

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

There are many implications for older adults who find it difficult to use technology or who have difficulty reading and writing. Those unable to complete or read different forms may lose out on various services, including benefits from government agencies, or payments for damage incurred due to the fact they did not understand their insurance. Those who do not have access to banks and have to rely on bank machines, more often than not find it difficult to use them. Therefore they carry more cash, or rely on others to get cash for them, which in turn can lead to numerous other

problems, including financial abuse.

The purpose of the project, *Listen to Me*, was to learn from older adults, through individual interviews and group settings, what they believe are the obstacles they face in the areas of literacy and technology. Throughout the project, older adults expressed their ideas on how these obstacles can be overcome. The information has been gathered and presented to people who are in a position to make changes in the organizations they represent. The project was funded by the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada and sponsored by the Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The primary goal of this project is to ease the adjustment to technology where older adults have no other choice but to use it; to improve the skills of those who find it difficult to read certain materials, and to improve the readability level of many forms that older adults are forced to use. Simply put, allow these services to become more senior friendly.

The project coordinator held focus groups and individual interviews within the Health and Community Services - St. John's Region and immediate outlying areas. The communities that were visited included: Trepassey, St. Mary's, St. Vincent's, Calvert, Pouch Cove, Bell Island, the Goulds, Torbay, and in St. John's. The total number of participants was 104 persons.

The Seniors Resource Centre contracted an evaluator to assist the project coordinator with developing evaluation questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered by the project coordinator and the evaluator verified the accuracy of the evaluations. The project coordinator conducted all evaluations by telephone approximately one week after each session. A copy of this evaluation questionnaire and the results of this evaluation, can be found in a separate evaluation report written by the project evaluator.

After all information was gathered, a Literacy Workshop was held on May 3, 2002, for representative participants from focus groups and individual interviews. The purpose of this workshop was to compile recommendations for the Literacy Forum. The evaluator attended and explained her part of the project to the older adults. She also observed and listened to the recurring themes, which allowed her to assess which issues were the most important.

On June 6, 2002 a Literacy Forum took place at the Fluvarium in St. John's. Policy makers from organizations identified by the participants were invited. Representatives from literacy organizations which may benefit from this information were also invited. Organizations were made aware of the barriers that older adults are facing and what they see as solutions to such barriers. The policy makers were given the opportunity to hear directly from older adults and discuss with them the recommendations they could make in order to alleviate some of these difficulties.

The success of this day was evaluated by a survey developed by the project coordinator and the evaluator. The results were positive and reassuring. A copy of this survey and the results can be found in the evaluation report. All those who attended this forum showed an interest in follow up initiatives that came from the project.

The commitments made as a result of this forum are numerous and the project coordinator is currently following up on these commitments. The Seniors Resource Centre's Literacy Advisory Committee will continue all further follow up.

Objectives

The first two objectives will be discussed together as the information that was gathered was discussed in both the focus groups and individual interviews.

Objective One:

To learn directly from older adults with low literacy skills, through interviews, the precise kinds of literacy related problems they are experiencing in their daily living.

Objective Two:

To hear from older adults with low literacy levels, in one-to-one and small group discussions, their suggested solutions to resolving some of the problems being encountered in coping with new technologies which challenge them in their activities of daily living; and what kinds of opportunities are required to improve their reading skills.

The *Issues and Suggested Solutions* that were developed from the focus groups and individual interviews are located in Appendix 1. The issues and suggested solutions were gathered over a four month period from the following areas:

Community	Males	Females	Total
Trepassey	3	9	12
St. Mary's	3	6	9
St. Vincent's	1	14	15
Calvert	1	8	9
Bell Island	0	8	8
Pouch Cove	3	6	9

Goulds	2	4	6
Torbay	0	10	10
St. John's	1	7	8
Individual Interviews	2	16	18

Highlights of each focus group will be outlined, however, specific issues that were common to all will not be summarized. The major areas of interest involved difficulty reading forms, bills that are hard to understand, bank machines/interac, automated telephone services, and medication. As is stated above these *Issues and Suggested Solutions* are located in Appendix 1.

