



# **Annual Performance Report**

## **2017-2019**





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## MESSAGE FROM THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE

I am pleased to present the first Annual Performance Report for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate covering 2017 - 2019. The Office was created late in 2017 so this first Annual Report will include November and December of 2017 up to March 31, 2019.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** provisions for a Category Three entity. As the Seniors' Advocate I recognize my obligations under the Act and I am accountable for the results reported herein.

I am pleased that there has been positive response to the establishment of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate. These past months have been a time of establishing a firm foundation for the Office. We are very proud of the work we have accomplished thus far, beginning with establishing a physical and online presence: securing office space, hiring personnel, creating a web page, developing a brand and writing a multi-year Activity Plan.

We have also been meeting with many seniors throughout the province and prioritizing the issues to be addressed by the Office of the Seniors' Advocate as well as laying the groundwork for future activities. During this inaugural year, we have become aware of a number of systemic issues and preliminary work has begun.

We have been encouraged by the collegial and collaborative working relationships that have been forged and will continue to grow.

As this province's first Seniors' Advocate it is a privilege to have so many opportunities to hear first-hand how seniors feel about the challenges and joys of growing older. And while not all of the experiences relayed to me are pleasant, everything I hear is so very important because that is how we advocate for change.

Sincerely,

**Suzanne Brake, PhD**  
**Seniors' Advocate**

## OVERVIEW

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate was created through the **Seniors' Advocate Act** which was proclaimed on December 14, 2016. The Act and Regulations came into force on July 5, 2017. Authority and duties for the Office are outlined in the Act.

Dr. Suzanne Brake was appointed as Newfoundland and Labrador's first Seniors' Advocate on November 7, 2017. Dr. Brake's first term is for six years. Each year the Seniors' Advocate must report to the House of Assembly through the Speaker of the House of Assembly on the exercise and performance of her powers and duties under the Act.

For the purposes of the Act, seniors are identified as individuals aged 65 years or older, or less than 65 years of age and in receipt of seniors' service. "Seniors' services" are the 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. "Service providers" means the public or private persons or bodies prescribed in the regulations who fund or deliver, in whole or in part, seniors' services.

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate addresses systemic seniors' issues, which are problems in an overall system impacting a number of seniors. For additional details on the Office, including its mandate, vision and lines of business please visit <https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/> or <https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/OfficeOfTheSeniorsAdvocate2018-2020ActivityPlan.pdf> to review the 2018-2020 Activity Plan.

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate has four staff: the Advocate, two Systemic Advocacy Consultants and an Administrative Officer. The Seniors' Advocate is an independent Officer of the House of Assembly and reports directly to the Legislature through the Speaker. All other staff members are part of the Public Service of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate serves the entire province and is based in St. John's. Personnel may be contacted in-person, via telephone (toll free), email, fax, mail or through the website.

The House of Assembly Management Commission approved an annual budget for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate of \$500,000 for fiscal year 2018-2019:

|                                     |                   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Salaries                            | \$ 386,400        |
| Employee Benefits                   | 5,700             |
| Transportation and Communications   | 48,900            |
| Supplies                            | 5,000             |
| Professional Services               | 9,000             |
| Purchased Services                  | 44,000            |
| Property, Furnishings and Equipment | 1,000             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        | <b>\$ 500,000</b> |

During the first months of operation, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate engaged in a process to determine how to ensure the achievement of our mandate as outlined in the Act. Using our lines of business: systemic advocacy, collaboration and public awareness, we developed the values which underlie the operations of the Office. The Office is 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.

| <b>Value</b> | <b>Action Statement</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Independence | 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 the review process. Every effort will be made to provide timely, accurate and fair recommendations. |
| Respect      | Every individual in contact with the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will be treated with respect. Differing opinions will be valued in an open, collaborative spirit.                                                                          |
| Diversity    | Every person is unique and the seniors' population, as a group, are not all alike. Differences in experiences and opinions will be welcomed and used to build an open, accepting and strong service to the public.                              |

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|             |                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Empowerment | This office will support and encourage seniors to use their voices. Seniors will know that their issues are important and that they have a role in making positive changes. |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Whenever possible, documents produced by the Office of the Seniors' Advocate follow clear language guidelines by using plain text and setting up pages with a left-side alignment. Documents also follow Canadian National Institute for the Blind's accessibility guidelines. In this Report, bold fonts are used rather than italics or underlining. As well, the font is a san-serif style in a minimum 12-point size.

