

# **Annual Performance Report 2020-2021**

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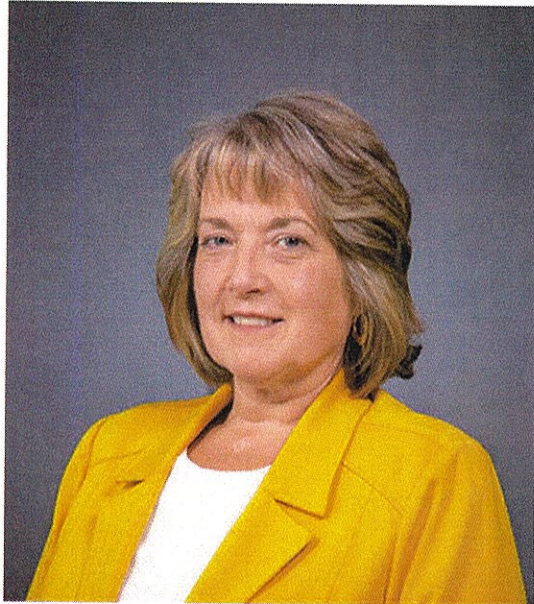
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## MESSAGE FROM THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE



I am pleased to present the 2020-2021 Annual Performance Report for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate. This report has been prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** provisions for a Category Three entity. While I was not in the position during the reporting period, as the Seniors' Advocate I recognize my obligations under the Act and I am accountable for the results reported herein.

The retirement of the previous Seniors' Advocate and my subsequent appointment has delayed the tabling of this 2021 Report until this time.

This report covers the time period when Covid-19 changed the way we conduct business; and will likely continue to impact us for the foreseeable future. Despite the challenges, seniors continue to be engaged, involved and eager participants in making life better for us all.

I welcome my new role as Newfoundland and Labrador's Seniors' Advocate and am committed to working toward the improvement of policies, programs and services for seniors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Walsh". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Susan Walsh  
Seniors' Advocate

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## 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.

Newfoundland and Labrador's first Seniors' Advocate was appointed for a six-year-term on November 7, 2017. 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 his or her powers and duties under the Act.

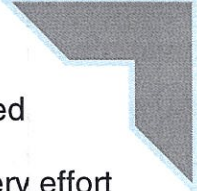
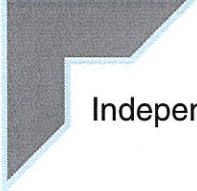
For the purposes of the Act, seniors are identified as individuals aged 65 years or older, or less than 65 years of age and in receipt of seniors' service. "Seniors' services" are the programs, services or systems of support, prescribed in the regulations, that are related to health care, personal care, 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/>.

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate has four staff: the Advocate, two Systemic Advocacy Consultants and one 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 members of the Public Service of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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


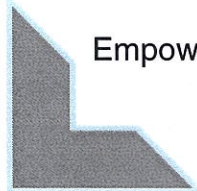
The Office of the Seniors' Advocate engaged in a process to determine how to ensure the achievement of our mandate as outlined in the Act. Using our lines of business: systemic advocacy, collaboration and public awareness, we developed the values which underlie the operations of the Office. The Office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



**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.



**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.

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.