Trepassey

The meeting in Trepassey was held on October 12, 2001 at 10:30 a.m. at the Opportunities Complex in Trepassey. Many of the participants were frequent members of the local Seniors Organization.

This focus group would be the one that set the tone for all other groups. Because of the recent bank closure they were forced into using new technology. In this community they have no other choice but to use the bank machine, telephone banking or drive to the nearest branch. This has meant a lot of change to their normal routine. The Seniors Resource Centre's Peer Advocates have been very helpful to those in the community because they had arranged for a session where the bank manager came to show them how to use the machine. These Peer Advocates also arrange for other information sessions in this area.

The information that was gathered in this session alone was extensive. The final thoughts of this focus group were that technology is not making things easier. For these individuals trying to cope is not sufficient, they have to learn this new technology.

St. Mary's

The meeting in St. Mary's was held on October 19, 2001 at 10:30am at the St. Mary's Town Hall.

This group discussed similar issues but because of the Father Val Power Learning Centre in Riverhead they specifically discussed computers. At the Learning Centre a person can go and learn how to use computers. The Centre caters to those who do not want to learn in groups and each person can follow at their own pace. This is very good for those who have their own transportation and for those who want to use their machines to e-mail, however only one person in this group drove. Due to the

name of the Centre, I asked the participants if a person could learn how to read there. They were unsure, but gave me a contact number to call. Unfortunately, this Learning Centre cannot offer this service. After this group I met with an older adult outside the building who wanted to come but was late. He agreed to an individual interview.

A new topic that I found in this group, was that of the local pharmacist and how good he was to the older adults of the community. It was explained that he would discuss the customer's medication with them individually. If they had any questions they could call him and he would help. This type of service was found frequently in smaller communities.

One final comment about illiteracy from this group was "I think that is common in Newfoundland Outports. Newfoundland is not up to par with the mainland. It's a problem for sure."

St. Vincent's

The meeting at St. Vincent's was held on October 19, 2001 at 2:00pm at the Sacred Heart Parish Hall.

This focus group was a challenge due to its size. However, the project coordinator was pleased to see this many older adults interested in this focus group.

This group was the first to identify the need for social interaction. When asked what this meant, they stated that one of the main reasons that they did not like the automated telephone system was because they wanted to speak to a person, especially when they had a problem getting through the system. Also a lot of solutions with respect to medication came from this group. It was from this group that the project coordinator began looking for a blister package for medication. This package was first found at Dominion Pharmacy and was displayed for all customers to see. This type of service is available for the same fee as standard packaging.

Calvert

The meeting in Calvert was held on November 2, 2001 at 2:00pm at the Calvert Community Centre. These older adults were from the communities of both Calvert and Ferryland.

This focus group started with a form one of the participants had been sent from the bank. The issue involved was a very simple one, however, the forms that accompanied it were quite difficult. This lady wanted to understand what it said because if there were any problems it would involve others also. The forms were explained by the project coordinator, with difficulty. The lady asked why the

document could not be explained in plain language. The answer to this question is one that all older adults that participated in this project asked.

At this focus group the issue of bills (invoices) and the difficulty reading them was also stressed. This group kept in close contact with the project coordinator and sent her examples of what they had described during these meetings.

Bell Island

The meeting on Bell Island was held on November 19, 2001 at 2:00pm at the Royal Canadian Legion.

This focus group also had many of the themes reoccurring; however, because of its closeness to the city, one might assume they would have more resources. This was found to be false. This community has been cut off from many resources. The literacy program that had once run in the Trade School has closed. The bank is also closed. For those who want to deposit money into their account, or are not able to use the machine, they have to use the ferry and drive into St. John's.

The community lacks many resources but it does have a Peer Advocate group. These older adults have frequent contact with the Seniors Resource Centre and receive all information that is available. For one gentleman who wanted to learn to read and write, (discussed later in report), this connection allowed him to get the help he needed.