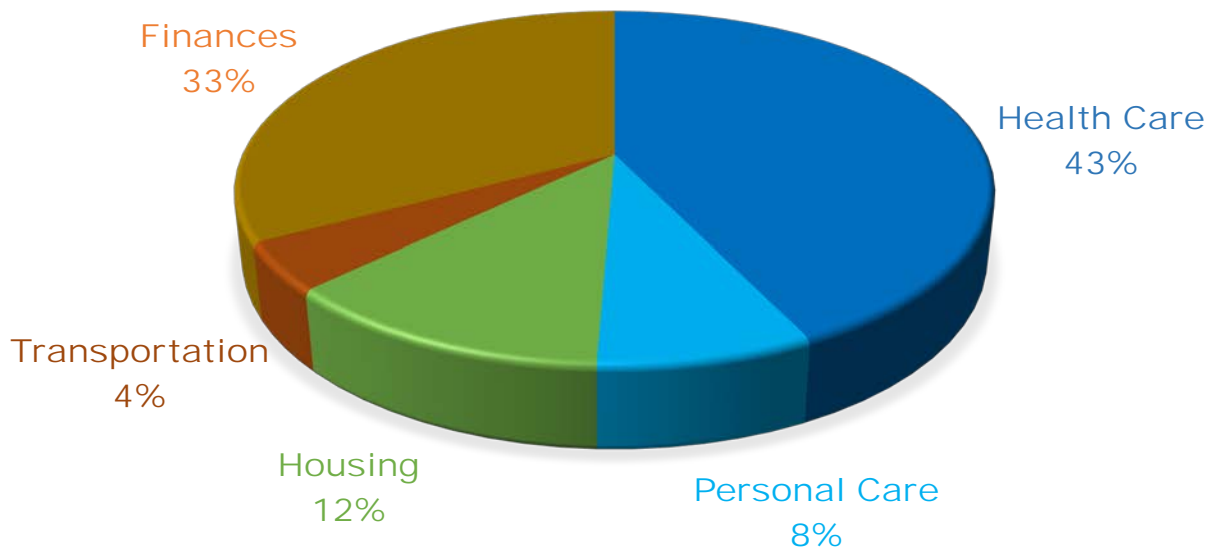




## HIGHLIGHTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

During the reporting period of November 7, 2017 to March 31, 2019, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate engaged in many activities including systemic advocacy, education, outreach and public engagement. Highlights of this time period include:

- A report outlining what the Office of the Seniors' Advocate has heard from seniors is under development and will be released in 2019. During 2017 - 2019, the issues uppermost on the minds of seniors are shown in the chart below. It must be noted, however, that most of the issues do not simply belong in just one category; overlap can occur. For example, poor oral health because seniors cannot afford a dentist would be classified as a "health care" issue, but there is a very strong link to "finances".



- Ongoing networking opportunities with seniors' organizations and retiree groups.
- A Consultation Paper with recommendations was presented to the 2018 Taxation Review Committee.

- A Presentation was offered to the Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities about high electricity rates and the negative impact on seniors.  
<https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/PUBPresentation.pdf>
- A review on Older Workers and Age Friendly Workplaces is underway with a Symposium scheduled for fall 2019.
- Addressed the International Federation on Ageing Conference in Toronto, Ontario about addressing aging policy through an inclusive lens.



## REPORT ON PERFORMANCE

### ISSUE 1: OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The mandate of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate is to monitor the systemic issues which most concern seniors. This Office uses a collaborative, partnership model to engage seniors and stakeholders. The Office is committed to ongoing outreach; travelling throughout the province to meet and talk with seniors and stakeholders.