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

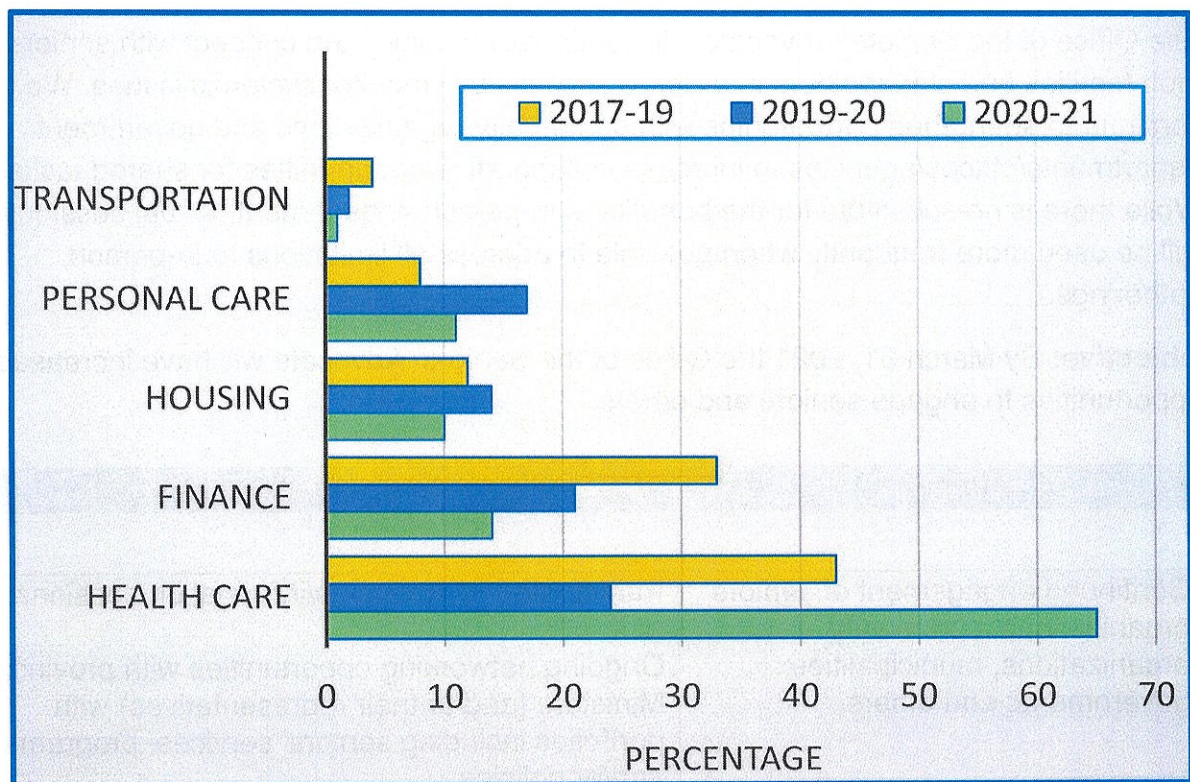
The budget approved for Fiscal Year 2020-21 was \$485,900.



## HIGHLIGHTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

During the reporting period of April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate engaged in many activities including systemic advocacy, education, outreach and public engagement. Highlights of this time period include:

- During 2020 - 2021, the most important issues brought to the Advocate's attention by seniors, families and stakeholders fell under five main categories, as demonstrated below. Since 2017, health care has consistently been the major area of concern. It should be noted, however, that Covid-19 contributed to this considerable increase in health concerns when compared to previous years.



- A Report on the November 2019 Older Workers Summit was released in January 2021. The Summit brought stakeholders together to look at older workers and the labour market and plan for the future.
- The Advocate presented to the Economic Recovery Task Force on the fiscal position of NL seniors.
- The Office participated as a member of the Health Accord NL's Aging Population Task Force.

- Ongoing networking with seniors' organizations and retiree groups continued in virtual formats.
- Participated on the Alzheimer Society of NL's Dementia Training Review committee to review of all educational modules developed for the eLearning program: *Dementia Passport*.

## REPORT ON PERFORMANCE

### ISSUE 1: OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate will continually network and connect with seniors, their families and stakeholders in order to successfully monitor systemic issues. We will continue to strengthen partnerships with community organizations and government departments/offices/agencies to increase collaborative opportunities for shared tasks. While there is no substitute for the benefits of in-person engagement, virtual sessions will be used more frequently when possible to address all limitations to in-person gatherings.

**Objective:** By March 31, 2021 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have increased opportunities to engage seniors and others.

| Indicators   | Accomplishments  |
|--|--|
| Continued engagement of seniors' organizations, community organizations, municipalities, governments and others. | <p>Participated in 16 events/information sessions.</p> <p>Ongoing networking opportunities with provincial Ministers (and/or their representatives) with portfolios including seniors' services, programs and/or policies.</p> <p>Regular meetings with Canada's other Seniors' Advocates.</p> <p>Quarterly meetings with provincial Statutory Offices.</p> <p>A member of Health Accord NL's Aging Population Task Force.</p> |



|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Alzheimer Society of NL's Dementia Training Review committee to review of all educational modules developed for the eLearning program: <i>Dementia Passport</i> .  |
| Engaged SeniorsNL, Office of the Citizen's Representative, and others.   | Individual concerns were referred as appropriate. Met semi-annually with SeniorsNL to discuss data collection, shared concerns and the prioritization of issues.   |
| Continued the development and implementation of a provincial outreach plan.  | The outreach plan to ensure connection with all regions of the province is an evolving plan. The in-person component of the plan was particularly curtailed as travel restrictions were put in place. Virtual engagement was the primary form of outreach. |
| Extended offers to meet with, or offer presentations, to groups or stakeholders, virtually or in small, physically-distanced venues. | Offers to present on, and listen to, the concerns of seniors continued to be made to seniors' organizations, community groups, businesses, governments, government departments and agencies.   |

**Discussion of Results:**

Outreach and public engagement opportunities allow the Advocate to connect with seniors, families, stakeholders and organizations on a personal level. The in-person component of the outreach plan was particularly curtailed as travel restrictions were in place. Virtual engagement was the primary form of outreach. These meetings allow the Advocate to converse with seniors about the issues and concerns which impact them. But, without a doubt, the limitations on in-person meetings impacted the comfort level and conversational tone which can only be found when meeting face-to-face. Provincial outreach will continue to be a major priority of the Seniors' Advocate as a way to both inform and learn.

