhD, Professor, Scientist and Assistant Director at Lawson Health Research Institute
 - Thrive
 - Credit Counseling Services of Newfoundland and Labrador
 - NAPE
 - Quality of Care NL
 - Dr. Valerie Tarasuk, PhD, Professor Emerita, Department of Nutritional Sciences with the University of Toronto
 - Iris Kirby House
 - National Association of Federal Retirees
 - Citizens for Change in Long Term Care in NL (CCLTCNL)
 - Old School Intergenerational Projects
 - Gathering Place



- Wiseman Centre and the Ches Penney Centre of Hope
- Stella's Circle
- NL Association of the Deaf
- Brightisle
- Aging Research Centre (ARC-NL)
- Office of the Citizen's Representative

Continuous Learning:

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate is committed to remaining well-informed and educated on issues related to seniors. We participated in 23 learning opportunities:

- The Impact of Retirement on Cognitive Decline
- Quality of Care: Successful Aging Session
- Annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2023 National Webinar
- Addressing Anti-2SLGBTQIA Hate
- Older Adults in the Emergency Room
- Inuit Culture presentation
- Reimagining Long Term Care: Enabling a Healthy Workforce to Provide Person Centered Care
- Oil to Electric Transition program webinar
- Canadian Dental Care Plan
- Successful Aging in Canada
- Presentation by Gloria Gutman, Simon Fraser University Gerontology Research Centre
- Let's Talk about Service Canada
- Shaping Policy for Poverty Reduction
- Canadian Coalition on Seniors Mental Health (CCSMH) Clinical Guidelines on Social Isolation and Loneliness release webinar
- Health Accord NL: Check point
- Social Prescribing
- Accessible Housing
- Help Us Remain: Bring Care for Identity to Care For Dementia
- Volunteer Connections conferences
- Retired Teachers of Ontatio/Les enseignantes et enseignants retraites de l'Ontario (RTOERO)
- Canadian Academy of Geriatric Psychiatry (CAGP) & Canadian Coalition of Seniors' Mental Health (CCSMH) Annual Scientific Meeting
- Aging Well Conference
- Canadian Association on Gerontology



REPORT ON PERFORMANCE

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 policymakers 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

Accomplishments

All individual issues and requests for advocacy are collected in the HPE Records Management System. Reports generated from the database then enable the Office to identify trends that confirm systemic issues.

The Office has been making enhancements to the electronic records management system, to improve our capability to capture systemic issues. Staff regularly monitor the efficiency and relevance of the data collected and/or reported to ensure data is accurate and relevant.

	<p>The Office has implemented a method to track issues and concerns received during public community sessions and meetings with community agencies.</p>
Receive and review matters related to seniors	<p>The Office received 748 individual requests for advocacy. The Office had 24 public community sessions with over 400 seniors where issues and concerns are identified as well as potential solutions. All information received/gathered is documented, analyzed and utilized to inform the Office’s systemic advocacy role.</p>
Consult with seniors, service providers, community organizations and the public	<p>The Office consulted with service providers and community groups through meetings to ascertain their perspective.</p> <p>The Office presented at/attended 38 events, which included public community sessions, seniors’ day events, presentation to university students, professionals and professional associations.</p> <p>The Office participated in 117 meetings, which included community organizations, government officials and committees.</p>
Release report with recommendations	<p>On November 14, 2023, the Office released a recommendations report titled What Golden Years?</p> <p>The Office also provided a Submission to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador on Budget 2024.</p>
Complete status reports on recommendations	<p>On September 8, 2023, the Office released the annual Status Report on Recommendations 2022-2023.</p>
Utilize a variety of methods to advance improved seniors services	<p>Having completed a thorough research process, which included a survey, the Office determined that a critical area of concern for</p>

seniors is the cost of living. Following significant research and analysis, the Office released a recommendations report title [What Golden Years?](#)

The Office has written letters to various government departments outlining, and/or following up on, systemic issues negatively impacting seniors, offering solutions, and seeking resolution. These include:

- Letter to the Minister of Health and Community Services, requesting an update on the decision to purchase influenza vaccine to cover all seniors over 65 years of age.
- Letter to the Minister of Women and Gender Equality, regarding amendments to the **Family Violence Protection Act**, to protect seniors from various forms of abuse and violence through expanded use of an Emergency Protection Order (EPO).
- Letter to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety requesting amendments to the **Family Violence Protection Act**, to protect seniors from various forms of abuse and violence through the expanded use of the Emergency Protection Order (EPO).
- Letter to David Diamond, CEO of NL Health Services, regarding concerns from seniors being evicted from their apartments in Central NL.
- Letter to Premier Andrew Furey, requesting the establishment of an All-Party Committee on the Housing Crisis, in response to the substantial concerns of the Office and many community partners have regarding homeless seniors.
- Letter to the Department of Health and Community Services, to obtain data on

the impact of rate increases for private pay residents in Personal Care Homes. The Seniors' Advocate has met with the Federal Minister responsible for seniors, to discuss issues that have an impact on a federal level, such as housing needs of seniors, cost of living and Old Age Security (OAS), and the national dental care program.

Inform the public

The Seniors' Advocate completed 17 media interviews to ensure the public is aware of issues seniors are facing and potential solutions.

The Office released its quarterly newsletters.

Six news releases were issued on matters related to seniors:

- Recognition of Seniors' Month
- Recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
- Release of **Status Report on Recommendations 2022-2023**
- Recognition of International Day of Older Persons and National Seniors' Day
- Statement regarding the rate increase for private-paying residents in personal care homes (PCH), requesting PCH operators pause the rate increase to allow for residents to either have a reassessment and/or explore their options.
- Release of **What Golden Years?** report

The Office presented at 38 events, which included public community sessions, seniors' day events, presentation to university students, professionals, and professional associations. These events are an opportunity to educate the attendees on the mandate of our office, to share information on the systemic issues the office is addressing, and

advise of systemic issues that have been successfully resolved as a result of our advocacy.

The Office has an email distribution list that continues to grow, with over 600 people on the list (up from 408 people during the 2022-23 report). This email list contains email addresses from people (primarily seniors) who attended any of our public events, including community engagement sessions or information booths, and voluntarily signed up to receive correspondence from our Office. We use this distribution list to send out information regarding our Office, including reports released, newsletters, etc. as well as any information that seniors would benefit from hearing about, including government initiatives, grants, new programs/services.

The Office remains active on social media platforms such as Facebook and X. The Office developed and posted 153 tweets/Facebook posts.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The systemic advocacy role of the Office has continued to grow with such things as: 38 community events in 23 communities throughout the province; an in-depth analysis of our survey findings, resulting in a new recommendation report (**What Golden Years?**); more timely advancements of issues to government; and increased public and media presence on issues impacting seniors. This may explain why the individual requests for advocacy, while still substantial (748), were lower this fiscal year. Given that the Office of the Seniors' Advocate's mandate is for systemic issues only, not individual issues, the reduction in the number of individual advocacy requests is positive, as an understanding of the role of the Office is becoming more widely understood.

Further, our ongoing public engagement actions, including our email group, media interviews, newsletters, presentations, and community town hall sessions, create awareness of the Office, our role, and the issues impacting seniors. Our extensive community engagement ensures seniors have the opportunity to be heard.

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	Accomplishments
Collect and analyze demographic information	In January 2024, the Office hired a Master of Applied Psychology Science (MAPS) graduate student to begin defining a data collection, evaluation, and reporting system for the Office, which will include the collection and analysis of demographic information of seniors in NL.
Analyze health seniors-related data	Using the data from the What We Heard report (2023) as well as data collected from relevant government departments, the MAPS student has begun to analyze health senior-related data.
Analyze financial seniors-related data	<p>Using the data from the What We Heard report (2023) as well as data collected from relevant government departments, the MAPS student has begun to analyze financial senior-related data.</p> <p>After analyzing the data collected for our What We Heard report, it was determined that 32% of seniors reported not having enough income to meet their financial needs, and were unable to afford basic necessities, which contributes to poor health outcomes and reduced quality of life. The Office completed further research and analysis on areas that had a financial impact on seniors, including provincial</p>

benefits, costs of home support, food security and transportation for medical appointments. This analysis resulted in the 12 recommendations contained within the **What Golden Years?** report.

Conduct research

All systemic issues require significant research which may include literature reviews, jurisdictional scans, consultations, surveys, focus groups and interviews.

The **What Golden Years?** report was developed upon analysis of the data collected in our **What We Heard** report. Once the financial concerns of seniors were quantified; the Office completed extensive research into various areas of financial impact on seniors. This included jurisdictional scans, collection of further data and information on specific topics, such as home supports.