**Objective 1:** By March 31, 2019 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have undertaken measures to work collaboratively with seniors and others.

| Indicators                                                                                                      | Accomplishments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Identified and engaged seniors' organizations, community organizations, municipalities, governments and others. | <p>Participated in 40 events/information sessions in 19 communities.</p> <p>Ongoing networking opportunities with provincial Ministers (and/or their representatives) with portfolios including seniors' services, programs and/or policies.</p> <p>Met with the federal Minister of Seniors.</p> <p>Regular ongoing meetings with Canada's three other Seniors' Advocates.</p> <p>Quarterly meetings of all provincial Statutory Offices.</p> |
| Engaged SeniorsNL and the Office of the Citizen's Representative.                                               | <p>Individual concerns were referred to the Office of the Citizens' Representative, as appropriate.</p> <p>Met quarterly with SeniorsNL to discuss their data collection and prioritization of issues.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Developed and implemented an annual provincial outreach plan.                                                   | <p>Outreach ensured all regions of the province are visited and ongoing implementation is underway.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Extended offers to meet with, or offer presentations, to groups or stakeholders.                                | <p>50+ Clubs assisted with arranging information sessions.</p> <p>The Leaders of the provincial Indigenous groups were invited to meet with the Advocate to discuss concerns of Indigenous seniors and Elders.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

### **Discussion of Results:**

When the Seniors' Advocate was named to the position in November 2017, work to establish the Office of the Seniors' Advocate immediately began. Outreach and engagement initiatives were critical for the Advocate to introduce herself and inform the public of the mandate of the Office. The secondary purpose of in-person networking was to actually have conversations with seniors about the issues which concern them. Many connections were made with groups and organizations serving seniors throughout the province. The provincial outreach is not limited in scope so all regions of the province will be visited during the Advocate's tenure. The Advocate is committed to continuing outreach and engagement to not only inform seniors about our work, research and recommendations, but to listen and support seniors to ensure that the very best possible services and programs are in place to serve their needs.

**Objective 2:** By March 31, 2020 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have undertaken measures to work collaboratively with seniors and others.

### **Indicators:**

- Continued engagement of seniors' organizations, community organizations, municipalities, governments and others.
- Engaged SeniorsNL and the Office of the Citizen's Representative.
- Continued implementation of a provincial outreach plan.
- Extended offers to meet with, or offer presentations, to groups or stakeholders.



## ISSUE 2: PUBLIC AWARENESS

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate will inform the public of its duties and powers and the operation of the Office. As well, the Office will promote awareness of systemic issues impacting seniors.

**Objective 1:** By March 31, 2019 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have undertaken measures to promote increased awareness of its role, powers and duties.

| Indicators                                   | Accomplishments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Developed a Website.                         | The website was launched June 2018 during Seniors' Month. Its purpose is to inform the public of issues and activities and to solicit input. For electronic communication, the public may use email or an online Public Engagement Form.                                                                                                             |
| Developed and distributed Information Cards. | Educational/promotional Office of the Seniors' Advocate Information Cards.<br><a href="https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/OSA-InformationSheet.pdf">https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/OSA-InformationSheet.pdf</a>                                                                                                                            |
| Participated in media interviews.            | The Advocate participated in 10 media interviews.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Produced news releases.                      | Four news releases were issued as well as an information/opinion piece for the Telegram.<br><a href="https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/newsreleases.aspx">https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/newsreleases.aspx</a><br><a href="https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/MessageBoardArchive.aspx">https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/MessageBoardArchive.aspx</a> |

### Discussion of Results:

This being the foundational period for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate, a major focus was on establishing an easily recognizable physical and online presence. The Office undertook branding activities such as creating a logo and building a website.

Promotional materials such as information cards, business cards, letterhead, inscribed pens and notebooks were designed and distributed. Media interviews and newspaper articles help promote the issues which are important to seniors.

**Objective 2:** By March 31, 2020 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to promote increased awareness of its role, powers and duties.

**Indicators:**

- Updated the Website.
- Explored social media outlets.
- Distributed Information Cards.
- Developed and distributed other promotional materials.
- Participated in media interviews.
- Produced news releases and opinion pieces.



### ISSUE 3: TRACKING AND TRENDING

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate uses a collaborative, partnership model for data collection and the monitoring of systemic issues impacting seniors.

