

**Provincial Advisory Council on  
Aging and Seniors**



**Activity Plan**

**April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2023**

**Please Note:**

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## 2.0 Message from the Chair

In accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, I am pleased to present the 2020-23 Activity Plan for the Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors (the Council).

This Advisory Council has been included under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** as a Category 3 entity and since 2011, has been planning and reporting in keeping with these requirements. This process better enables Council to enhance recognition of issues impacting seniors and achieve its accountability requirements to the public.

This Activity Plan was not developed in isolation. In addition to the strategic directions of the Province and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, the Plan was informed by the recommendations and conclusions identified in the inaugural, 2019 Report of the Seniors' Advocate (**Long May your Big Jib Draw: Setting Sail**). Additionally, this Plan is responsive to the issues that emerged during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This worldwide health event highlighted a number of issues faced by older adults, in our province, throughout Canada, and around the world.

It is clear that older adults are facing a variety of challenges to maintaining their health and well-being. This Activity Plan represents Council's continued efforts to assist the Provincial Government in supporting the physical, mental, and financial health of older adults. By engaging with stakeholders throughout the Province we identify programs and services that support and encourage the concept of healthy aging. When older adults are healthy and supported to play integral roles in their communities and families, society benefits.

This Activity Plan represents the collective work and accountability of the Council. As Chairperson, I am ultimately accountable for this plan and achievement of its results.

Sincerely,



Linda Oldford, Chairperson  
Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors

## 3.0 Overview

The Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors (Council) was announced in 2004 as one of three initiatives to facilitate the provincial response to the needs of an aging population. In 2005, the Council was established to provide advice to the Minister Responsible for Seniors (currently the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development) on issues related to older persons and the aging process.

Council members represent a diverse cross-section of older adults, many of whom are experienced in working in areas of critical importance to seniors, including health care, long-term care, mental health, and financial well-being. As a result, Council benefits from a membership with a broad base of knowledge in areas of importance to seniors, and those who support them.

The Public Service Commission (PSC), through the Independent Appointments Commission (IAC), solicits candidates for vacancies with consideration given to geography, culture, gender, background, experience and skills. Members are appointed for terms of up to three years by the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development. The Seniors and Aging Division of the department serves as the Secretariat to Council, including the provision of support for meetings and other activities. The Council maintains a working relationship with the Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, which is also managed through the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. These two councils share a number of objectives related to inclusion and accessibility.

The mandate of the Council is to advise and inform the Minister on issues, concerns, and requirements of seniors and those who support them. This includes ensuring that the Provincial Government considers the perspective of older adults when developing both current and future legislation, policies, programs, and services. The Council also provides a strong, collective voice for older adults in the development of a wide range of programs to support the independence and well-being of an aging population.

The Council's aims/lines of business include:

- Challenge ageism;
- Promote the value and worth of people as they age;
- Foster an environment of understanding within the Provincial Government and the community with regard to aging and demographic change;
- Identify areas of opportunity within the Provincial Government to develop and/or adapt legislation, policies, programs and services to better support an aging population;

- Support the work of the Seniors' Advocate; and
- Inform the Provincial Government on the potential impacts of legislation, policies, programs, and services on people as they age.

More information on Council is available here:

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/cssd/seniors/focus/provincialadvisory/>

## 4.0 Priorities and Objectives: 2020 - 23

The Council supports the Provincial Government's strategic directions of improved health and well-being outcomes for individuals, families, groups and communities, as well as improved and equitable access to economic, cultural and social opportunities for those who experience barriers to inclusion. These strategic directions include expanding housing and transportation options to age in place, and building a positive image of aging.

