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Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors

Annual Report 2023-2024

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Please contact:

Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors

Seniors and Aging Division

Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development

2nd Floor, West Block, Confederation Building

P.O. Box 8700

St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Telephone: (709)729-4291 or Toll Free 1-888-494-2266

Email: PACAS@gov.nl.ca

Chairperson's Message

Hon. Paul A. Pike
Minister
Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL
A1B 4J6

Dear Minister Pike:

As Vice-Chair of the Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors (hereinafter referred to as PACAS or Council), I am pleased to present its annual report for the fiscal year 2023-24.

PACAS remains committed to providing advice to the Provincial Government on developing and supporting age-friendly communities and meeting the evolving needs of an aging population. Council does this by ensuring that seniors' perspectives are considered in policy development and in planning for programs and services for seniors and older adults.

This annual report has been prepared and submitted in accordance with Council's obligation as a category three entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. The work undertaken by Council during the reporting period supports the mandate of the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD).

This was the first year of a new three-year activity plan for PACAS and Council members have shown keen interest in providing practical advice to the Minister and staff of CSSD on three key areas: ageism, food insecurity, and care in the community. These issues are intertwined with the social determinants of health and are key considerations as the Provincial Government continues to advance initiatives contained in Health Accord NL and the overall social and economic well-being of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

As the Chairperson role is currently vacant, my signature below is indicative of Council's accountability for the preparation of this annual report and achievement of the results reported.

Sincerely,



Joshua Carey, Vice-Chairperson
Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors

Table of Contents

Overview	1
Lines of Business.....	2
Highlights and Partnerships.....	2
Report on Performance.....	3
Issue 1: Ageism.....	3
Issue 2: Food Insecurity	5
Issue 3: Care in the Community	6
Opportunities and Challenges.....	7
Financial Information	8
Annex A:	
Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors Members 2023-24.....	9

Overview

The Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors (PACAS or Council) was established in 2005 to provide advice to the Minister Responsible for Aging and Seniors (currently the Minister of CSSD) on issues related to older persons and the aging process.

As of March 31, 2024, Council consisted of 9 members (See Annex A) and is listed in Schedule C of the **Public Service Commission Act**. 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 secretariat to the Council, including the provision of support for meetings and other activities.

Council members represent a diverse cross-section of individuals, including older adults, many of whom are experienced in working with seniors and stakeholders in areas of critical importance to seniors, including health care, long-term care, mental health, and social and economic 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 seniors.

Total expenditures for the Council for 2023-24 were \$6,190.83. More details are provided on pages 7 and 8.

More information on the Council may be found at:
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/cssd/seniors/focus/provincialadvisory/>

Lines of Business

The Council's 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 regarding 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.
- Inform the Provincial Government on the potential impacts of legislation, policies, programs, and services on people as they age.

Highlights and Partnerships

2023-24 provided opportunities for PACAS to explore new ways to collaborate and continue to inform and advise the Provincial Government on issues related to older persons, aging, and demographic change.

Key activities included:

- Assisted in the selection of 2023-24 Seniors of Distinction Award recipients. This annual award recognizes and celebrates the contributions, achievements and diversity of Newfoundland and Labrador seniors.
- Participated in the engagement process to support the development of the province's new Poverty Reduction Plan and Seniors' Well-Being Plan.
- Continued to provide feedback on Health Accord NL initiatives and implementation.
- Continued to participate in the Age-Friendly Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Working Group to advise and recommend improvements to the Age-Friendly Newfoundland and Labrador Communities Program.

Report on Performance

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 priorities include enhancing supports to age well in the right place and building a positive image of aging.

The concept of aging well in the right place means having the health and social supports and services necessary to allow individuals to live safely and independently in their own homes or communities for as long as they wish and are able.

Issue 1: Ageism

The **World Health Organization** refers to ageism as the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) directed towards people on the basis of their age.