**Objective 1:** By March 31, 2019, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have identified and monitored systemic seniors' issues.

| Indicators                                                              | Accomplishments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Established protocols to identify and monitor systemic seniors' issues. | Every issue brought to the attention of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate is collected in the HPE Records Management System. For this inaugural year the database's tracking capability was used as the primary tool for two purposes to: 1. to determine which issues are systemic in nature and 2. rank each issue in order of importance based on the number of times it has been brought to the attention of the Office. |
| Developed an electronic records management system.                      | The HPE Records Management System was customized to suit the needs of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate, which is primarily tracking. All contacts with the Office are entered into this database. All Office staff received training on the System. The Administrative Officer is responsible for administration and maintenance of the System.                                                                             |
| Received and reviewed matters related to seniors.                       | Three hundred and twenty (320) seniors contacted the Office of the Seniors' Advocate in this time period. More than 1330 individuals attended networking and information sessions with the Office to share their personal experiences with the Advocate. Categories of the issues which concern seniors: health care, personal care, housing, transportation and finances.                                                     |

**Discussion of Results:** The HPE Records Management System works well as a sorting and tracking tool. However, this tool cannot assist the Office of the Seniors' Advocate in monitoring emerging (or potential) issues which may not yet be of concern for seniors, but may become so in the near future. For emerging issues, the Office may work to raise public awareness of the issue(s) as a preventative measure. One example is older workers' attachment to the labour market and implications for employers as well as pensions and benefits programs. This issue has been brought to the attention of the Office just a few times; however, research and Federal-Provincial-Territorial seniors'

activities indicates this is an area which will receive more attention in coming years. In this instance the Office and its partners including the Board of Trade, the Harris Centre, Older Workers NL, Departments of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour and Children, Seniors and Social Development are working to heighten awareness by hosting a Symposium in 2019.

**Objective 2:** By March 31, 2020, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to identify and monitor systemic seniors' issues.

**Indicators:**

- Continued enhancement of protocols to identify and monitor systemic seniors' issues.
- Enhanced the electronic records management system.
- Received and reviewed matters related to seniors.

**ISSUE 4: REVIEWS**

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate was established to identify, review and analyze the systemic issues related to seniors. The Office will make recommendations to service providers to bring about positive changes to improve seniors' services. The public will be informed about reviews and actions resulting from the reviews.

| <b>Indicators</b>                                         | <b>Accomplishments</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Identified areas where a systemic review is warranted.    | Issues this year include oral health, electricity rates, age-friendly banks, housing and homelessness, vehicle insurance rates, older workers and long term care.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Conducted research.                                       | All systemic issues require significant research. Research includes literature reviews, jurisdictional scans, consultations, surveys, focus groups and interviews.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Consulted with seniors, service providers and the public. | More than 320 people contacted the Office of the Seniors' Advocate while another 1330 connected through outreach. Numerous service providers such as employees of regional health authorities, NL Housing, Gathering Place, municipalities, SeniorsNL and so on also consulted with the Office. All contact (in-person, electronically, mail and via telephone) informs, solicits information and |



|                                              |                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                              | ensures the path of the Office is agreed upon by seniors.                                                      |
| Made recommendations and informed the public | The public are informed of findings via in-person meetings and on the Office of the Seniors' Advocate webpage. |

**Objective 1:** By March 31, 2019, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have undertaken systemic review(s) where necessary.

**Discussion of Results:** Some issues brought to the attention of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate are individual issues which are outside the scope of the Act. In these instances, the person is given as much assistance as possible before being referred elsewhere. Because all of the calls to the Office are entered into the Office database, if an individual issue occurs several times, it may develop into a systemic issue. A number of these issues were identified for review. While some preliminary reviews have concluded with no need for additional analysis at this time, others warrant more in-depth study. Research of systemic issues may result in: reports with recommendations; reports with findings but without recommendations; opinion pieces; correspondence and presentations. As well, there are emerging issues that will likely become more significant in the near future. It is worth noting that without exception, all of the systemic issues raised thus far are not new. Seniors have always been concerned about health care, personal care, housing, transportation and finances. Policy makers and service providers have been aware (in varying degrees) of these issues. The establishment of the Office and its work is providing a way to systematically focus on the "big picture" issues.

**Objective 2:** By March 31, 2020, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to implement systemic review(s) where necessary.

**Indicators:**

- Identified areas where a systemic review is warranted.
- Conducted research.
- Consulted with seniors, service providers and the public.
- Made recommendations and informed the public.

**ISSUE 5: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILING**

The population of this province is aging. This change should bring about a shift in how aging and the aging process are viewed. For policy-makers and service providers this also means that programs, policies and services must adapt. Demographic profiling will outline socioeconomic factors pertaining to seniors.