Pouch Cove

The meeting in Pouch Cove was scheduled for October 22, 2001 but because of a conflicting meeting for seniors, it was rescheduled for October 29, 2001 at 2:00pm at the Silver Threads Seniors Club in Pouch Cove. Two could not attend because of illness, they were contacted to set up individual interviews.

Privately after the meeting the project coordinator was told that even if you get brochures from the bank or letters in with forms, most people don't usually bother reading it. "For sure they are not going to admit it." It was stated that this was the case because reading this material is so difficult that they cannot understand it, therefore most people do not try. New technology related differently to this group

because the branch of the bank was located closer to them than a bank machine. Many stayed with the branch. In this group, direct deposit/withdrawal was an important issue because several of the participants did not have this feature. They said that they had a choice, and having their money go directly into their account was not an option they liked. They believed they could not keep track of their income/payments this way.

The final portion of the discussion was on places a senior could go in order to learn things. They discussed the Lifelong Learners program the Seniors Resource Centre offers. They said they could go and learn about computers, and as well be involved in other courses. A member of the group said, "Getting out physically can help. Once you are active in that way it helps you to get active in others. This will help you gain confidence. If you go out into your community you will gain very valuable ties to the community that will help when you need help. This is where you find people that can help you with reading and writing." All agreed that once you began to learn things, and became independent, then a whole new world opens up for you. Unfortunately, only those who are close to the city or have transportation are able to attend.

Goulds

The meeting in the Goulds was held on February 15, 2002 at 2:00 pm at the home of a participant of the focus group.

This focus group looked specifically at the use of jargon in forms and documents. One gentleman gave me his background and explained that he had received a government document that he could not understand, even though he had at one time worked for the provincial government.

The discussion of Interac became more prominent as the focus groups were held closer to the capital city. The issues about Interac were quite similar to those of bank machines that were raised by older adults in more rural locations.

Torbay

The meeting in Torbay was held on February 18, 2002 at 8:00 pm at the St. Nicholas Church Hall.

Those who attended this focus group would be categorized as younger – seniors (50+). The project coordinator was very interested in speaking with them because they were younger than others in previous focus groups and she wanted to see how these issues affected this group. Some of the participants did depend on their children to do such things as banking. They had the same difficulties as the other older adults and discussed their thoughts on forms and other written material. One

lady thought that those who write the forms work in this area everyday and use this jargon in their environment. Therefore, if they can understand it, why would others have difficulty? They need to put themselves in their customer's shoes.

St. John's

The meeting at Maplewood Apartments, a seniors apartment building, was held on February 11 at 2:00 pm.

This group was contacted because there are so many older adults concentrated in St. John's. This apartment building is only for older adults. These participants were from all over the island originally, but have settled in St. John's. When discussing literacy, one lady told me of her childhood. She told me that when she was a young girl she had to clean houses while the boys left school to go on the boats. "There was no need to read." She is now ninety and tries to do as much for herself as possible. She does find difficulty with many forms and has to ask someone to explain them to her.

Time and time again the issue of plain language was raised throughout each of the focus groups. This lady was lucky because she learned the basics of reading when she was younger and worked as she got older to keep some of her independence. If the forms she received were written in a clearer way, she would not have to ask anyone what was meant.

Another topic that was discussed was medication. Many of these older adults told the project coordinator that their medication was delivered. This led to the project coordinator looking for pharmacies that offers this service. Many of the pharmacies that do this just send a delivery driver. However, there is a pharmacy that delivers and specially caters to older adults and those who may have difficulty understanding their prescriptions. This pharmacy is called the *Prescription Shoppe* and is located in St. John's. The owner, the pharmacist or a doctor, will deliver the medication to a patient and discuss how it is to be taken. This discovery led to an article being published by the *Seniors Pride*, a newsletter put out by the Seniors Resource Centre. A member of the Literacy Advisory Committee and a representative of the Seniors Pride wrote this article to let seniors in the area know about this service. This article can be found in Appendix 6.