## ISSUE 2: PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

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:** By March 31, 2021 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have undertaken measures to promote increased awareness of its role, duties, powers and processes.

| Indicators   | Accomplishments  |
|--|--|
| Enhanced the Website.                                  | The website is an evolving entity as it is continuously being updated as news, information and public needs change. Its purpose is to inform the public of issues and activities but also to solicit input. For electronic communication, the public may use email or an online Public Engagement Form.  |
| Explored social media outlets.                         | The Office researched the practicality of establishing an official social media presence such as Facebook and Twitter. Communication challenges due to Covid-19 has encouraged more people to engage in social media outlets as a way to stay in touch with family, friends and community. It was decided to establish an online presence via Twitter. Guidelines and protocols were developed and the account @SrsAdvocateNL was activated in October 2020. |
| Distributed Information Cards.                         | Educational/promotional Office of the Seniors' Advocate Information Cards were circulated. <a href="https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/OSA-InformationSheet.pdf">https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/OSA-InformationSheet.pdf</a>   |
| Developed and distributed other promotional materials. | Promotional materials including business cards, logo-inscribed pens and notebooks were distributed for meetings and public engagement sessions.  |
| Participated in media interviews.                      | The Advocate participated in 22 media interviews, including speaking on government's daily Covid-19 online briefing, at the invitation of the Premier.   |
| Issued news releases and opinion pieces                | News releases/messages/statements were issued <a href="https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/SeniorsAdvocateRecognizesSeniorsMonth.pdf">https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/SeniorsAdvocateRecognizesSeniorsMonth.pdf</a><br><a href="https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/NationalSeniorsDayOct1-2020.pdf">https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/NationalSeniorsDayOct1-2020.pdf</a>   |



## **Discussion of Results:**

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate has established a physical and online presence with the creation of its website, Twitter posts (@SrsAdvocateNL) and promotional materials.

The Advocate's participation in radio, television and online events has been very important in promoting the positions, advocacy activities and policies of the Office. Media interviews, news releases and print articles are also very important in promoting the issues which are important to seniors; as well as ensure that government programs and services - especially any changes to them - are communicated to the public. As well, media events have been instrumental in ensuring seniors are receiving clear communiques regarding Covid-19 directives and general information related to Covid-19.



### ISSUE 3: TRACKING, TRENDING AND IDENTIFYING

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

**Objective:** By March 31, 2021 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have identified and monitored systemic seniors' issues.

| Indicators  | Accomplishments   |
|---|---|
| Enhanced protocols and procedures 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. The database's tracking capability was used to determine which issues are systemic in nature and helping the Office monitor the frequency of issues, as well as other factors including regions or geography. This information informs this Office on the prevalence of systemic issues. |
| Enhanced the 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 of issues. The Administrative Officer is responsible for administration and maintenance of the System. Staff continue to seek ways to improve the system to ensure the data is as accurate and detailed as possible.   |
| Received and reviewed matters related to seniors.                                   | 690 individuals contacted the Office of the Seniors' Advocate during this time period to express concerns about seniors' issues. Many individuals also attended networking and information sessions with the Office (most were virtual so the numbers of participants was not always available).  |

**Discussion of Results:** The HPE Records Management System is the Office's main sorting and tracking tool. Emerging (or potential) issues which may not yet be of concern for seniors can come to the attention of the Advocate through research or other means. For such issues, the Office may choose to raise public awareness as an informative or as a preemptive measure.

#### 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 bring about positive changes to improve seniors' services. The public will be informed about reviews and actions resulting from the reviews.