In addition to the strategic directions of Government and the Department, the Council receives input from other stakeholders to inform its areas of focus and facilitate our ability to provide the best advice possible to the Minister. To this end, priorities for 2020-23 will consider:

- **Recommendations of the Seniors' Advocate:** On September 25, 2019, the Seniors' Advocate released the office's first report **Long May Your Big Jib Draw: Setting Sail**. The Council met with the Advocate (Dr. Suzanne Brake) in October 2019 and February 2020 to discuss how the Council can support recommendations and to discuss further work.
- **Recommendations of the Auditor General (2017):** In 2017, the Auditor General's Report reviewed government's preparedness for changing demographics. Council will advise the Minister on programs and policies to address recommendations, with consideration given to similar recommendations emerging from the Seniors' Advocate's report.
- **Issues Identified by the COVID-19 Vulnerable Populations Task Group and Seniors' Working Group:** These groups were convened during the COVID-19 pandemic as a mechanism to identify issues and support vulnerable populations. The Seniors' Working Group identified a number of issues that will require long-term efforts in both research and policy development. Members of Council were active on the Seniors' Working group and are familiar with the issues identified,

including social isolation, food insecurity, financial insecurity, the digital divide, and access to information.

- **Priorities identified by the Forum of Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) Ministers Responsible for Seniors Forum:** Newfoundland and Labrador is an active participant in the FPT Forum and there is an ongoing flow of information from the Forum and its Working Groups to the Council. Current FPT priorities include, aging in place; the socioeconomic impacts of ageism; and the labour force participation of older workers.

The Age-Friendly NL Communities program was the cornerstone of the Council's 2017-20 Activity Plan. To this end, age-friendly principles of aging in place and social inclusion are contained throughout the 2020-23 Activity Plan. Additionally, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on Newfoundland and Labrador's senior population, will influence many activities and policy goals of the Council. As such, COVID-19 and age-friendly lenses will be applied to the work of the Council on a go forward basis.

Based on the priorities noted above, the following have been identified as core issues for Council.

#### **4.1. Issue: Social Isolation**

Social isolation affects both physical and mental health. In 2019, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador announced the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative with the goal of addressing social isolation. COVID-19 has further demonstrated the importance of social inclusion for seniors and the negative implications of isolation and loneliness. Below are some other mental health services that are accessible to seniors living with social isolation and loneliness:

Provincial CHANNAL Warm Line – Available between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 a.m. daily, this line is staffed by trained mental health peer supporters. Individuals are encouraged to call if they are feeling isolated or worried and need someone to talk with. The toll-free number is 1-855-753-2560.

Mental Health Crisis Line – This service is for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. Individuals can call 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. The toll-free number is 1-888-737-4668.

SeniorsNL – This organization provides information and referral services to seniors and those who support seniors throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Their peer support volunteers are knowledgeable and available to those who need information or just want to talk. SeniorsNL’s toll-free number is 1-800-563-5599. Their email address is [info@seniorsnl.ca](mailto:info@seniorsnl.ca) and their website is <http://seniorsnl.ca/>.

Bridge the gApp – This online resource is available at <https://www.bridgethegapp.ca/> and provides many resources for adults and youth to support mental wellness.

### **Objective 1**

- By March 31, 2021, Council will provide the Minister with recommendations on how to reduce social isolation and loneliness among seniors.

### **Objective 2**

- By March 31, 2022, Council will provide advice to the Minister on how to address the digital divide for seniors.

### **Objective 3**

- By March 31, 2023, Council will provide advice to the Minister on how to address the ongoing mental health impacts of social isolation and loneliness on seniors.

#### **4.1.1.Key Indicators**

- Ongoing promotion of the social inclusion initiatives of the Department.
- Increased use of technology and technology support services by seniors.
- Reduced number of calls by seniors to support lines and mental health lines.

## **4.2. Issue: Elder Abuse**

Elder abuse has been identified by both the Government of Canada and the Seniors’ Advocate as a critical issue facing seniors. Additionally, the FPT Seniors Forum is exploring the possible incorporation of elder abuse as a topic in the upcoming work cycle. Elder abuse can include but is not limited to financial abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, isolation, and neglect. The challenges faced in the definition of elder abuse are complex and include balancing the concept of vulnerability with independence and capacity.

### **Objective 1**

- By March 31, 2021, Council will provide advice to CSSD on ways to strengthen the **Adult Protection Act**.

## **Objective 2**

- By March 31, 2022, Council will provide advice to the Minister related to NL's participation in FPT discussions on the establishment of a national definition of elder abuse.