Ageist stereotypes negatively impact the physical and mental health of older adults. People such as caregivers, family members, friends or employers can hold ageist stereotypes, or they can be internalized by individuals leading them to act in ways that endorse these stereotypes.

Ageism does not only affect seniors and older adults. The **World Health Organization** outlines negative impacts of ageism for individuals across the lifespan.

For older people, ageism is associated with a shorter lifespan, poorer physical and mental health, slower recovery from disability and cognitive decline. In addition, ageism reduces the quality of life, increases social isolation and loneliness (both of which are associated with serious health problems), restricts the ability to express sexuality and may increase the risk of violence and abuse.

For younger people, ageism manifests across many areas, such as employment, health, housing, and politics, where younger people's voices are often denied or dismissed. Experiencing discrimination at a young age can have long-lasting consequences on well-being, self-esteem and sense of belonging. In addition, it exposes young people to more disadvantages throughout their lives, making them more likely to encounter inequalities later in life.

Ageism has far-reaching impacts on all aspects of our health and takes a heavy economic toll on individuals and society.

2023-24 Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Council will have enhanced promotion of intergenerational programs and activities, and increased effort at reducing the prevalence of ageism in NL.

Indicators	Report on Activities
1. Provided input into the development of a guide to intergenerational activities.	CSSD is developing an Intergenerational Program Guide. During 2023-24, the Seniors and Aging Division held a public engagement process to help inform the development of the guide. PACAS was represented in two targeted stakeholder engagement sessions and held a stand-alone meeting on the subject to ensure Council's input was captured to support plan development.
2. Provided input into a public awareness campaign on ageism and age-friendly communities.	In 2023-24, Council provided input into a public awareness campaign on ageism and age-friendly communities. Council made suggestions on how such a campaign could look and feel, what key themes or messages should be conveyed and ways to help ensure such a campaign is effective. SeniorsNL and the Office of Women and Gender Equality (WGE) are currently working to update the public Respect Aging Campaign. The Seniors and Aging Division of CSSD will collaborate with SeniorsNL and WGE on this initiative and ensure that Council's input is considered to reduce ageism and promote age-friendly principles.

2024-25 Objective

By March 31, 2025, the Council will have provided advice to the Minister on development and promotion of an age-friendly business model for NL.

Indicator:

- Developed recommendations for the Minister on the development of an age-friendly business model for NL.

Summary

Ageism continues to be a challenge for many seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador, throughout Canada and around the world. Ongoing efforts to create public awareness of the negative effects of ageism and the benefits of age-friendly communities are aimed at reducing elder abuse and neglect, reducing the prevalence of ageism, and supporting better physical and mental health and overall well-being for seniors and older adults.

Issue 2: Food Insecurity

The University of Toronto's interdisciplinary Food Insecurity Policy Research program defines household food insecurity as the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints and describes it as a serious public health problem in Canada. Their **Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2021** report shows the prevalence of household food insecurity in Newfoundland and Labrador at 17.9 per cent.

The province's Seniors' Advocate's report, **What We Heard: Engagement with Seniors, Family Members and/or Caregivers, and Service Providers**, supports the notion that food insecurity is a significant issue that continues to affect seniors. Forty per cent of seniors responding to a survey administered as part of the Seniors' Advocate's engagement process reported not being able to afford food or eating healthy. This is also in line with the reported experiences of provincial food help lines, which continue to report unprecedented calls for assistance (even higher than during the Covid-19 pandemic) from an increasing number of seniors.

2023-24 Objective

By March 31, 2024, Council will have presented a profile of seniors' food insecurity in Newfoundland and Labrador, including available resources and gaps, to the minister.

Indicator	Report on Activities
Created a provincial profile of seniors' food insecurity, including available resources and gaps.	In 2023-24, Council, supported by the Seniors and Aging Division of CSSD, reviewed available statistics and other data related to food security and food programs in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada and compiled a profile that described the food insecurity prevalence in Newfoundland and Labrador; provided insights, statistics and anecdotes from the community sector; and described barriers to food access, and the food charity system in the province.

