



Message from the Advocate

It's hard to believe the holiday season is here and we are nearing the end of 2023... and what a productive year it has been!

In our first newsletter, which was last December, I reflected on the work of my Office since my appointment as Seniors' Advocate six months prior. Well, it's one year later and I can tell you that a lot has been achieved and I would like to note a few of the highlights.

My Office committed to reporting annually to the public on the status of all recommendations made by this Office. I am pleased to say that we have now produced two status reports which you can read [here](#) on our webpage. We have seen progress in those recommendations being advanced. In addition, this year my Office released 12 new recommendations in our **What Golden Years?** report. We will issue a status report on the progress of all outstanding recommendations next fall. We've had the pleasure of meeting with, and hearing from, hundreds of seniors in approximately 30 communities to understand your issues and hear your ideas.

In March we released the results of our extensive public engagement process. As you may know, we had an unprecedented response to the sessions and our online survey and I thank you so much! Our [What We Heard](#) report details the issues seniors are experiencing.

So, as we advance into 2024, my Office will continue to advocate for improved programs and services for seniors. I will offer my voice to raise your concerns and highlight the issues which are most important to seniors.

From all of us at the Office of the Seniors' Advocate, we wish you all a season of joy and a new year full of health and happiness.

Susan



WHAT GOLDEN YEARS?

On November 14 the Seniors' Advocate released a 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 consultation process that heard from approximately 1,400 seniors.

Thirty-two per cent of NL seniors reported not having enough income to meet their financial needs and were unable to afford food, rent, medications and required medical services. This is contributing to poorer health outcomes and reduced quality of life.

Twelve (12) recommendations were made to a number of government departments to begin to address some of the cost of living concerns expressed by seniors.

The recommendations include:

- 1) Indexing the NL Seniors' Benefit;
- 2) Reviewing both the maximum family net income threshold to receive the full NL Seniors' Benefit and the phase out rate;
- 3) Exempting seniors in receipt of GIS from having to pay for their required home supports;
- 4) Exempting households with a family net income of less than \$29,402 from having to pay for their required home supports;
- 5) Implementing the Food First NL recommendation for a shared food delivery service to ensure food can be delivered to seniors if necessary;
- 6) Increasing the amount of money per kilometer people traveling for medical appointments are eligible to receive through the Medical Transportation Assistance Program (MTAP); and
- 7) Providing all people age 65 years and older free access to the high-dose influenza vaccine.

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate NL will monitor the implementation of the recommendations and report on progress annually in the Status Report on Recommendations.



ADVOCACY

ACTIONS

Issue:

On September 28, 2023 the Minister of Health and Community Services, announced increased monthly rates provided for government-subsidized beds in personal care homes (PCH) and community care homes. While this rate increase is a welcome move forward, demonstrating the important role of PCHs in providing care for individuals throughout the province, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate has been contacted by numerous private-pay residents and family members who have been notified that their rates will also increase. These seniors are very concerned about the significant increase in their rate as well as the fact that some have received just 30-day notice of the increase and fear not having time to explore alternate options and ultimately eviction if they cannot afford the increased rate.

OSA Action:

On October 19 the Seniors' Advocate issued a news release asking all PCH Operators to pause rate increases for private-pay residents until all such residents have undergone a financial reassessment process and/or have had time to explore their options. Specifically, she asked that private-pay residents receive a minimum notice of 90-days before PCHs implement the new rates. Further, the Seniors' Advocate requested that the Department of Health and Community Services provide aggregate data on the outcome of the financial reassessment process.

Response:

We are most pleased that the PCHs are providing support to private-pay residents impacted by the rate increase. As well, the Department of Health and Community Services has provided information on the ongoing financial reassessment process. While the volume of reassessments is low, the process is ongoing. We will continue to monitor this process.

ADVOCACY

ACTIONS

Issue:

Raising shared concerns with other provincial seniors' advocates and representatives of the federal government.

