



Provincial Healthy Aging Implementation Plan

Year 1: 2007 - 2008

Building a Foundation



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Introduction

In 2003, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador made “healthy aging” a priority in *Our Blueprint for the Future*. The Minister of Health and Community Services, as Minister Responsible for Aging and Seniors, was asked to lead a **Ministerial Council on Aging and Seniors**. The Council consists of government Ministers from departments and agencies that impact aging and seniors.

The **Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors** was appointed. This is made up of twelve individuals. The Council offers advice to government on quality of life issues for seniors. It supports public discourse on aging.

Government formed the **Aging and Seniors Division**. The Aging and Seniors Division is located within the Department of Health and Community Services but has a focus that crosses all of government. It acts as a centre of expertise and knowledge on aging and seniors. The division provides advice and supports the making of policy. Its partners include:

- **Other provincial government departments**
- **Seniors organizations**
- **The federal government**
- **Other provinces and territories**
- **Other sectors**

Healthy aging is not the sole responsibility of any one department or agency. The division must partner with the community to carry out its mandate.

The Aging and Seniors Division has been working with an **Interdepartmental Working Group**. Members are drawn from various government departments and agencies and the regional health authorities. They are involved in the development and monitoring of the *Healthy Aging Policy Framework and Implementation Plan*.

In 2006, a discussion document and seniors’ profile, *Healthy Aging for All in the 21st Century*, were shared with the public. These formed the



basis for consultations. Over 1000 people from 17 Newfoundland and Labrador communities participated. Consultations were followed by a Provincial Forum in June 2006. A cross-section of organizations with an interest in aging took part.

The Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework and Implementation Plan consists of three components:

1. The document titled *Perspectives on a Provincial Healthy Aging Plan - Summary of Consultations* presents what was heard through community consultations, briefs and submissions, and the provincial forum. It includes a preliminary review of research on issues raised during consultations;
2. The *Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework* will be used to guide public policy decisions that impact on aging and seniors; and
3. This document titled *Provincial Healthy Aging Implementation Plan for Year 1: 2007-2008* provides a series of goals and actions supporting the 6 priority directions to be implemented in Year 1 (2007-2008).

In addition, a decision-making process to monitor and evaluate annual progress, as well as priority setting for the following four years will be implemented. An implementation plan subject to available funding will be developed annually. However, many of the internal government initiatives will require little or no funding and can be incorporated within current departmental budgets.



What is Healthy Aging?

Health Canada defines healthy aging as “a lifelong process of optimizing opportunities for improving and preserving health and physical, social and mental wellness, independence, quality of life and enhancing successful life-course transitions”.¹ We accept this definition of healthy aging as the basis on which we have developed the *Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework and Implementation Plan*.

Perfect health is not required for healthy aging. Making the most of health is key to positive aging. All people can have good health and well-being. They can even do so as they cope with impairments and health issues. One can learn to live well in spite of limits. This is a true mark of health and strength.



Demographics

The population of Newfoundland and Labrador is aging fast. Over the last 30 years, it has aged faster than any other province in the country². The median age of 41.3 years is the highest in Canada. Currently, in 2007, people over 65 make up about 13.9 per cent (69,000) of the population in this province. This is likely to increase to 20 per cent within 10 years. Fifty-five per cent of the province's seniors are females.

Why is our population aging? People are living longer. There was a high birthrate between 1946 and 1965. These “baby boomers” are now in their 60s. This group is quickly adding to the great increase in the proportion of seniors. The birthrate began to decline in the mid 1960s and continues to decrease. This leaves less young people to balance the scale. Migration is playing a role. Many young people are leaving the province (out-migration). Those coming to the province are often former residents who return home to retire.

Shifting demographics point to the need for legislation, policies, programs and services that respond to changes as the population ages.



Vision and Principles

Our Vision is:

For individuals,
families,
communities and
society as a whole to
foster healthy aging
in order to achieve
optimal health and
well-being.

The vision guides the *Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework and Implementation Plan*. It is based on the vision of the National Framework on Aging and that of the Province's Department of Health and Community Services. This vision was endorsed by the Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors and through community consultation.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador supports the following principles. These were also endorsed by the Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors and through community consultation:

Dignity: Being treated with respect; recognized for one's contributions; and having self-esteem.

Self-Fulfillment: Having the chance to reach one's full potential with access to educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources.

Social Inclusion: Being accepted and able to fully take part within our families, communities and society.

Independence: Being in control of one's life, making one's own choices, and being able to do as much for oneself as possible.

Safety and Security: Having enough income as one ages; having access to a safe and supportive environment free of fear, exploitation and violence.

Fairness: Having diverse needs seen as equal, no matter one's age, gender, racial and ethnic background, disability, or status.