2024-25 Objective

By March 31, 2025, the Council will have provided advice to the minister on seniors' food insecurity.

Indicator:

- Completed analysis and provided advice to the minister on seniors' food insecurity.

Summary

Food insecurity continues to be an issue for seniors and older adults as well as the overall population. This situation has been exacerbated by inflation and the increased cost of living. The Seniors and Aging Division is represented on the Provincial Food Security Working Group, made up of government and community stakeholders, which discusses opportunities and challenges in the area of food security in Newfoundland and Labrador. The division will continue to bring Council's input forward as measures to address this issue are discussed.

Issue 3: Care in the Community

Council supports the Provincial Government's efforts to promote the development and maintenance of age-friendly communities. In May 2022, Council held an engagement session with community sector stakeholders to discuss ways to better promote and support age-friendly communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. This engagement identified the important role that municipalities play in this endeavor, as they are responsible for the design and delivery of many of the programs and services in the communities where people live. It was also recognized that municipalities need education and support to apply a senior and older adult lens to identifying, and facilitating planning for, age-friendly initiatives.

As people age, the level of support they require to remain in or near their own homes can change. It is important that people are empowered to make decisions about their own care and that our support systems are adequate to meet the needs of people as they age throughout the lifespan.

Section eight of Health Accord NL's final report speaks to the health of older adults and provides calls to action to support healthy aging. Among the recommendations is a call to implement and support an integrated continuum of care to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of care delivery, improve health and social outcomes for older adults and older adults with disabilities, and support older adults to age in place with dignity and autonomy.

2023-24 Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Council will have promoted age-friendly communities to municipalities.

Indicator	Report on Activities
Presented to MunicipalitiesNL's annual conference.	Due to changes in membership and competing priorities, Council did not present to MunicipalitiesNL (MNL) in 2023-24. Council members and Seniors and Aging Division staff have spoken to MNL staff and leadership and are working to arrange an opportunity to present to and engage with MNL and its convention delegates on the concept age-friendly communities at its fall 2024 conference.

2024-25 Objective

By March 31, 2025, the Council will have supported the review and updating of advance care planning materials.

Indicator:

- Received a presentation from the Interdepartmental Advance Life Planning Work Group and provided feedback on its draft materials.

Summary

The Provincial Government continues to promote the concept of age-friendly communities through the Age-Friendly Newfoundland and Labrador Communities Program. Engaging with MNL is meant to educate municipalities on the benefits and importance of using age-friendly principles and thinking in municipal programs and planning, and encourage communities to prioritize age-friendly practices to support individuals across the lifespan.

Opportunities and Challenges

- Ageism remains one of the last socially accepted forms of discrimination. This is true on a global scale. Through the Respect Aging Campaign, participation in the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors' Ageism Working Group and other opportunities, the Provincial Government is contributing to initiatives that help to reduce the prevalence of ageism. PACAS will continue to provide input and advice on this issue.
- Poverty continues to be among the most significant social determinants of health and it continues to be a significant issue for single seniors and older adults in particular. The past few years have been a period of high inflation and significant increases in the cost of living. This has exacerbated issues such as access to safe and affordable housing and food. The Provincial Government recently released a Poverty Reduction Plan and Budget 2024 announced that a Seniors' Well-Being Plan is forthcoming. These are positive

developments that will help seniors and older adults and the population at large. PACAS will continue to observe the impacts of the global financial situation and the programs and policies of the Provincial Government and provide advice wherever possible.

- The Cabinet Committee on Seniors continues to help ensure that the issues of importance to seniors and older adults are at the forefront of Provincial Government decision making and that a seniors' lens is applied to all major policy and program decisions. The deliberations of the Cabinet Committee, as well as Council's efforts to engage municipalities in age-friendly planning, will help to ensure that, as people move through the lifespan, they will be supported to age well in the right place in age-friendly communities.