OSA Action:

The provincial Seniors' Advocates from NL and BC, and NB met in Ottawa during November 27-29 to discuss issues impacting seniors. The Advocates met with the Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Minister responsible for seniors. They also met with the National Seniors Caucus Chair, MP Joanne Thompson. Discussions centred on a national dental care program, differences between provinces on costs for home support, housing needs of seniors and the cost of living.



Response:

In follow-up to meeting with the previous Federal Minister for Seniors, Kamal Khara, and the current Minister for Seniors, the Honourable Seamus O'Regan to advocate for the advancement of the dental care plan for seniors, we were pleased to see a date announcement on this. Please see the brochure on the pages 12 and 13.



ADVOCACY

ACTIONS

Issue:

Homelessness and housing insecurity amongst seniors throughout the province.

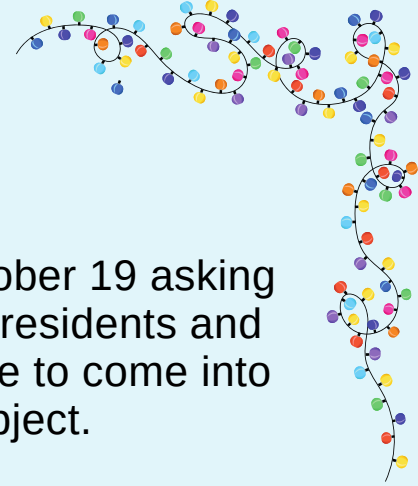
OSA Action:

On October 31, 2023 the Seniors' Advocate and End Homelessness wrote Premier Andrew Furey to request 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 is supported by a number of community partners: The Gathering Place, Connections for Seniors, Seniors NL, Transition House Association of NL, Stella's Circle, Iris Kirby House, the Salvation Army St. John's Downtown Ministries, Wiseman Centre and the Ches Penney Centre of Hope. Recognizing that the housing crisis affects all age groups, we recommended that the initial focus of the All-Party Committee on the Housing Crisis be on seniors because of these recent trends and the overall vulnerability of many seniors. Furthermore, the number of seniors who are homeless is likely much higher than indicated by the number visiting shelters because many seniors are couch-surfing, living in uninsulated trailers, and other inappropriate, and often unsafe, arrangements. We also recognize that housing is being addressed in other government initiatives, such as the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. However, we believe that a dedicated All-Party Committee is required to target the underlying causes of homelessness, to enable full participation of those with lived expertise and community partners, and to co-create the housing solutions rooted in national and international best practices.

Response:

While we have not yet received a response from the government to our October letter, on November 30 the provincial government did announce the formation of a Task Force on Homelessness. The announcement stated the Task Force will have provincial and municipal government representation as well as from community groups. We will continue to work with our community partners to monitor the work and progress of this Task Force and its focus on the housing crisis on a provincial level and specifically for seniors.





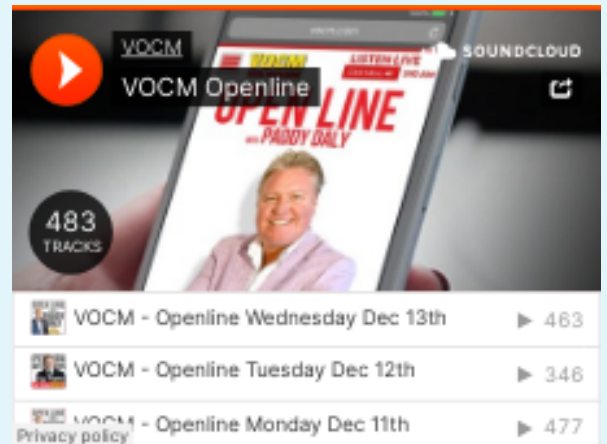
Media Interviews

After the Seniors' Advocate issued a news release on October 19 asking all PCH Operators to pause rate increases for private-pay residents and to offer these residents a longer notice for the rate increase to come into effect, there were a number of media interviews on the subject.

Listen here!