The vision and principles form the basis of the *Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework and Implementation Plan*. Priority directions are grounded in the vision and principles.

Priority Directions

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is embracing 6 priority directions to promote healthy aging. Within 5 years we will demonstrate success in the priority directions of:

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- **Recognition of Older Persons** through increased societal respect and regard for older persons; age-friendly legislation, policies, programs and services; and greater inclusion of seniors in our society;
- **Celebrating Diversity** by ensuring that the diversity of the aging population is seen and valued in provincial legislation, policies, programs and services;
- **Supportive Communities** by enhancing the role that communities play to support an aging population;
- **Financial Well-being** by improving the financial well-being of seniors through identification of opportunities; improving knowledge about government services and programs; and encouraging financial and retirement planning;
- **Health and Well-being** by ensuring people as they age have the best possible physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual health and well-being; and
- **Employment, Education and Research** by focusing on the impact of an aging population on employment, education and research.

Pursuing these priority directions will involve strong collaboration with all sectors of our society. These include seniors, the volunteer sector, community organizations, and the business community, to name a few. Together we will meet the challenge.



Priority Direction	Recognition of Older Persons
<p style="text-align: center;">Goals & Actions</p>	<p>Increased recognition of seniors in our province.</p> <p>New initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and launch a public awareness campaign to promote positive images and attitudes with regard to aging (\$50,000 - Department of Health and Community Services). • Events and materials to promote June as Seniors Month (\$20,000 - Department of Health and Community Services). • Events and materials to promote October 1 as International Day of Older Persons (\$10,000 - Department of Health and Community Services). • Launch of Provincial Seniors Recognition Awards (\$10,000 - Department of Health and Community Services). • Planning to support an annual Seniors Fair and Exposition (\$10,000 - Department of Health and Community Services). <p>An age-friendly lens is used when developing and reviewing provincial legislation, policies, programs and services.</p> <p>New initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a working group to develop and implement an age-friendly lens.* • Support a cross-government working group to assess the impact of adding age to the Human Rights Code.* • Support networking of seniors' organizations (\$50,000 - Department of Health and Community Services).

<p>Goals & Actions (cont'd)</p>	<p>Seniors are increasingly visible in society.</p> <p>New initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and sharing of best practices of regional seniors' groups working together (\$20,000 - Department of Health and Community Services). • Grants to support strategic planning for seniors' organizations (\$50,000 - Department of Health and Community Services).
<p>Priority Direction</p>	<p>Celebrating Diversity</p>
<p>Goals & Actions</p>	<p>Provincial policies, programs and services include consideration of the impact of gender throughout life including later years; and</p> <p>Provincial policies, programs and services reflect the uniqueness of language, heritage, culture and spiritual expression including during later life.</p> <p>New initiative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop diversity awareness training for health and community service providers highlighting later life. Pilot training to primary health care teams during Year 1 (\$100,000 - Department of Health and Community Services).

Priority Direction	Supportive Communities
<p style="text-align: center;">Goals & Actions</p>	<p>Communities and municipalities will be more age-friendly.</p> <p>New initiative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share age-friendly “toolkit” with municipalities (produced through recent national research on developing age-friendly communities) (\$20,000 - Department of Health and Community Services). <p>2007-2008 actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Active, Healthy Newfoundland and Labrador: A Recreation and Sport Strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador</i> to promote physical activity and healthy living to benefit young and old (\$2.39 million - Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation). • Liability insurance to support community use of schools, including by seniors (\$100,000 - Department of Education). • Increase financial support for 8 existing Newfoundland Labrador Housing community centres to provide tenants with intergenerational opportunities in social, educational, recreational, employment and career development and health and wellness programs (\$192,000 - Poverty Reduction Strategy). <p>Improved access to transportation systems by older persons.</p> <p>2007-2008 action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferry rate reductions for all people including seniors (\$1.5 million - Department of Transportation and Works).

**Goals
&
Actions**
(cont'd)

Improved range of housing opportunities that support healthy aging.

New initiative:

- Establish committee to assess affordable and accessible housing options for seniors.*

2007-2008 actions:

- Enhanced Provincial Home Repair Program to reduce the wait list and help low-income households, including seniors (\$4 million - Newfoundland Labrador Housing).
- Tenants with Newfoundland Labrador Housing, age 55 and older, will benefit from a lower rental rate (rent geared to income) (\$350,000 - Poverty Reduction Strategy).
- Federal-Provincial Affordable Housing Agreement, a significant portion is targeted at seniors housing (\$10 million - Newfoundland Labrador Housing).
- Extension of the Fuel Tank Replacement Assistance Program to help low-income families, including seniors, offset replacement costs of domestic fuel tanks (\$750,000 - Department of Finance).

