



Office of the

SENIORS' ADVOCATE

Newfoundland and Labrador

**Annual
Performance
Report
2021 - 2022**



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Newfoundland and Labrador
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MESSAGE FROM THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE

I am pleased to present the 2021-2022 Annual Performance Report for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate (the Office). This report has been prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** provisions for a Category Three entity.



This report will read somewhat differently from past annual reports. The Office was without an Advocate from June 1, 2021 to June 14, 2022, as the previous Advocate retired on May 31, 2021 and I was not appointed until June of 2022 (outside the reporting period). However, as the Seniors' Advocate, I recognize my obligations under the Act and I am accountable for the results reported herein.

Another unique situation during this reporting period is that Covid-19 guidelines limited personal interactions to primarily virtual venues. During the 2021-2022 year, Office personnel addressed many calls, emails, and letters from seniors and their families throughout the province; virtually met with stakeholders and offered presentations; and conducted research for reviews. What could not happen this past year was the release of recommendations, media interviews, public engagement or the advancement of new work plans; to paraphrase Dr. Janice Fitzgerald, this year was one where the Office of the Seniors' Advocate "held fast".

In the coming months I will release a new three-year Activity Plan outlining the work the Office of the Seniors' Advocate NL will undertake. I will be reaching out to seniors and community agencies to inform this and welcome your input as I move forward to ensure the voices of seniors are heard and positive change realized.

Sincerely,

Susan Walsh
Seniors' Advocate

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OVERVIEW

The Office was created through the **Seniors' Advocate Act** (the 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.

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 in the Office 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.

VALUES

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.

CLEAR LANGUAGE

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.

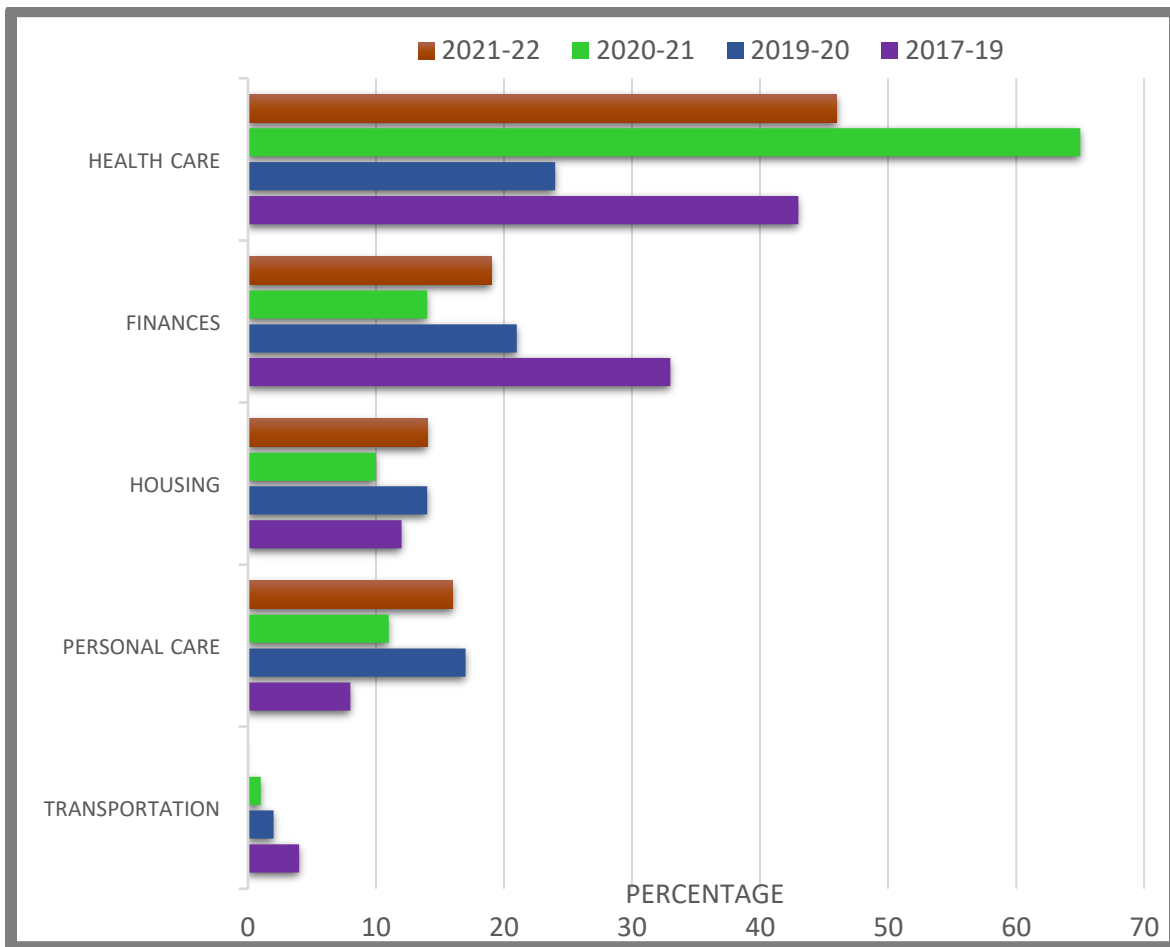
FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The budget approved for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 was \$486,700.

HIGHLIGHTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

During the reporting period of April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate engaged in many activities including systemic advocacy, education, outreach and public engagement. Highlights of this time period include:

- Issues brought to the attention of the Office have consistently been assigned to five overarching categories (outlined in the Act), as portrayed in the graph below. Since 2017, health care has consistently been the major area of concern for seniors and stakeholders. In 2020-21 there was a significant increase in Health Care issues which could be attributable to concerns about Covid-19 and Public Health directions. In 2021-22, there was a decrease in the volume of calls about Health Care concerns, when compared to the previous year. This change might be a result of people adapting to living a world with Covid-19. In spite of this decrease, Health Care issues remained the major area of concern during 2021-22.



- Participated in 76 educational sessions/conferences with local, provincial, national and international focuses.
- Presented at the “Long Term Care Day of Action Town Hall” hosted by the Canadian Federation of University Women.
- Offered community expertise on the National Dementia Strategy. The roundtable was hosted by CanAge (National Seniors’ Advocacy Organization).
- Worked with Municipalities NL to ensure the 2021 municipal elections were accessible for all. A presentation was also offered to municipalities on the process.
- Member of
- COVID-19 Seniors' Working Group

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, 2022 the Office of the Seniors’ Advocate will have increased opportunities to engage seniors and others.

Indicators	Accomplishments
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Continued engagement of seniors' organizations, community organizations, municipalities, governments and others.

Participated in 4 events/information sessions.

Engaged SeniorsNL, Office of the Citizen's Representative, and others.

Results of data collection and shared concerns were discussed as needed. Individual concerns were referred as appropriate to SeniorsNL and the Office of the Citizens' Representative.

Continued the development and implementation of a provincial outreach plan.

In the absence of a Seniors' Advocate and travel restrictions due to Covid-19, outreach was limited to discussions with the Systemic Advocacy Consultants. Most engagement was virtual or via telephone.

Extended offers to engage with groups and/or stakeholders.

Offers to present or listen to the concerns of seniors were regularly provided to seniors' organizations, community groups, businesses, governments, government departments and agencies. For 2021-22, the engagement was offered virtually or in small, physically-distanced venues.

Discussion of Results:

All outreach and public engagement opportunities allow the Seniors' Advocate to interact with seniors, families, stakeholders and organizations on a more personal level about the issues and concerns which impact them. During most of 2021-2022, such connections were challenged by two major factors: the vacancy of the Seniors' Advocate position for the majority of this reporting period and Covid-19 restrictions related to gatherings and travel. Virtual engagement was the primary form of outreach but without an Advocate, most plans were placed on hiatus. In future, provincial outreach is expected to continue to be a major priority of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate as a way to both inform and learn. Preference will continue to be for in-person meetings to ensure all participants feel comfortable and dialogue is conversational, which is a unique benefit of meeting face-to-face, however Public Health advice will ultimately inform the approach taken.

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, 2022 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.	Ongoing monitoring of the website ensures the format remains accessible and relevant. Its purpose is to inform as well as solicit input. For electronic communication, the public may use email or an online Public Engagement Form.
Explored social media outlets.	The Office continued to expand its social media presence on Twitter. Forty-three Tweets were developed and posted.
Distributed Information Cards.	Educational/promotional Office of the Seniors' Advocate Information Cards were circulated via mail as requested by individuals. https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/OSA-InformationSheet.pdf
Developed and distributed other promotional materials.	Promotional materials: business cards, logo-inscribed pens and notebooks were distributed for meetings and public engagement sessions.
Participated in media interviews.	There were 11 media requests for information and interviews. The Office's response to these was limited given there was no Advocate in place for most of the reporting period. Office staff responded to 8 of the requests, providing factual written information.
Issued news releases and opinion pieces	News releases/messages/statements were issued https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/SeniorsAdvocateRecognizesSeniorsMonth.pdf https://www.seniorsadvocatenl.ca/pdfs/NationalSeniorsDayOct1-2020.pdf

Discussion of Results:

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate continues to avail of opportunities to promote its activities and inform the public. Participation in radio, television and online events has been critical for sharing views, activities and policies of the Office. However, during 2021-22, media interviews, news releases and print articles were minimal due to the vacancy of the Seniors' Advocate position. Communiques to the media and public at large were the responsibility of the Systemic Advocacy Consultants during this time and were therefore consigned to factual, public content without offering opinions which could be construed as a position of the Seniors' Advocate.

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, 2022 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have identified and monitored systemic seniors' issues.