Individual Interviews

The individual interviews were quite rich in information. Information gathered in these seemed to mirror that of the focus groups. I had always asked groups if they had used the bank machines and interac. Many of the participants were more likely

to use the interac machine. I had always been wondering why this was so. It was in an individual interview that I finally discovered the answer. One person said that they used interac because there was always someone there to help them with it if they ran into trouble. Once I had been given this answer, I used it along with others to see what the response would be. This tended to be the most agreed upon answer.

Those who were involved in all focus groups and individual interviews had an opportunity to speak with the project coordinator privately after all meetings. This gave them an opportunity to offer comments on issues discussed after giving the topic further thought. They were also invited to contact the project coordinator and give her documents and materials of interest at any time. This option was given to allow older adults to discuss their experiences in private. These meetings have stimulated participants to look closer at materials they receive.

These focus groups and interviews were very successful. Those who were involved were excited to be part of a project that asked them, the older adults, what the issues were and what ways they could suggest would help. This experience was empowering for those who took part. The participants were reassured that issues and solutions would be brought to policy makers; and those issues outside the scope of the project would be addressed by the Seniors Resource Centre as general community concerns.

Objective Three:

To compile recommendations for help into a report to be disseminated to reading programs catering to older adults, and sectors that influence the lives of older adults and have the capacity to effect positive changes. For example, to provide findings and recommendations from this assessment of older adults' daily "literacy" functioning obstacles to banking associations, governments and leadership in the commercial sector.

In order to achieve this objective a Literacy Workshop for Older Adults was scheduled for May 3, 2002. The project coordinator compiled issues and suggested solutions for participants of the literacy workshop. These issues and solutions were those encountered by focus groups and from individual interviews, which the project coordinator understood were relevant to the project.

The Literacy Workshop was originally scheduled for March, however, due to a conference the Centre was holding, it was determined that the workshop should be rescheduled until May. This did take away from the time that the project coordinator would use to invite policy makers, however many of these individuals could not commit too far in advance, so it was decided they would not be invited until a month

prior to the Literacy Forum. The project coordinator used this time to draft letters of invitation, develop a guest list and begin an agenda for the day. Therefore, the impact of the delay of the literacy workshop was minimal if any.

This workshop was held to gather together older adults from the various focus groups and interviews in order to receive their feedback on what the project coordinator had found. They would also have the opportunity to discuss what organizations they would like to see attend the Literacy Forum. The eleven older adults who were in attendance for this workshop represented St. Vincent's, Trepassey, Ferryland, Calvert, Bell Island, Pouch Cove and St. John's. These representatives were the ones that the project coordinator thought were the best-suited representatives because they had no difficulty verbalizing their issues and were trusted by those who found it difficult to speak to tell their side of the story. Between the time the focus groups/interviews and this workshop had taken place, these older adults had been in contact with the project coordinator, relaying information that other community members had given them. The *Issues and Suggested Solutions* (Appendix 1) were sent to the participants prior to the workshop in order for them to have time to review what had been said. These participants would also have the opportunity to think about the issues and solutions in advance to allow for greater discussion. Some adjustments were made to the lists because of the day's discussions.

Even at this point the older adults commented on the accomplishments of the project. The older adults that had been involved could see the process develop from focus group to workshop to forum. One participant noted, "...many people come and speak to older adults in the community and you don't see them again...I can actually see the progress." This was a huge determinant of the success of the project because this showed the older adults felt as though their issues and suggestions were being heard, and something was being done with their assistance.