## **Objective 3**

- By March 31, 2023, Council will advise the Minister on ways to enhance and promote the Respect Aging Program – part of the province's Violence Prevention Initiative.

### **4.2.1. Key Indicators**

- Amendments to the **Adult Protection Act** which enhance client rights and procedural fairness.
- Establishment of a national definition of elder abuse.
- Increased awareness and use of the Respect Aging Program.

## **4.3. Issue: Financial Literacy and Security**

Financial planning and security are a core issue facing seniors. Financial security intersects with a variety of other issues including housing, financial abuse, food security, and transportation.

### **Objective 1**

- By March 31, 2021, Council will contribute to the creation of draft materials to support financial retirement planning for individuals living with low income.

### **Objective 2**

- By March 31, 2022, Council will contribute to the creation of a new poverty reduction strategy for NL.

### **Objective 3**

- By March 31, 2023, Council will contribute to a series of financial literacy tools for seniors.

### **4.3.1. Key Indicators**

- Representatives from Council will participate in drafting working group to prepare materials for retirement planning for individual with low income.
- NL will adopt a new poverty reduction strategy.

- The number of seniors declaring bankruptcy and reporting financial crises will decrease.

#### **4.4. Issue: Demographic Change**

In June 2017, Terry Paddon, Auditor General, submitted his **Report to the House of Assembly on Performance Audits of Departments and Crown Agencies**. The report provides recommendations related to the government's preparedness for changing demographics.

The Council will advise the Department in identifying a path to achieve the recommendations identified by the Auditor General.

##### **Objective 1**

- By March 31, 2021, Council will contribute to the terms of reference and workplan of the interdepartmental working group on changing demographics.

##### **Objective 2**

- By March 31, 2022, Council will advise CSSD on creation of a demographics change lens to be applied across departments in development of legislation, programs, and services.

##### **Objective 3**

- By March 31, 2023, Council will advise CSSD on ways to integrate age-friendly and universal design principles into municipal and regional planning.

##### **4.4.1. Key Indicators**

- Ongoing updates for Council on work of the interdepartmental working group on changing demographics (standing agenda item).
- Creation of a demographics change lens.
- Continued to promotion and uptake on the Age-Friendly NL Communities program as a way for communities and regions to plan for changing demographics.

## 5.0 Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors Membership

**Linda Oldford, Chair (Gander)** Linda Oldford spent 35 years in a career with the Federal Government (Service Canada). During that time, she was a union activist and held many positions, including three terms as the Public Service Alliance of Canada's Director for Women. In addition to serving on the Board of Directors for SaferMeds N, Mrs. Oldford is first Vice-President of the Newfoundland and Labrador 50+ Federation and chairs the 50+ Club in Burnside, and the Town of Gander Seniors Advisory Board. She is the 50+ Representative on the Central Wellness Board, as well as a member of the Burnside Community Association and the Anglican Church Women. Ms. Oldford has a keen interest and involvement in Indigenous culture and is a member of First light Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Dr. Rana Aslanova (St. John's)** Rana Aslanova (St. John's) holds MSc and PhD in Clinical Epidemiology from Memorial University of Newfoundland. She has served as a client/volunteer services coordinator for the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre, and is currently a research manager and lecturer in Faculty of Medicine, MUN. Rana is a member of the Canadian Society for Epidemiology and Biostatistics (CSEB), the Research Evidence into Action for Community Health/ Atlantic Interdisciplinary Research Network (REACH/AIRN), the Editorial Offices of the Clinical Rheumatology Journal, the Canadian Journal of Psychiatry & Current Oncology, and the Women in Science and Engineering Newfoundland and Labrador (WISE).

**Leo Bonnell (Clareville)** Leo Bonnell is a retired bank manager and active community leader. He has been active in local community affairs throughout the Province and has held leadership positions with his church board, the chamber of commerce, bankers' association, Lions Club International, Rotary International, and other organizations. He is past chair of the Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors; vice-Chair of the Random Age-Friendly Communities Board, and is an advisory member for the Public Health Agency of Canada's Pan-Canadian Age-Friendly Communities Reference Group.