Improved literacy and education for seniors that promote lifelong learning.

2007-2008 action:

- Update Strategic Literacy Plan (\$140,000 - Department of Education).

<p>Goals & Actions (cont'd)</p>	<p>Enhanced recognition and support to unpaid caregivers.</p> <p>New initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the feasibility of developing an in-home respite program.* • Support development and distribution of educational materials for unpaid caregivers (\$20,000 - Department of Health and Community Services). <p>2007-2008 action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregivers Out of Isolation Program (\$40,000 - Department of Health and Community Services).
<p>Priority Direction</p>	<p>Financial Well-being</p>
<p>Goals & Actions</p>	<p>Identified opportunities, through policies, programs and services, to improve the financial security of older adults.</p> <p>New initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with the Poverty Reduction Strategy, reassess measures currently used to determine financial well-being in later life.* • Assess the impact of dispensing fees on seniors' financial well-being (\$20,000 - Department of Health and Community Services). • Actively contribute to development of a federal/provincial/territorial "cumulative impact assessment tool". This tool will help highlight the impact of aging in policy development.*

<p>Goals & Actions (cont'd)</p>	<p>2007-2008 actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the Low Income Seniors' Benefit income threshold for senior couples by approximately \$10,000 to ensure more seniors can avail of the program (\$4.2 million - Department of Finance). • Income tax reduction impacting seniors (\$8 million approximately - Department of Finance). • Expansion of the Home Heating Rebate for low-income individuals and families, including seniors, to subsidize various heating costs including home heating fuel, wood, and electricity (\$4 million - Department of Finance). • Electricity rebate for homeowners (including seniors) using diesel generated power in rural isolated communities along the Labrador coast (\$1.6 million - Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador).
<p>Priority Direction</p>	<p>Health and Well-being</p>
<p>Goals & Actions</p>	<p>Older persons demonstrate improved health and well-being in target areas.</p> <p>New initiative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote representation of seniors on Regional Wellness Coalitions.* <p>2007-2008 actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target middle-aged and older persons in priority areas of the <i>Provincial Wellness Plan</i> (healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco control, and injury prevention).* • Support wellness grants and initiatives aimed at seniors through implementation of the <i>Provincial Wellness Plan</i>.*

**Goals
&
Actions**
(cont'd)

- Support healthy eating for seniors through the *Provincial Food and Nutrition Framework and Action Plan*.*
- Promote the revised *Canada's Food Guide*.*
- Support older adults through *Active, Healthy Aging Newfoundland and Labrador: A Recreation and Sport Strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador*.*
- Promote the national goal of a 10% increase in physical activity among seniors by 2010.*
- Help older adults quit smoking through the *Provincial Tobacco Reduction Strategy*.*
- Carry out work that targets seniors as part of the *Provincial Injury Prevention Plan*.*
- Support the networking of organizations involved in injury prevention among seniors.*

The health care system reflects policies, programs and services which are age-friendly and promote healthy aging.

New initiatives:

- Ensure home care (home health and home support) services are age-friendly within the ongoing development of the *Long Term Care and Community Supports Strategy*.*
- Recommend changes to expand the home support program to support independence.*
- Recommend changes to the home support financial criteria.*
- Review current policy on hiring family members as home support workers through the provincial Home Support Program.*

Goals & Actions

2007-2008 actions:

- Ensure standards for personal care, long term care, and home support are stated, kept current and monitored regularly.*
- Assess and improve infrastructure in long term care homes. Funding in 2007 for construction of new long term care homes in Clarendville, Corner Brook, and Happy Valley-Goose Bay; design and site work for a new health centre, including a long term care home in Lewisporte; as well as a new health care centre, and redevelopment of the long term care home in Grand Bank. (\$51.3 million - Department of Health and Community Services).
- Continue to implement a standardized resident assessment instrument for long term care residents (\$1.4 million - Department of Health and Community Services).
- Continue to support and develop primary health care teams in the province (\$1.2 million - Department of Health and Community Services).
- Ongoing development and expansion of post-acute home care and end-of-life care services (\$2.9 million - Department of Health and Community Services).
- Supplement medical transportation costs for individuals, including seniors, through the Medical Transportation Assistance Program (\$458,100 - Department of Health and Community Services).

**Goals
&
Actions**
(cont'd)

The prevalence of chronic disease and conditions is reduced.

New initiative:

- Launch a *Chronic Disease Prevention and Management Strategy*.*

2007-2008 action:

- Provide tele-health services to support management of chronic diseases (\$1 million - Department of Health and Community Services).

Increased support for a lifelong approach to protect oral health, vision, hearing and speech.

New initiatives:

- Ensure that the provincial *Oral Health Plan*, under development, promotes lifelong oral health.*
- Review subsidies for vision care.*

Older adults have improved access to needed medications.