The project coordinator also began a list that was completed by those at the workshop. The final list of invited organizations included:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bank of Montreal | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunlife Assurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better Business Bureau | <input type="checkbox"/> Royal Bank |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Care Corporation | <input type="checkbox"/> CIBC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canadian Association of Insurance
and Financial Advisors NF, Great
West Life | <input type="checkbox"/> TD Canada Trust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Southern Avalon Development
Association | <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland and Labrador Credit
Union |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irish Loop Regional Economic Board | <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland and Labrador
Department of Health & Community
Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland and Labrador | <input type="checkbox"/> Newtel Communications/ Aliant |

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Human Resources & Employment <input type="checkbox"/> Prescription Shoppe <input type="checkbox"/> Scotiabank <input type="checkbox"/> Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer and Commercial Affairs, Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Government Services and Lands <input type="checkbox"/> Income Security, Human Resources Development Canada <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, Literacy Branch <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland and Labrador Housing <input type="checkbox"/> Rabbittown Learners Program <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers on Wheels <input type="checkbox"/> Frontier College <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Social Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency <input type="checkbox"/> Provincial Information and Library Resources Board | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telecom <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland and Labrador <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland Pharmaceutical Association <input type="checkbox"/> Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland and Labrador Nurses Union <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association <input type="checkbox"/> Dr. Michael Murray, Professor, Memorial University of Newfoundland <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Works, Services and Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Dominion (Head Office) <input type="checkbox"/> Sobeys (Head Office) <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Cable(Persona) <input type="checkbox"/> Rogers Cable <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland Power |
|---|--|

Following the Literacy Workshop, a letter of invitation to the Literacy Forum and proposal was sent to the above organizations. This allowed for invited policy makers to make arrangements for either themselves, or for another individual to attend. Two weeks prior to the forum another attempt was made to contact individuals that did not respond by this date. This attempt was made by telephone. Until two days prior to the Forum the project coordinator communicated closely with organizations that were still attempting to find people who would be available.

Unfortunately, the response rate was not what the project coordinator had anticipated. Many of the organizations were interested in attending, however due to previous commitments, could not attend. However, these policy makers did show interest in follow up initiatives that evolve from this project. Others did not respond to the invitation and could not be contacted. A small number (one) did not feel that they could improve or change their organization or have any impact on other organizations with which they do business, with respect to literacy and older adults. Prior to the Literacy Forum a total of twenty-three policy makers had been confirmed.

Objective Four:

To bring together in a forum, representatives from the field of adult literacy, government agencies, banking and commercial interests and seniors' organizations, to share the findings of the Project's assessment of older adults' literacy needs; and to stimulate positive responses in those areas impacting upon or contributing to illiteracy among seniors.

The Literacy Forum was held on June 6, 2002 at the Fluvarium. The policy makers who did attend were representatives of the following organizations:

- The Bank of Montreal
- Royal Bank
- Scotiabank
- Better Business Bureau
- Canadian Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors NF, Great West Life
- Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Human Resources and Employment
- Consumer and Commercial Affairs, Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Government Services and Lands
- Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Health and Community Services
- Income Security, Human Resources Development Canada
- Newfoundland and Labrador Housing
- Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, Literacy Branch
- Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Rabbittown Learners Program
- Frontier College
- Teachers on Wheels
- Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland
- Newtel Communications/ Aliant Telecom

The older adults who had participated in the workshop were also invited to attend this event. Due to illness three could not attend, three others had previous commitments, and therefore there were only five in attendance. Those who did attend, participated in small group discussions directly with policy makers in order to share the main issues and solutions from their point of view, hence the title of the project, "Listen to Me!" Two older adults joined in the discussion; one was the learner from Rabbittown who has been learning to read only for the past year. The other was a lady who had come to the Seniors Resource Centre to find help for a seventy-five year old gentleman in her hometown who wanted to learn how to read. This lady decided to teach him herself, and with the joint assistance of the Seniors Resource Centre and Teachers on Wheels she received all the help she needed. Both ladies could speak on these issues because they either had these difficulties themselves or had dealt with others in their communities that do. All older adults had an opportunity to share directly their literacy concerns with representatives of

these organizations while allowing the policy makers to supply their own recommendations and promises for the future.

A copy of the Literacy Forum Agenda can be found in Appendix 3.

