

Message from the Advocate

Happy Seniors Month Everyone!

Seniors Month is a time to recognize and celebrate the remarkable contributions seniors have and continue to make to the social and economic development of Newfoundland and Labrador.

June also marked my 1 year anniversary having the privilege of being the NL Seniors' Advocate.

What a year it has been! When I began in the position I made a commitment to hear from seniors so I could best understand their needs and represent them. I have heard from thousands of people, released three reports related to the needs of seniors, reported on government's response to recommendations of this Office and have successfully called for government action in a number of areas including improving the Personal Care Home and Long Term Care system, cost of living and housing.

We have also tried to be more accountable to seniors through our communication with such things as increased media presence, newsletters and emails, but we can always make improvements, so I welcome you to reach out to us any time with feedback.

So Seniors Month is a perfect time for myself, and my small but mighty team, to offer our sincere thanks to all of you who have engaged with us so we can better advocate on your behalf and to recognize the remarkable contributions seniors make to their families, neighbors, communities and this province.

For those wondering what they can do to recognize Seniors Month, participate in activities in your community marking the occasion; spend time with a senior in your life; volunteer with seniors; support age friendly initiatives in your community or advocate for these from your municipality; and take action to prevent ageist attitudes.

Have a wonderful Seniors Month and a happy, healthy summer season!



Susan Walsh
Seniors' Advocate NL



June is Seniors Month in Newfoundland and Labrador!!

Every day seniors are doing many wonderful things that should be commended and applauded, such as working, creating, showing and teaching.

Through their formal and informal volunteer work, seniors help so many and give so much – from their support to other seniors in their communities, volunteering at the local school, cooking and serving food and fundraising for charities. That is why each year the month of June is dedicated to celebrating and recognizing the many roles seniors play in improving the lives of individuals, families, communities and the province.



June 1st is also recognized as Intergenerational Day, which celebrates the power of all generations coming together, learning from each other and sharing. Intergenerational connections build stronger communities, enhance our well-being and reduce ageist attitudes and beliefs. These connections highlight the similarities between all generations.

Seniors Month 2023 is a great reminder of the importance of showing gratitude in the moment through words and actions and spending time with the seniors in our lives. To all seniors, we recognize you and express our heartfelt gratitude for all you have done, and continue to do, to support your family, neighbors, community and province.

Thank you!



ADVOCACY

ACTIONS

What We Heard!

On March 31 we released a report titled **What We Heard: Engagement with Seniors, Family Members and/or Caregivers, and Service Providers.**

This Report was sent to all MHAs and community partners so as to inform policy development, program delivery and spending at all levels of government.

10 Key Findings:

- ① Seniors are equally concerned about access to health care and the cost of living.
- ② The number one priority was supports to age well in their own home, followed closely by addressing the cost of living and then access to health care.
- ③ 32% of seniors do not have enough income to meet their needs.
- ④ 16% of those noting they did not have enough income to meet their needs were receiving greater income than the lowest income seniors in NL (those in receipt of GIS).
- ⑤ Seniors who do not have enough income to meet their needs (32%) report being unable to afford food (40%) and going without food (60%).
- ⑥ Seniors who do not have enough income to meet their needs do not purchase needed medical supplies and devices (57%), personal items (51%), special dietary requirements (34%) nor attend social events (60%).
- ⑦ Seniors noted inability to access primary health care providers and wait times as their most frequent unmet health care needs, which was significantly higher in Labrador.
- ⑧ Family members noted home support as the highest need for those living with dementia, followed by training and education for caregivers and family members.
- ⑨ 40% of seniors identified home repairs and maintenance around the home as needed to stay in their homes, while 46% of family members/caregivers reported home support as required.
- ⑩ 23% of seniors said they were looking for an apartment/condo and 21% wanted a senior or retirement community complex. All noted that these were not available in their community or not affordable and had long waitlists.



Next Steps

We will use this data to guide our our strategic direction toward improved services for seniors in the province. Based on these findings, we will be releasing our next recommendations report in the fall.

ADVOCACY

ACTIONS

On May 11, the Seniors' Advocate, Susan Walsh, presented to the Cabinet Committee on Seniors. Discussion centred on the **What We Heard: Engagement with Seniors, Family Members and/or Caregivers, and Service Providers** report findings and government's response to the Health Accord Recommendations.

ISSUE

Seniors having to travel to St. John's for medical services noted they should not have to pay the "accommodations tax" (also known as a tourism levy) imposed by the City of St. John's on hotels, motels, etc.

OSA ACTION

The Seniors' Advocate wrote Mayor Breen, City of St. John's, and conducted research on the matter.

RESOLUTION

While the City of St. John's noted it did not have the discretion to exempt those traveling for medical purposes, it did note that many hotels in St. John's provide reduced rates for people attending medical appointments. We have confirmed this to be accurate. Therefore, prior to confirming a reservation, call around to hotels/motels in the area to get your best discount!

ISSUE

Seniors are concerned about having to pay out-of-pocket for required drivers medical examinations (for driver's over age 75).