2007-2008 actions:

- Addition of new drugs to the list of drugs covered by the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program (\$1.4 million - Department of Health and Community Services).
- Expansion of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program to cover more low income individuals including seniors and high cost drugs (\$24.8 million - Poverty Reduction Strategy).

**Goals
&
Actions**
(cont'd)

Older adults have improved skills and supports to achieve positive mental health and avoid addictions.

New initiatives:

- Promote links between the provincial Seniors Mental Health Consultant, the regional health authorities, and the community.*
- Ensure that seniors' mental health is part of the *Provincial Wellness Plan: Wellness Paper: Mental Health Promotion*.*
- Ensure that healthy aging is part of the developing provincial *Substance Use Strategy*.*
- Link with the *National Framework on Substance Abuse* as it relates to seniors.
- Support development and dissemination of educational materials on seniors mental health to regional health authorities, personal care and long term care homes (\$20,000 - Department of Health and Community Services).

2007-2008 action:

- Support the *Provincial Policy Framework for Mental Health and Addictions Services* as it relates to older persons.*

Improved legislation, policies, programs and services which work toward older adults being free from violence and neglect.

New initiatives:

- "Violence Against Older Persons" Public Awareness Campaign (\$30,000 - Violence Prevention Initiative; \$30,000 - Department of Health and Community Services).

<p>Goals & Actions (cont'd)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the Violence Prevention Initiative and community partners to identify a comprehensive response system to prevent and address the abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults (\$20,000 - Department of Health and Community Services). • Promote the annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (June 15) *. • Legislative policy framework for long-term and community support for vulnerable adults will be developed *. <p>2007-2008 action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the Provincial Violence Prevention Initiative to revise policies and programs as they relate to abuse and neglect of older adults*.
<p>Priority Direction</p>	<p>Employment, Education and Research</p>
<p>Goals & Actions</p>	<p>Employers improve planning for an aging workforce.</p> <p>2007-2008 action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with existing health human resource networks to identify and recommend human resource supply of health and community service workers to work in area of aging and seniors.* <p>Knowledge of aging and the impact of population aging are brought into the work, education and research environments.</p> <p>New initiative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage post-secondary institutions to offer age-friendly training and develop age-friendly curriculum.*

**Goals
&
Actions**
(cont'd)

Improved knowledge of aging and seniors is reflected through evidence gained through research.

New initiatives:

- Support working group to explore research models, develop a research framework and promote research on aging and seniors (\$50,000 - Department of Health and Community Services).
- Support research in prioritized areas including medication use, living and aging with disability; seniors' mental health and addictions; and abuse and neglect of older adults (\$250,000 - Department of Health and Community Services).
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive aging and seniors' profile (\$50,000 - Department of Health and Community Services).

* The Department of Health and Community Services will use current resources as well as 2 new staff positions to support development and implementation of various components of the *Provincial Healthy Aging Implementation Plan*.

Conclusion

Government joins many partners in implementing the *Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework and Implementation Plan*. Many actions are underway through current programs, plans and strategies. However, there are many new priorities. *The Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework and Implementation Plan* is long term and will be carried out over 5 years.

We must track and evaluate progress, and make needed changes to ensure success. An implementation and accountability framework for Year 1: 2007-2008 will monitor progress and measure Government's commitment to support healthy aging.

The Aging and Seniors Division will oversee the Plan. While progress will be reviewed on an annual basis, a prioritization exercise will also occur on an annual basis to determine next steps in the coming year. Both progress of current and proposed actions for the coming year will be reviewed by the Interdepartmental Working Group on Aging and Seniors. The review will be submitted to the Minister Responsible for Aging and Seniors. The Minister will make yearly recommendations on next actions to the Ministerial Council on Aging and Seniors. Government will report yearly on progress in the 6 priority directions. The Minister Responsible for Aging and Seniors will give an annual statement of progress to the House of Assembly.



Moving Forward

The *Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework and Implementation Plan* has been a priority of government since healthy aging was supported in *Our Blueprint for the Future*. It reflects Government's commitment to a new vision of healthy aging. This vision will impact Government's role in an aging society and provide a new way of doing things. The community will adopt new values. These will reshape life and work to fully embrace the aging population.

Government has been working to provide support to seniors since *Our Blueprint for the Future* was first put forth. The *Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework and Implementation Plan* builds on many government efforts introducing more coordinated long term solutions. This will ensure that all people grow as they age.



Endnotes

¹ Health Canada (2002). Division of Aging and Seniors. *Dare to Age Well: Workshop on Healthy Aging. Part 1: Aging and Health Practices*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.

² Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Department of Finance. Economic and Statistics Branch (Oct. 2006) *Demographic Change: Issues and Implications*.





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