The morning began with a greeting from the Honourable Judy Foote, Minister of Education, who shared her thoughts on literacy and new technology and its impact on older adults. Shortly after she spoke, an older learner from the Rabbittown Learners Program read her story entitled "Life" to the group. This was an eye opening experience for many of the Forum's participants.

The day was broken into group sessions. Each group contained one to two older adults, one to two literacy professionals (may have been part of the advisory committee) and three to six policy makers. The first exercise of the day was to reword and redesign a consent form. This proved to be a difficult task. Before lunch a presentation about the importance of plain language was given. At lunchtime a guest speaker told the group what literacy means to her. She is currently teaching an older adult to read. This lady wanted to stress to those in attendance that it is NEVER too late to learn.

After lunch the participants again broke into small groups. This group work was very important because this was where the policy makers heard directly from the older adults. A list of the *Issues and Suggested Solutions* (Appendix 1) were included in a package given to those who attended the Literacy Forum. Older adults used these lists as guidelines to relay what they and other older adults in the focus groups/interviews saw as barriers in their daily lives. The policy makers used the issues and suggested solutions to develop their own recommendations and promises for future action. The older adults also learned from these sessions because they found out that these organizations were willing to listen to what they had to say.

Even though the attendance of policy makers to this Forum was not as high as the project coordinator had anticipated, the quality of input and interest exhibited in the project of those who did attend, exceeded expectation. This group worked enthusiastically to learn all they could about how their organizations could improve in these areas and worked well with other organizations that did not specifically have the same issues as their own.

Recommendations that came from this Literacy Forum can be located on page 26.

Objective Five:

To provide a follow-up response to determine if Forum participants' recommendations and commitments have been actioned. This will be done by the Seniors Resource Centre's Literacy Program/Project Committee.

This objective is still in the process of being implemented.

An outline of the presentation by Della Coish, the Executive Director of the Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland and Labrador, is being sent to all the participants who attended the Literacy Forum.

The project coordinator is currently following up on commitments made at the forum by policy makers. She will also be presenting the final report of this project to those organizations that said they would be interested.

The success of this objective will be one that will have to be monitored over time by the Centre's Literacy Program/Project Committee.

The following table lists the specific commitments that were made by policy makers:

Business / Government Department	Commitment	Progress by July 31
Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education	Has made a commitment to focus on the need of seniors and literacy.	In objective 1.8 of the Strategic Literacy Plan seniors were noted as a large component of the population that need to receive special attention with respect to literacy. The outcome of this will be obvious from future actions.
Business / Government Department	Commitment	Progress as of the end of July
Better Business Bureau	Redo forms to allow for them to be more understandable.	Rewrote and designed the Consumer Complaint form. This form had been given to the project coordinator as an example of the forms that

	<p>this organization used. Once this forms was redone it was sent to the project coordinator. This form can be found in Appendix 5.</p> <p>This organization has also redone <u>all</u> the forms that they currently use.</p>
<p>Newtel – Aliant Telecom</p>	<p>Having an ad placement in the telephone book to stress to businesses the importance of putting in place proper automated telephone services. Making industry trainers available to provide tips on proper ways to implement the automated services.</p> <p>*We must keep in mind that Newtel has no control over the organization's choice of automated service. However, they can try to influence their customers.</p>
<p>Business / Government Department</p>	<p>Commitment</p>
<p>Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland</p>	<p>Ensure that their organization is kept as senior friendly as possible.</p>
	<p>Progress as of the end of July</p> <p>To keep this organization as seniors friendly as possible specific things are done. These things include:</p>