Live Radio
Radio One and CBC Music
cbc.ca



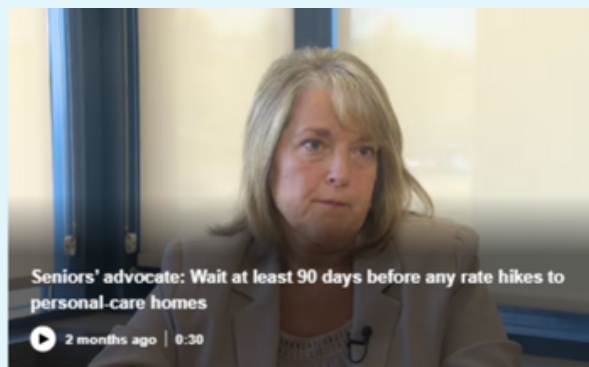
VOCM Openline
483 TRACKS
VOCM - Openline Wednesday Dec 13th ▶ 463
VOCM - Openline Tuesday Dec 12th ▶ 346
VOCM - Openline Monday Dec 11th ▶ 477
Privacy policy

Read here!



Senior's advocate Susan Walsh says senior residents in care homes not...
Walsh says while she agrees an increase is necessary, it doesn't leave private pay...
100.1 BayFM

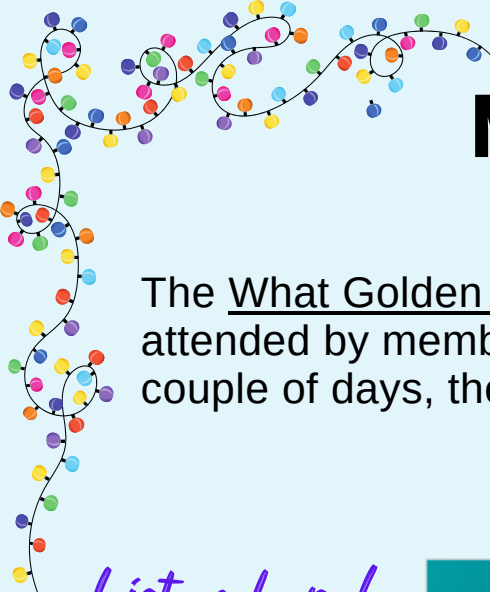
Watch here!



Seniors' advocate: Wait at least 90 days before any rate hikes to personal-care homes
2 months ago | 0:30

<http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2275031619722>





Media Interviews

The What Golden Years? Report was launched on November 14 and was attended by members of the media. After the launch, and over the next couple of days, the Seniors' Advocate gave several media interviews.

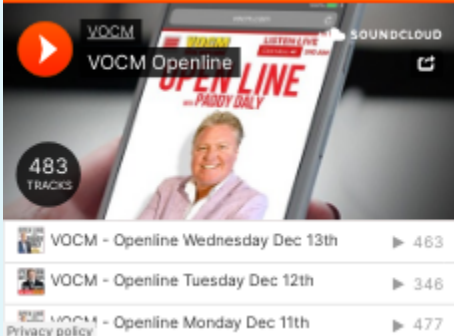
Listen here!



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Read here!

<https://vocm.com/2023/11/14/seniors-advocate-releases-what-golden-years-report-on-cost-of-living>

NL Seniors' Advocate met with seniors on the west coast about not being able to afford home...

Susan Walsh says the co-pay for home care is about 18 percent of their family income and seniors can't afford it.

100.1 BayFM

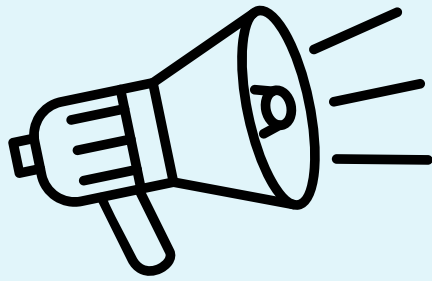
Watch here!



Evening Newshour

The province's top-rated newscast and most-watched program, NTV's flagship show features the top local, national and international news stories of the day,...





Town Hall Meetings with the Seniors' Advocate

In June we announced that the Seniors' Advocate would be travelling throughout the province during the fall and winter to network with seniors, provide an update on our work and to seek input from seniors on her current and future recommendations to government.