**Objective 1:** By March 31, 2021, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have undertaken systemic review(s) where necessary.

| Indicators  | Accomplishments  |
|---|--|
| Identified areas where a systemic review is warranted.    | The Office of the Seniors' Advocate has identified a number of priority issues. In particular, Covid-19 revealed concerns within the long term care and personal care sector. While these issues were not all unique to Covid-19 challenges, the pandemic did expose the issues to the public, hence increasing pressure on policy-makers. The Office focused most of its attention on the plans to review the long term care sector.  |
| Conducted research.                                       | All systemic issues require significant research. Research may include literature reviews, jurisdictional scans, consultations, surveys, focus groups and interviews.  |
| Consulted with seniors, service providers and the public. | <p>More than 690 people contacted the Office directly and others connected through public engagement and community outreach sessions (mostly virtual). Service providers such as employees of regional health authorities, NL Housing, municipalities and SeniorsNL also consulted with the Office.</p> <p>An Older Workers Summit was held on November 13, 2019. The Summit brought stakeholders together to look at older workers and the labour market and plan for the future. The report on the Summit was released in January 2020.<br/> <a href="https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/OlderWorkersSummitSummaryReport2021.pdf">https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/OlderWorkersSummitSummaryReport2021.pdf</a></p> |
| Made recommendations and informed the public.             | <p>The public was informed of the Office's reviews and plans for reviews via online public engagement sessions, news releases, media, in-person meetings and on the Office of the Seniors' Advocate webpage.</p> <p>An invitation to meet with Dame Moya Greene and her team provided an opportunity to discuss the Economic Recovery Plan and potential impacts on seniors.</p>   |



**Discussion of Results:** Every issue heard by the Office is recorded in its database. The tracking system can show whether an individual issue is becoming systemic or has potential to become systemic. The Advocate decides how to address issues. When the Office of the Seniors' Advocate is asked to help resolve a non-systemic issue, the Office offers as much assistance as possible: a telephone number of an agency; referring the caller to another more suitable office, service or program. When issues are identified as within the purview of this Office's mandate for review, initial research commences to determine if more research is required or that there is no need for further exploration. Research of systemic issues may result in: reports with recommendations; reports with findings but without recommendations; opinion pieces; correspondence or presentations.



## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

A challenge for the Office is the issue of individual advocacy. Many seniors and their family members reach out to the Office seeking advocacy for their concern however the Act does not provide legislative authority to address the concerns of individual seniors. While the Office is not staffed to address individual issues, Office personnel do work diligently to try and ensure that individual issues are addressed as frequently the individual has already made numerous calls seeking help or is distressed.

Adapting work plans to a world with Covid-19 will be an ongoing challenge for the foreseeable future. Working within evolving Covid-19 Public Health Orders means that travel throughout the province and in-person public engagement activities are restricted. As well, work planning requiring in-person interviews, for example, will require adaptations. The Office will continually monitor the Public Health situation and make adjustments accordingly. Balancing safety while carrying out the mandate of the Office can be challenging but is necessary.

An ongoing challenge for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate is human resources. In addition to the Seniors' Advocate, the budget supports two Systemic Advocacy Consultants and one Administrative Officer. These four individuals serve a population of more than 120,000 people aged 65 years and older or approximately 240,000 people aged 50 years and older - roughly 50 per cent of the entire population of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Seniors' issues are important to all people and the Office is committed to a collaborative, compassionate spirit. The ability to continue to involve seniors and listen to what they have to say has been instrumental in the development of a strong rapport between seniors, families and the Advocate. As well, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate has engaged policy makers and service providers in formal and informal discussions.

## 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 2021**.

|  | Estimates      |         |          |
|--|----------------|---------|----------|
|  | Actual         | Amended | Original |
|  | \$             | \$      | \$       |
| <b>OFFICE OF THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE</b>         |                |         |          |
| <i>Current</i>                                 |                |         |          |
| <b>7.1.01. OFFICE OF THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE</b> |                |         |          |
| 01. Salaries                                   | <b>374,960</b> | 375,000 | 372,300  |
| Operating Accounts:                            |                |         |          |
| <i>Employee Benefits</i>                       | <b>500</b>     | 5,700   | 5,700    |
| <i>Transportation and Communications</i>       | <b>3,265</b>   | 45,000  | 45,900   |
| <i>Supplies</i>                                | <b>2,066</b>   | 5,000   | 5,000    |
| <i>Professional Services</i>                   | -              | 9,000   | 9,000    |
| <i>Purchased Services</i>                      | <b>31,657</b>  | 44,000  | 44,000   |
| <i>Property, Furnishings and Equipment</i>     | <b>4,836</b>   | 4,900   | 4,000    |
| 02. Operating Accounts                         | <b>42,324</b>  | 113,600 | 113,600  |
| <b>Total: Office of the Seniors' Advocate</b>  | <b>417,284</b> | 488,600 | 485,900  |

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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