OSA ACTION

As mentioned in our March Newsletter, our Office has been advocating for this expense to be covered under MCP and not paid out-of-pocket by seniors (as outlined in our 2023 submission to the Budget Consultations <https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/BudgetSubmission2023.pdf>).

RESOLUTION

This recommendation was approved and announced in Budget 2023. The Department of Health and Community Services is in the process of finalizing the billing process and seniors should continue to get their medicals as required in order to maintain their driver's license. Although physicians have been requested to consider not charging the fee for the completion of the drivers medical examination form, as of April 1, 2023, if there is a requirement to pay, the Department of Health and Community Services has confirmed that these seniors will be reimbursed up to \$100. Details on the reimbursement process will be forthcoming, but it would be wise to keep receipts etc.!

June 15: World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

News Release – For Immediate Release
Office of the Seniors' Advocate Newfoundland and Labrador
June 15, 2023

Seniors' Advocate Recognizes World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging reports that the prevalence of elder abuse in Canada is increasing, which appears to be the practice experience in Newfoundland and Labrador as well. This increase is a significant concern given the under-reporting of abuse of older persons.

Elder abuse, which includes emotional, physical, sexual or financial abuse, unfortunately couples with ageist attitudes and beliefs, and people with ageist attitudes tend to believe their actions are justified. Older adults who are physically, cognitively or emotionally vulnerable, living in poverty and/or members of an underrepresented group are at increased risk.

There are actions you can take to prevent and help eradicate elder abuse. If you have concerns that a senior is experiencing abuse, report it by calling 1-855-376-4957 or contacting your local police.

Further, research shows that having social supports is a strong protective factor to guard against elder abuse, so consider:

- reaching out to offer support to the seniors in your life who may be more isolated;
- addressing ageist attitudes when you hear them; and
- promoting the value seniors have contributed, and continue to contribute, to our communities.

“Under the Adult Protection Act, we all have a legal responsibility to report suspected abuse. We must also work toward the prevention of abuse of older adults through: creating age friendly communities that enable social inclusion; educating on impact of elder abuse and ageism; and promoting services, policies and programs that respect the dignity of older adults.”

Susan Walsh
Seniors' Advocate Newfoundland and Labrador

Watch and listen to
Susan's June 15th
message



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Media Interviews



On March 30, 2023 Susan issued a news release and met with the media to discuss the release of the **What We Heard** document and the findings.

Watch here!

<https://ntv.ca/evening-newshour/>



<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/here-now-see-our-latest-episodes-from-cbc-newfoundland-and-labrador-1.4405960>



Read here!

<https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/NewsReleaseMarch30-2023.pdf>



On March 31, 2023 Susan was on Open Line speaking with Paddy Daly about the What We Heard report.

Listen here!

https://soundcloud.com/vocm/openline-friday-march-31?in=vocm/sets/vocm-openline&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing



Media Interviews

Susan spoke with Marykate O'Neill about the importance of Seniors Month which was broadcast June 4 on the NTV Sunday Evening News Hour. And on June 7 she spoke about Seniors' Month with VOCCM's Linda Swain on NEWS TALK.

Watch here!

<https://ntv.ca/province-marks-seniors-month/>



To mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, on June 15 Susan spoke with NTV's Becky Daley about the importance of this day and how seniors - and people looking out for seniors - should be vigilant!

Watch here!

<https://ntv.ca/seniors-advocate-provides-insight-on-how-to-support-seniors-on-elder-abuse-awareness-day/>



Public Engagement

On March 22, Susan met with the Parkinson's Society NL and presented to Parkinson's NL at Bishop's Gardens in St. John's. It was a great opportunity to share the work of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate and to listen to seniors on matters important to them.

Susan participated in the Volunteer Connections Conference at Emera Innovation Exchange on Signal Hill. Seniors contribute to their communities in untold volunteer hours. With an aging population and our community demographics, who will be the future volunteers? We were happy to be part of that important dialogue to inform Canada's National Strategy on Volunteerism.



Advocacy Consultant Tanya Billard presented at the Marjorie Mews Library and George Street United Church. Two wonderful opportunities to continue public awareness and education on our office and on issues important to seniors.

Susan was especially honoured to celebrate and toast the Mount Pearl Seniors Independence Group on their 25th Anniversary! Cheers to the next 25 years!



Public Engagement

Susan met with Food First NL, Local Wellness Collective and Bridges to Hope on the issue of food insecurity and its impact on seniors and raised the need for support of the food delivery system to government.

Advocacy Consultant Pamela Dawe presented at the Age-Friendly Placentia Bridging Generations Expo in Placentia on April 28 - the 8th year for this great annual event.



On June 12 we had another wonderful opportunity to meet with seniors with the Bay De Grave 50+ Club, to share information about our office, hear their concerns, answer questions and celebrate Seniors Month!