This fall the Advocate visited 15 communities and had more than 500 seniors come out to meet, talk and listen.

We plan a similar engagement process over the winter and spring. If your organization/group would like to meet with Susan in the winter/spring, please call 709-729-6603, 1-833-729-6603 (toll free) or email: seniorsadvocate@seniorsadvocatenl.ca.

We have already heard from some locations interested in winter/spring sessions, so please reach out as soon as possible if your organization would like to be included.

Keep checking our website, social media or contact our office to learn more about upcoming sessions!

Office of the SENIORS' ADVOCATE Newfoundland and Labrador				TOWN HALL MEETINGS WITH NL'S SENIORS' ADVOCATE FALL 2023 SESSIONS			
WESTERN							
DATE	TIME	50+ GROUP	LOCATION				
November 8, 2023	10:00 am	Evening Breeze 50+ Club	Recreation Centre, Main Road, Sopps Arm/ Pollards Point				
November 8, 2023	2:30 pm	Stephenville Seniors Citizens 50+ Club	129 Queen St., Stephenville				
November 9, 2023	11:00 am	Jolly 50+ Club	Jolly 50+ Club, 13 Main Street, Burgeo				
November 10, 2023	10:00 am	Funtastics 55+ Club Inc.	Town Hall, Main Road, Woody Point				
November 10, 2023	1:00 pm	Gros Morne Seniors 50+ Club	Gros Morne 50+ Club, 1-5 Hiscock's Lane, Norris Point				
November 10, 2023	4:30 pm	Curling Seniors 50+ Club *MEMBERS ONLY*	St. Mary's Anglican Church, 456 Curling Street, Corner Brook				
CENTRAL							
DATE	TIME	50+ GROUP	LOCATION				
November 14, 2023	3:30 pm	Alexander Bay 50+ Club	Lions Club - Alexander Bay				
November 15, 2023	11:00 am	Buchans 50+ Club/Beothuk 50+ Club Buchans Junction	Lions Club, Buchans				
November 15, 2023	2:00 pm	Friendly 50+ Club	50 Main St, Grand Falls Windsor				
November 16, 2023	8:00 am	New World Island 50+ Club	Carter's Cove Community Hall				
November 16, 2023	2:00 pm	Botwood 50+ Club	1 Airbase Road, Botwood				
EASTERN							
DATE	TIME	50+ GROUP	LOCATION				
October 18, 2023	12:30 pm	Flatrock 50+ Fun Club *MEMBERS ONLY*	Red Head Park Chalet, Flatrock				
November 6, 2023	2:30 pm	Marine Golden Age 50+ Club *MEMBERS ONLY*	Holyrood Firehall				
November 22, 2023	10:30 am	New Horizons Random Citizens 50+ Club	213 Harbour Drive, Hillview				
November 22, 2023	3:30 pm	Clarenville and Area Age Friendly 50+ Club	Bill Davis Chalet, Swan Park, Clarenville				



Public Engagement

On October 5, Advocacy Consultant, Tanya Billard, participated in the City of St. John's Seniors' Day event at the Paul Reynolds Centre.



The Advocate attended a lovely luncheon and afternoon presentation on October 6 with the Marine Golden Age 50+ Club in Holyrood. It was another great opportunity to discuss the role and work of our Office and to hear their concerns.



On October 18 the Seniors' Advocate met with the seniors of the Flatrock 50+ Fun Club. It was a great opportunity to share information about our office, hear their concerns about issues impacting seniors and chat over a great lunch!

On October 20 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate and End Homelessness St. John's facilitated a session with community partners to discuss housing and homelessness issues, emerging trends, potential solutions and next steps.



Public Engagement



On November 7, Advocacy Consultant, Pamela Dawe, participated in the annual Seniors & Science Day at the Johnson Geo Centre. It was a great opportunity to speak with seniors and visit interesting demonstrations and exhibitions!