Consult with seniors, service providers, community organizations and the public

The Office consulted with service providers and community groups on issues of concern to seniors. These consultations were often a result of concerns the Office has heard, as part of our information gathering, and an opportunity for service providers and community groups to share what they are seeing in their respective agency. Through 24 community consultations, the Office consulted with seniors throughout the province.

Inform the public

The Seniors' Advocate completed 17 media interviews to ensure the public is aware of issues seniors are facing and potential solutions.

The Office released its quarterly newsletter, which outlines seniors issues, actions taken by the Office, reports released, and recent public engagements, both publicly and to our email distribution list.

Six news releases were issued to the public on matters related to seniors.

A recommendation report [What Golden Years?](#) was released, which identified financial concerns of seniors and included 12 new recommendations.

Through the release of the [Status Report on Recommendations 2022-23](#), the Office informs the public on the status of all recommendations made by this Office. The report also includes governments response to our recommendations.

The [2024 Budget Submission](#) was another tool used to inform the public on financial concerns of seniors and contained the 12 recommendations made in the What Golden Years? report.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Collecting, analyzing and tracking trends on seniors' health and well-being has been a key area of interest for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate, however, human resources was a challenge. This year, through hiring a Masters of Applied Psychology Science student, we have begun this critical work.

All issues and concerns brought to the attention of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate continue to be recorded in the database and analyzed to indicate if the issue is becoming systemic or has the potential to become systemic over time. When a systemic issue is identified, extensive research takes place. This research includes analysis of data collected, literature reviews, jurisdictional scans, and review of existing policies/standards. The research is a critical component as it offers support for reviews and recommendations and sheds light on best practice/other existing models that may be valuable to our review. The Office released the **What Golden Years?** report as a result of data collected and analyzed in the **What We Heard** report that deemed financial concerns and cost of living as a systemic issue for seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador. The research completed for this report lead to the twelve recommendations contained within it.

The Office released its second annual **Status Report on Recommendations**. This report reviews the status of recommendations made by our Office and reports publicly to ensure seniors are aware if their concerns are being addressed.

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	Accomplishments
Engage seniors, seniors’ organizations, community organizations, municipalities, governments and others	<p>Connected with 50+ clubs throughout the province, with 18 clubs hosting town halls. 15 of the 18 town halls were open to all community members.</p> <p>Connected with seniors through other existing community senior groups, and hosted three community sessions open to the public.</p> <p>Attended, and had a booth at, four senior expos/conventions, where we displayed information about our office, provided promotional merchandise, and met with seniors.</p> <p>The Office participated in 118 meetings. Met with one federal government minister, four provincial government ministers, one Member of the House of Assembly, one Member of Parliament, and the Cabinet Committee on Seniors, to advocate on matters of importance to seniors.</p>
Collaborate with and support seniors’ community organizations	The Office had 41 meetings with community organizations, including participating on two community organization committees.

The Office collaborated with eight community organizations on the issue of housing/homelessness. This included meeting to discuss the issues, identify primary points of concerns, drafting and sending a letter to the Premier to request the establishment of an All-Party Committee on the Housing Crisis, which was supported by all eight community groups.

The Office represented Newfoundland and Labrador as a working group member on the Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health (CCSMH) and developed clinical guidelines.

The Office collaborated with community organizations to raise awareness of the many incidents where seniors experience fear with an unwanted individual in their home. This resulted in meeting with the Office of Women and Gender Equality and the Department of Justice and Public Safety to discuss solutions.

The Office had heard from seniors and community organizations that accessing food and accessing food banks is an increasing challenge. The Office collaborated with Food First NL and Bridges to Hope to address the food insecurity concerns for seniors. This resulted in a recommendation in our **What Golden Years?** report.

- **Recommendation 10:** The Department of Health and Community Services, in collaboration with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, implement recommendation 4a of the Rethinking Food Charity in Newfoundland and Labrador: Results, Reflections and Recommendations 2022-23 report to ensure that food banks can provide food delivery in circumstances they assess as necessary.

The Office has attended four community seniors' expos/conventions to create awareness of the Office and our role:

- Seniors' Day, hosted by the City of St. John's
- Seniors' Expo, hosted by the town of CBS
- Seniors' on the Go, hosted by MUN Botanical Gardens and CARPNL
- Seniors' and Science Day, hosted by CARPNL and Johnson Geo Centre

The Seniors' Advocate attended the 50+ Federation Convention, where she was keynote speaker. The convention enabled the Advocate to provide an update to over 250 seniors on the work of the Office and issues of importance to seniors.