**Noreen Careen (Labrador City)** Noreen Careen was Executive Director of the Labrador West Status of Women's Council for more than 20 years. Having an undergraduate degree in women's studies, she served in a variety of roles with the Hope Haven's Women's Shelter for over 20 years and was involved with many other initiatives, from family resource centres to the Labrador West Housing and

Homelessness Coalition and the Newfoundland and Labrador Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse through SeniorsNL.

**Doreen Chaulk (Deer Lake)** Doreen Chaulk has a lengthy history in health care in Newfoundland and Labrador. Graduating as a nurse, she also received a Master's Degree in Science in 2001. She served in many capacities over the years such as a faculty member at Western Memorial School of Nursing; Director of Addictions with the Department of Health and Community Services; and as Assistant Chief Executive Officer with Western Regional Health Authority.

**Maisie Clark (Campbellton)** Maisie Clark was born in Port Blandford and taught school in Newfoundland and Labrador and Northern Manitoba. As a result of her husband career with the Canadian Air Force, she has lived in a number of communities across Canada, the United States and Europe, where she was an active volunteer in numerous community organizations and local governments. She has been very involved with Girl Guides of Canada, the Lewisporte and Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Lewisporte Area Economic Development Committee. Ms. Clark has served as the mayor of CFB, Gypsonville, Manitoba and has been the mayor of Campbellton since 2001. In 2013, she was named one of Newfoundland and Labrador's Seniors of Distinction.

**Marie Brennan Downey (Stephenville Crossing)** Marie Brennan Downey holds a Bachelors in Social Work from Memorial University and has worked in a variety of health care related positions throughout her career. In addition to working as a Social Work Clinical Leader, Marie also served as Outreach Services Coordinator, and Program Manager of Rehabilitative Services in acute and long-term care facilities. Marie currently serves on the Board of Trustees of Western Health and continues to be active in her community through volunteer activities.

**Dr. William Eaton: MD, FCFP,(PC) (St. John's)** Dr. William Eaton earned MD and MSc (Clinical epidemiology) degrees at Memorial University. Dr. Eaton worked clinically for 40 years in Family Medicine, long-term care, and Palliative Care and for 36 years of those years at Memorial's medical school. He is a retired Associate Professor of Family Medicine, a former Chair of the St. John's Alzheimer Society, and a former Program Director for Family Medicine at Memorial University. He has six children and eleven grandchildren.

**Helen Handrigan (St. John's)** Helen Handrigan received a Masters in Social Work degree in 1978 and is now a retired social worker, having 35 years of practice in acute care, family court and tenant relations. Her last position was Senior Housing Officer with

the City of St. John's. Since 2013 she has served on the Board of Directors with SeniorsNL.

**Roseanne Leonard (Paradise)** Roseanne Leonard holds a Masters of Business Administration from Memorial University and serves as Managing Director of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Community Business Development Corporations. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Alzheimer Society of Newfoundland and Labrador and a former Chairperson of the Newfoundland and Labrador Employers Council. Roseanne also holds a Masters Certificate in Project Management from York University.

**Judy Pardy (Cartwright)** Judy Pardy has a lengthy history in socioeconomic development with communities in coastal Labradaor. She was previously Executive Director with the Southeastern Aurora Development Corporation and has served in many capacities including archaeology and recreation roles. She is currently involved with the Sandwich Bay 50+ Club and as a peer volunteer with SeniorsNL.

**Wayde Rowsell (St. Lawrence)** Wayde Rowsell began his volunteer service as a board member with the Newfoundland Association of Public Employees, while employed as a Laboratory Technologist with the U.S. Memorial Hospital. In 1985 Mr. Rowsell was elected to the St. Lawrence Town Council and re-elected an additional six times, serving five terms as mayor. He is a founding member of the St. Lawrence Heritage Society and served on the boards of the Heritage Run Tourism Association and Greater Lamaline Area Development Association. Mr. Rowsell's many activities include health care, economic development, workplace health and safety, heritage and sports.

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