On June 15 - World Elder Abuse Awareness Day - Advocacy Consultant, Tanya Billard, showcased the work of the Office at the St. John's Citizens' Crime Prevention Committee's free event which offered information sessions to help educate people about financial scams, threat, and fraud.

COMING FALL 2023:

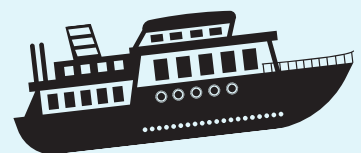
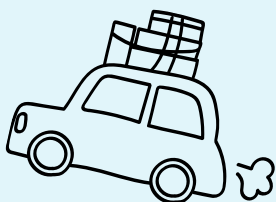


Public Engagement Sessions with the Seniors' Advocate

Beginning September 2023, the Seniors' Advocate, Susan Walsh, will be travelling throughout the province to talk with seniors and provide an update on the work of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate.

Alternatively, in September keep a close watch on our website, Twitter and Facebook page for a listing of schedules and locations.

If your organization or group would like to meet with Susan please call 709-729-6603, 1-833-729-6603 (toll free) or email: seniorsadvocate@seniorsadvocatenl.ca



Government's Review of NL's Statutory Offices

On December 5, 2022 the Provincial Government announced it had appointed Retired Supreme Court Justice Robert Fowler to conduct a review of the statutory offices that report to the House of Assembly www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2022/jps/1205n02/.

The statutory offices under review are: Commissioner for Legislative Standards; Office of the Chief Electoral Officer; Office of the Child and Youth Advocate; Office of the Citizens' Representative; Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner; and the **Office of the Seniors' Advocate**.

These statutory offices are independent of government and not directed by Cabinet or Ministers. Given the need to operate independently from Government, the offices report directly to the House of Assembly.

The Review Committee will be accepting submissions from the public until July 17, 2023. The Office of the Seniors Advocate has provided its submission to this Review and it can be read here www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/OSANLSubmissionMay15-2023.pdf.

Visit www.rsonl.ca to see the Terms of Reference, learn how you can participate, read all submissions and the final report when it is completed.



Some of the Budget Initiatives of Interest to Seniors

Federal Budget Highlights - March 28, 2023

- The next phase of the Canadian Dental Care Plan which will provide Canadians, including seniors, with access to high quality dental care (*details to come!*);
- A new grocery rebate will give seniors on average an additional \$225 (*look for this rebate with your July GST payment*);
- Starting in 2023, a refundable Multigenerational Home Renovation Tax Credit, which will provide up to \$7,500 in support for constructing a secondary suite for a senior or an adult with a disability;
- Crackdowns on predatory lending (very high interest rate loans) and junk fees (unexpected, hidden, and additional fees from internet overage charges, roaming fees, additional airline charges, etc.);
- Increases to Canada health transfers. For 2023-24 NL will receive \$664M to 1. improve access to family doctors; 2. strengthen mental healthcare services; and 3. clear backlogs and shorten wait times; and
- Encouraging more doctors and nurses to practice in rural and remote communities through student loan forgiveness.



Provincial Budget - March 23, 2023

- No new taxes or fee increases;
- Begin implementation of the Dementia Care Action Plan www.gov.nl.ca/releases/files/2023/03/23135-Dementia-Care-Action-Plan-March-30.pdf;
- Review of the provincial long-term care and personal care home programs;
- \$1.3M allocated to cover the cost of driver medicals for people age 75 and older;
- 5% increase to the Income Supplement;
- 5% increase to the Seniors' Benefit;
- Providing Metrobus or GoBus passes for people in the St. John's area in receipt of GIS;
- A new, three year, \$70M Affordable Housing Program to help construct over 850 affordable homes, with a focus on seniors;
- More than \$21M for 10 new Family Care Teams across the province to provide primary care access for up to 80,000 people when fully implemented, with more to come.
- Continuing 50% off the cost of registering passenger vehicles, light trucks, and taxis; and
- Maintaining the home heating supplement which provides up to \$500 to eligible residents.

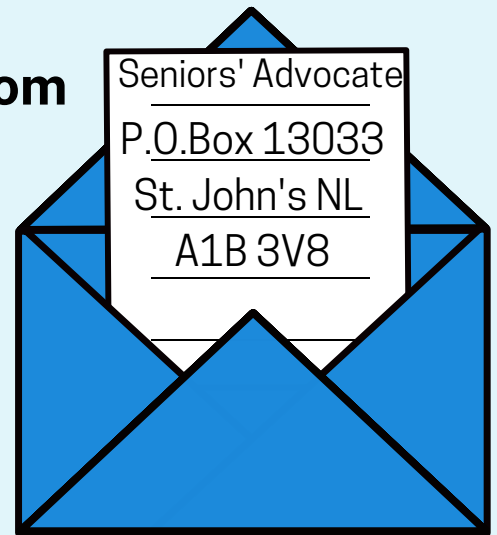
For all budget details, visit www.budget.canada.ca/2023/home-accueil-en.html AND www.gov.nl.ca/budget/2023



Our Team

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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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