Develop and distribute promotional materials

The Office expanded its inventory of promotional material, which are provided at public events. All promotional material contains contact information for the Office. Hundreds of promotional material items were handed out at consultations and other events.

We also purchased a tabletop banner, which contains information about the Office, as well as a tablecloth, which contains our logo.

The Office also now has a QR code, so attendees at events can use the QR code to quickly access our website.

Participate in media interviews and public presentations on matters of importance to seniors

The Advocate completed 17 media interviews to ensure the public is aware of issues seniors are facing and potential solutions. The Office presented at 38 events, which included public community sessions, seniors day events, presentation to a MUN class of medicine and to the NLCSW.

Issue news releases, reports, newsletters and information of public interest

The Office released six news releases, four newsletters, one recommendation report [What Golden Years?](#), one [status of recommendation report](#), two submissions [Budget 2024 & Submission to the Review of Statutory Offices](#), the [Activity Plan 2023-2026](#) and [Annual Performance Report 2022-23](#). The Office also sent out emails through the distribution list which contained information of public interest, as well as posted on X and Facebook.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate maintains a strong working relationship with community organizations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Through these partnerships we have raised awareness of, and called for action on, seniors systemic issues including poverty, housing and homelessness, and safety.

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate continues to create opportunities to promote its activities and inform the public. Ongoing media interviews have been an important piece of informing the public, as well as the release of our reports and quarterly newsletters. The Office completed another round of town halls, visiting seniors in 23 communities throughout the province, to continue to increase awareness of the Office as well as hear from seniors. These town halls also offer opportunity to educate on issues such as ageism.

The Office continued its work on the development of the first-ever Clinical Guidelines for Social Isolation and Loneliness with the Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health (CCSMH). Our Office represented Newfoundland and Labrador on this national panel, and the guidelines were published in February 2024.

The Office remains committed to supporting seniors' community organizations. We participate in senior events in the community, typically with a booth set up, where promotional items are in high demand. Having the booth allows for engagement with a high number of seniors who are at the event, many of whom are interested in hearing about our office and our work for seniors.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The most significant and concerning challenge for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate is achieving the powers and duties as set out in the **Seniors' Advocate Act (ACT)** with the limited staffing resources. The **ACT** states that the Office of the Seniors' Advocate is established to:

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

With just two Systemic Advocacy Consultants and the Advocate, the challenge to meet the mandate of the Office and address the systemic issues facing approximately 131,214 people 65 years and older (24.4% of the overall population) and 255,187 people 50 years and older (47.4% of the overall population) in the province is almost impossible.

Further, the skill sets required to complete the required statistical and data analysis to inform the policy and program recommendations is not within the current human resource complement.

Another critical issue that is negatively impacting the Office's ability to achieve its' mandate is the fact that many of the individual issues relate to the health care system, however, without the authority within the **ACT** to investigate the matters and the associated investigatory

provisions within the legislation, it is challenging to define the problems and solutions at a systemic level.

Another challenge this year for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate was the Review of the Statutory Offices of the House of Assembly. A significant amount of time was spent preparing the written submission to the Review of Statutory Offices, which included rigorous research on other existing Office of the Seniors' Advocate's and statutory offices, a review of all the Office's activities/engagements etc. since its establishment in 2017, and various applicable **Acts**. A few months later, the Office prepared for an in-person interview with the Review of Statutory Offices, which again required significant preparation. The overall need to "defend" the office, as well as the inevitable questions arising as to the future of the Office while the review was occurring, was a challenge.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are based on information provided in the Report on Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for Year Ended 31 March 2024.

	Actual	Estimates	
	\$	Amended	Original
	\$	\$	\$
OFFICE OF THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE			
<i>Current</i>			
7.1.01. OFFICE OF THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE			
01. Salaries	450,330	461,200	461,200
Operating Accounts:			
<i>Employee Benefits</i>	2,650	5,700	5,700
<i>Transportation and Communications</i>	30,847	53,600	61,900
<i>Supplies</i>	3,913	5,000	5,000
<i>Professional Services</i>	2,482	9,000	9,000
<i>Purchased Services</i>	48,477	50,200	44,000
<i>Property, Furnishings and Equipment</i>	10,056	10,100	8,000
02. Operating Accounts	98,425	133,600	133,600
Total: Office of the Seniors' Advocate	548,755	594,800	594,800

CONTACT



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Office of the

SENIORS' ADVOCATE

Newfoundland and Labrador