Advocacy Consultant, Tanya Billard, represented the Seniors' Advocate at the 2023 Seniors of Distinction Awards Ceremony held in St. John's, on November 9. We send congratulations to this year's recipients: Gertrude Bromley; Howard Butt; Sarah Foster; Martin Brendan Hynes; Albert Legge; Joyce Morgan; Fraser W. Piccott; Lorna Warford; and Angela M. Woodford.

In between Town Hall Sessions on the West Coast, on November 9 the Seniors Advocate met with representatives of the Aging and Research Centre NL (ARC-NL) in Corner Brook. It was exciting to learn of the work and plans of this dynamic organization and to discuss partnership opportunities.

On November 21 our Office was honoured to participate in an Inuit Culture Presentation by Hilary Blake of the Nunatsiavut Government. The information provided us with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Inuit of NL.

Public Engagement



The Seniors' Advocate was part of a panel on November 21 on the release of Agewell's **A Report on Abuse of Older Adults: The Issues, the System, and Recommendations**, available here: https://agewell-nih-appta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ELDER-ABUSE-REPORT_FINAL_Nov20.pdf

On November 23 the Seniors' Advocate, Susan Walsh, and Advocacy Consultant, Tanya Billard, were guest lecturers at Memorial University for a course entitled **Critical Issues in Healthy Aging**.

On December 11 the Seniors' Advocate, Susan Walsh, and Advocacy Consultant, Tanya Billard, met with seniors from the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of the Deaf (NLAD) to learn about their concerns and share the work of the Office.

CANADIAN DENTAL-CARE PLAN (CDCP)

On December 11 the federal government unveiled its new dental-care plan that will start covering some dentistry costs in 2024 for eligible seniors, children under 18 and all eligible low- and middle-income Canadians in 2025.



Government
of Canada Gouvernement
du Canada

Canadian Dental Care Plan



**Accessible.
Affordable.
Essential.**

Canada

Accessible

Oral health is an important part of our overall health and well-being.

Regular visits to an oral health professional can reduce the risk of dental decay, gum disease and other serious health issues such as cardiovascular disease and stroke.

A third of people living in Canada do not have dental health insurance. In 2022, almost one in four Canadians reported avoiding visiting an oral health professional because of the cost.

The Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) will ease financial barriers to accessing oral health care for Canadian residents with an adjusted family net income below \$90,000, who do not have dental insurance.

Affordable

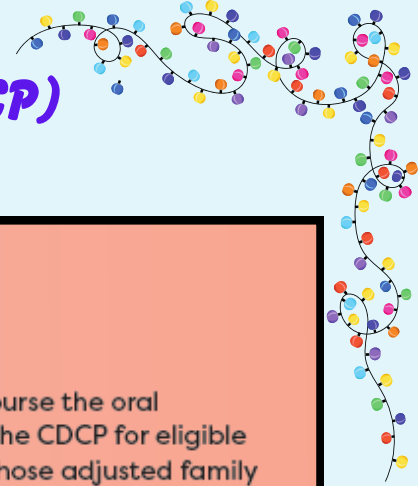
To qualify for the CDCP, you must meet all the eligibility criteria. If you have a spouse or common-law partner, you both need to meet the eligibility criteria to be able to qualify for the CDCP.

To qualify, you must:

- ✓ be a Canadian resident
- ✓ not have access to employer/pension-sponsored or private dental insurance
- ✓ have an adjusted family net income under \$90,000
- ✓ have filed your tax return in the previous year

Canadian residents who have access to dental care benefits through government social programs will be able to apply to the CDCP if they meet all the eligibility criteria.

CANADIAN DENTAL CARE PLAN (CDCP)



The CDCP will be rolled out using a phased approach, starting with seniors, adults with a valid Disability Tax Credit certificate and children under the age of 18. All remaining eligible Canadian residents between the ages of 18 and 64 will be able to apply in 2025.

Letters will be sent in phases by age group beginning in December 2023 until all potential eligible seniors who are 70 years of age or older have been invited to apply for the CDCP. All letters are expected to be delivered by end of March 2024.