Financial Information

Members of the Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors do not receive remuneration. Council members are reimbursed for expenses and travel costs. Council's budget is included in the Seniors and Aging Division's budget. As detailed in the table below, the costs for 2023-24 totaled \$6,190.83.

Area of Expenditure	Total
Purchased Services (meeting space rentals, food and beverage, etc.)	\$1,287.73
Transportation and Communication (Travel costs, per diems, accommodations, incidentals, etc.)	\$4,903.10
Total	\$6,190.83

The Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors is not required to submit audited financial statements.

Annex A: Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors Members 2023-24

Pamela Anstey (St. John's) Pam Anstey has worked in community and non-profit development for more than 20 years. Holding a Master of Social Work from Dalhousie, she has an extensive background in disability policy, poverty, and food insecurity, along with a knowledge of social enterprise and small business. Pam currently works as a case manager with the Community Food Helpline, as a counsellor with the Athena Health Centre, and as Executive Director of the St John's Farmers' Market. She also sits on the Board of the Centre for Health Information, the Board of the NL Federation of Cooperatives, and as an active member of the Provincial Food Insecurity Working Group.

Mark Brown (St. John's) Mark Brown holds several diplomas in business and management and is a retired Royal Canadian Mounted Police Sergeant and civilian information technology professional. He also worked as a business coordinator with a local small business and as a security monitor with the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly. Mark is currently a member of the St. John's Northwest Rotary Club; a board member of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 56; Chair of Home Again Furniture Bank and Director with United Way Newfoundland and Labrador. He also served in executive capacities on the College of the North Atlantic Advisory Committee of the Computer Studies Program; Crime Stoppers Newfoundland and Labrador; NL 911; Glenn's Helping Hand Foundation and was the Founding Chair of United Way Newfoundland and Labrador. He has received numerous awards for this professional and community work at the provincial, national and international level including the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for community service.

Noreen Careen (Labrador City) Having an undergraduate degree in women's studies, Noreen Careen was Executive Director of the Labrador West Status of Women's Council for more than 20 years. 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. In 2019, she was named one of Newfoundland and Labrador's Seniors of Distinction.

Joshua Carey, Vice-Chair (Corner Brook) Joshua Carey holds a Bachelor of Community Studies from the University of Cape Breton, a Diploma in Adult Education from St. Francis Xavier University and a Diploma in Community Studies and Project Management from Bay St. George Community College. As a career public servant, Joshua's work focused on economic, industrial and community development. He has also been heavily involved in the community, having served on municipal councils and as a member and chair of many provincial, regional, and community boards and committees.

Veronica Dale Colbourne (St. Lunaire-Griquet) Veronica Dale Colbourne has been a member of her local Town Council for the past 16 years and has served as Mayor for the past 10 years. She also chairs the board of directors for her local ambulance service. Veronica is an active volunteer in other capacities. She is an advocate for all things pertaining to the Great Northern Peninsula. During her home time, Veronica enjoys life with her long-time partner Robert and their two cats. Veronica loves to cook and enjoys time at home. Her interests are municipal governance and home life.

Dr. William Eaton: MD, FCFP, (PC) (St. John's) 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 Alzheimer Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, 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 Master of 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.

Aruna Ralhan (Torbay) Aruna Ralhan has a degree in occupational therapy from the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities in Delhi, India and worked for more than 32 years in the province's health care system. She has also served as chair of the St. John's Hindu Temple and as President of the Friends of India Association. Aruna is a member of provincial and national occupational therapy professional associations and has a keen interest in seeing improvements to the health care system and improving outcomes for the province's aging population.

Doris Sacrey (Botwood) Doris Sacrey held a Certified Financial Planning designation and worked in the insurance and finance industries. Prior to her career in financial planning, she worked for the Iron Ore Company of Canada and in early childhood education. She has served as the Labrador representative on the Dr. H. Bliss Murphy Cancer Care Centre as well a board member for the Hope Haven Crisis Shelter and the Labrador West Status of Women Council.