Discussion of Results:

Indicators	Accomplishments
Enhanced protocols and procedures to identify and monitor systemic seniors' issues.	All issues brought to the attention of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate are collected in the HPE Records Management System. The database's tracking capability is one tool used to determine whether issues are systemic. The database also shows trends: ongoing or emerging. Other factors such as age, gender, and geography also inform the Office in prioritizing issues for further review or analysis.
Enhanced the electronic records management system.	The HPE Records Management System was customized to suit the needs of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate. The Administrative Officer is responsible for administration and maintenance of the System. Staff regularly monitor the efficiency and relevance of the data collected and/or reported to ensure data is accurate and relevant.
Received and reviewed matters related to seniors.	Four hundred and fifty-six individuals contacted the Office requesting assistance or expressing concerns about seniors' issues.

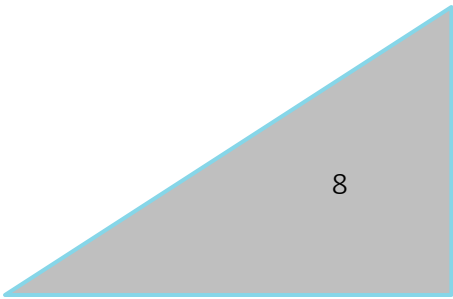
The HPE Records Management System is the Office’s primary sorting and tracking tool. As well, it provides insight into emerging issues which may become a concern for seniors. The Seniors’ Advocate decides whether to publicly bring awareness of the issue as an informative or a preemptive measure. During this time period, with no Advocate in place, no issues could be raised to a public level.

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.

Objective: By March 31, 2022, 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 identified a number of priority issues for potential review. However, action on these issues was put on hiatus until a new Advocate is in place.
Made recommendations and informed the public.	The Office did not publically release reviews, reports or plans for reviews due to the absence of a Seniors’ Advocate.
Conducted research.	All systemic issues require significant research which may include literature reviews, jurisdictional scans, consultations, surveys, focus groups and interviews. During 2021-22 this research was limited to literature reviews, jurisdictional scans and engagement with seniors and stakeholders.



Consulted with seniors, service providers and the public.

Four hundred and fifty-six people contacted the Office directly or through engagement and community outreach sessions (mostly virtual). The Office consulted with service providers and community groups. During 2021-22 there was additional engagement with municipalities via Municipalities NL to ensure the 2022 municipal elections were accessible while following Covid-19 public health guidelines

Discussion of Results:

All issues and concerns brought to the attention of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate are recorded in its database. Analysis of the data can indicate whether an issue is becoming systemic or has potential to become systemic over time. Individual issues which are not under the legislative authority of the Office are referred to a more suitable office, service or program. The Advocate has the legislative prerogative to decide how to address systemic issues. When issues are identified as within the purview of this Office, a review may take place resulting in: reports with recommendations; position papers for public awareness; opinion pieces; or any other means the Seniors' Advocate determines will garner the best results for positive systemic change.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The greatest challenge during the 2021-22 year was operating the Office without direction from a Seniors' Advocate due to the position being vacant for over a year. The Office remained operational; Office personnel addressed all issues and continued to conduct research and pursue and provide educational opportunities. However, the inability to release reports, address the media or conduct reviews beyond more traditional research methods hindered the advancement of the goals of this Office and systemic advocacy for seniors.

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 impaired engagement opportunities. The Office will continually monitor the Public Health situation and make adjustments accordingly. Balancing safety while carrying out the mandate of the Office is challenging but necessary.

The Office has a responsibility to ensure that individuals are aware of the Office's requirement to refer individual issues to appropriate offices or programs. Explaining this limitation can be very frustrating for all parties, especially when an individual has

already made numerous calls seeking help or is especially upset. In future efforts will be made to ensure that the public is better-aware that this Office has no legislative authority to address individual advocacy.

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 an Administrative Officer. These four individuals serve a population of more than 120,600 people aged 65 years and older or approximately 243,655 people aged 50 years and older - nearly 50 per cent of the entire population of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The ability to engage seniors and stakeholders, and hear what they want us to know has been critical in the development of a respectful environment between seniors, families, stakeholders, policy-makers, service-providers and the Office of the Seniors' Advocate. The main message of this Office: Seniors' issues are everyone's issues because if we are fortunate, we will all grow old.

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 2022.**

	Estimates		
	Actual	Amended	Original
	\$	\$	\$
OFFICE OF THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE			
<i>Current</i>			
7.1.01. OFFICE OF THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE			
01. Salaries	262,191	373,100	373,100
Operating Accounts:			
<i>Employee Benefits</i>	-	5,700	5,700
<i>Transportation and Communications</i>	2,839	45,900	45,900
<i>Supplies</i>	1,525	5,000	5,000
<i>Professional Services</i>	-	9,000	9,000
<i>Purchased Services</i>	31,558	44,000	44,000
<i>Property, Furnishings and Equipment</i>	-	4,000	4,000
02. Operating Accounts	35,922	113,600	113,600
Total: Office of the Seniors' Advocate	298,113	486,700	486,700

CONTACT INFORMATION

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