Group	Applications start date
Invitation to apply by mail	
Seniors aged 87 and above	December 2023
Seniors aged 77 to 86 years	January 2024
Seniors aged 72 to 76 years	February 2024
Seniors aged 70 to 71 years	March 2024
Application online	
Seniors aged 65 to 69 years	May 2024
Adults aged 18 to 64 with a valid Disability Tax Credit certificate	June 2024
Children under 18 years old	June 2024
All remaining eligible Canadian residents	2025

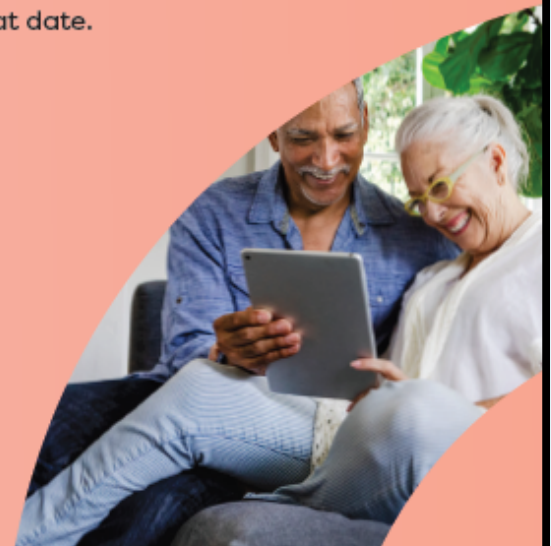
People covered under the CDCP will be reassessed annually to confirm they are still eligible.

Essential

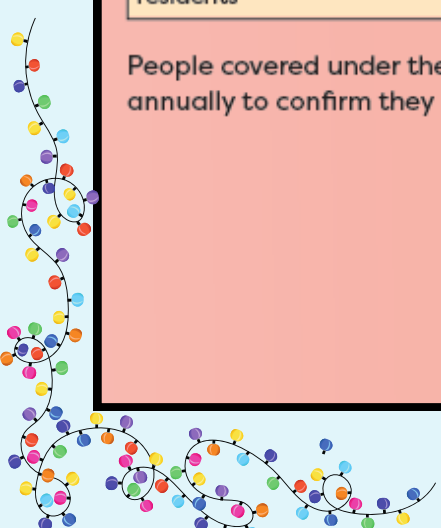
The CDCP will directly reimburse the oral health provider enrolled in the CDCP for eligible expenses. Plan members, whose adjusted family net income is over \$70,000, will be required to pay a co-payment.

Adjusted Family Net Income	Co-payment percentage
Below \$70,000	Co-payment not required.
\$70,000 - \$79,999	40 per cent co-payment required.
\$80,000 - \$89,999	60 per cent co-payment required.

Coverage will begin on the date provided in your welcome package from Sun Life. Appointments with an enrolled oral health provider should be scheduled as of that date and no sooner for the eligible oral health care services to be covered under the Plan. The CDCP will not reimburse you for oral health care services received before that date.



For more information, visit Canada.ca/dental

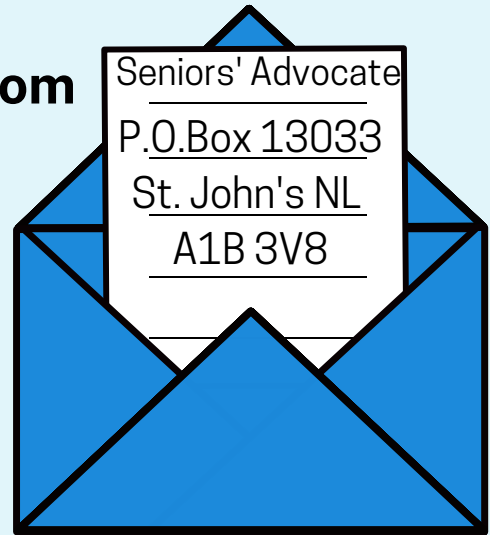




Our Team

Susan Walsh, Seniors' Advocate
Tanya Billard, Advocacy Consultant
Pamela Dawe, Advocacy Consultant
Sherri-Lee Owens, Office Administrator

To receive updates and information from the Office of the Seniors' Advocate, contact us to be added to our email list.



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