**Objective 1:** By March 31, 2019 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have initiated a demographic profile of NL seniors.

| Indicators                                                                                                                        | Accomplishments                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Collected demographic information in a range of areas including personal care, health care, housing, transportation and finances. | Initiated collection of demographic information on health care, personal care, housing, transportation and finances is helping the Office of the Seniors' Advocate develop a portrait of seniors in this province. |
| Analyzed demographic information as provided.                                                                                     | Demographic information and statistics are analyzed on an ongoing basis.                                                                                                                                           |

**Discussion of Results:** With the collection and analysis of data, a clearer picture of seniors in this province is emerging. That being said, a number of barriers have been encountered in soliciting and analyzing the data: firstly, data requests may be readily available while others take more time to gather. In these instances data may become outdated very quickly. Another barrier has to do with how data is collected and categorized in age ranges. Most data collection tools tend to group all people older than 65 under the heading "65 Plus". While that categorization may have been suitable during a time when lifespans were shorter and population numbers past 65 were fewer, that is no longer the case. Data collections need to be amended so as to break down age groups further and use "plus" only when those numbers are insignificant, from a sampling perspective.

**Objective 2:** By March 31, 2020 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have developed a demographic profile of NL seniors.

**Indicators:**

- Continued collection of demographic information in a range of areas including personal care, health care, housing, transportation and finances.
- Continued analysis of demographic information as provided.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Without a doubt, these first months of operation have been a time of great learning and growth; trial and error; plans versus practicality.

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate is directly responsible for addressing the systemic issues impacting seniors. For seniors aged 65 and older, that translates to approximately 108,000 people; however, if the age group is expanded to include people who use seniors' services or self-identify as seniors, that cohort could be as many as 230,000 people – roughly 50 per cent of the entire population of Newfoundland and Labrador. We would be remiss if we did not comment on the challenges of undertaking large or broad reviews. Systemic reviews are very labour intensive and time consuming. And while not impossible, there are significant human resource challenges for a small office.

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate has encountered difficulties regarding individual advocacy. The Office has no legislative authority to advocate for the concerns of individual seniors. At times, this constraint presents a challenge for the Office, especially if there is a sense that the senior may still not have his or her advocacy needs fully met. When a frustrated or very upset senior reaches out for help, the Office staff respectfully address their concerns, if possible, rather than refer them on to another office or organization.

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate has established a comfortable, compassionate environment where seniors feel at ease telling their experiences and expressing concerns. Seniors know that their voices are being heard. From the very beginning, the Seniors' Advocate was adamant that the approach of the Office would be collegial and collaborative and that philosophy has served the Office very well. In that spirit, the Office will further enhance the engagement of seniors.

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate has engaged policy makers and service providers in formal and informal discussions. Discussing possible solutions and advocating for change can be easy. Implementing solutions and shifting to new ways of doing and thinking can be difficult and uncomfortable. The Office will continue to work with partners to affect change.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are based on information provided in the **Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for Year Ended 31 March 2019**.

|                                                | <u>Actual</u>         | <u>Estimates</u> |                 |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------|
|                                                | <u>Actual</u>         | <u>Amended</u>   | <u>Original</u> |
|                                                | \$                    | \$               | \$              |
| <b>OFFICE OF THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE</b>         |                       |                  |                 |
| <i>Current</i>                                 |                       |                  |                 |
| <b>7.1.01. OFFICE OF THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE</b> |                       |                  |                 |
| 01. Salaries                                   | <b>326,146</b>        | 386,400          | 386,400         |
| Operating Accounts:                            |                       |                  |                 |
| <i>Employee Benefits</i>                       | <b>500</b>            | 5,700            | 5,700           |
| <i>Transportation and Communications</i>       | <b>11,648</b>         | 46,500           | 48,900          |
| <i>Supplies</i>                                | <b>2,769</b>          | 5,000            | 5,000           |
| <i>Professional Services</i>                   | -                     | 9,000            | 9,000           |
| <i>Purchased Services</i>                      | <b>35,144</b>         | 44,000           | 44,000          |
| <i>Property, Furnishings and Equipment</i>     | <b>3,324</b>          | <u>3,400</u>     | <u>1,000</u>    |
| 02. Operating Accounts                         | <b><u>53,355</u></b>  | <u>113,600</u>   | <u>113,600</u>  |
| <b>Total: Office of the Seniors' Advocate</b>  | <b><u>379,501</u></b> | <u>500,000</u>   | <u>500,000</u>  |





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