	<p>Having a person answer the telephone.</p> <p>All publications used by seniors and all other individuals are in plain language. Those publications that are mainly used by seniors, such as Estate Planning, use fonts that can be easily read.</p> <p>There is an Information Line listed in all pamphlets to ensure that those who have difficulty understanding information can call and get clarification.</p>
<p>Scotiabank</p> <p>Present findings to District Vice President.</p> <p>Create a short paper to share with all Newfoundland and Labrador Branches. Bring related recommendations to Executive Office to see if something can be done.</p> <p>*Scotiabank has form free counter service.</p> <p>Business / Government Department</p> <p>Commitment</p>	<p>Within a week of the forum, the policy maker brought back the information to the District Vice President of Scotiabank. He in turn, spoke with his superior for the Atlantic Region in Halifax. They have raised the awareness, but unfortunately because of the time of year, actions are on hold until the Fall. However, the issues that were raised at the Literacy Forum are on the Agenda for the Fall Atlantic Forum.</p> <p>Progress as of the end of July</p>
<p>Consumer and Commercial Affairs Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Government Services and</p>	<p>Circulate information to Directors in Department. Use ideas in next printing of material.</p> <p>Circulated the information to the other directors in the department, unfortunately, there has not been a meeting</p>

Lands	<p>Is hiring a Consumer Education Coordinator that will be in contact with the Seniors Resource Centre to determine what programs, brochures, etc. would be relevant to Seniors.</p> <p>*Consumer and Commercial affairs are always prepared to meet with groups and to talk to individuals to help them deal with businesses.</p>	<p>scheduled with them. It will be discussed at the next meeting.</p> <p>The Consumer Education Coordinator will be hired in the fall and will definitely be calling the Centre at this time.</p>
Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Health and Community Services	<p>Ensure information from the forum is incorporated into any forms the department designs.</p> <p>Make sure clients are not filling out forms on their own; staff is supposed to complete forms for clients.</p> <p>Give feedback to the specific boards and programs about these issues.</p>	<p>The communications department are currently working on the font size of all material. They have realized that the population of Newfoundland and Labrador is aging.</p>
Business / Government Department	Commitment	Progress as of the end of July
Bank of Montreal	Give information to local representatives and communicate with their National Public Affairs	Have presented the issues to Local Representatives.

<p>Office.</p> <p>Offer to speak to groups related to the Seniors Resource Centre. Hold any presentations that would benefit seniors.</p>	<p>Involved with a similar project dealing with new technology and older adults had sent that information to National Public Affairs Office, have also sent this information. The person from this office stated that this was the latest of several projects sent to them lately from all across the country.</p> <p>The Canadian Bankers Association is also looking at these issues, how they relate to older adults and what can be done about them.</p> <p>If any groups want to have a presentation on any type of banking issues this representative will set up a presentation.</p>	
<p>Business / Government Department</p>	<p>Commitment</p>	<p>Progress as of the end of July</p>
<p>Canadian Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors NF/ Great West</p>	<p>Pass along the information to those in head office to help them</p>	<p>Have brought this information to the attention of head office. Will be</p>

Life	<p>when they are developing new forms or changing existing ones.</p> <p>Run new or existing forms by seniors. Work with Seniors Resource Centre to do this.</p>	<p>meeting with them by end of September to discuss new forms and other issues that were discussed at forum. Some existing forms have already been changed. Forms do not have writing on one side of page but are spread between front and back of this page.</p> <p>Will be in contact with Literacy Advisory Committee to review new forms.</p>
Newfoundland and Labrador Housing	<p>Details of the project will be presented to the Senior Executive Committee for further discussion and action.</p> <p>Work with the Seniors Resource Centre and other interested groups in order to make our services as user friendly as possible.</p>	<p>There is a Senior Executive meeting scheduled and the issue of the Forum is on the Agenda. The policy maker will bring up the offer of the Seniors Resource Centre to review and make suggestions on documents. Will be in contact with the Seniors Resource Centre to give an update.</p>
Business / Government Department	Commitment	Progress as of the end of July
Newfoundland and Labrador Housing (continued)		Met with Senior Executive Committee. All Senior Management were in agreement that they

	<p>should do as much as they can to make their forms/brochures easier to read. Will be sending over a Residents Handbook to the Seniors Resource Centre's Literacy Advisory Committee for them to review.</p>
<p>Newfoundland and Labrador Human Resources and Employment</p>	<p>Revise policy manuals using plain language.</p> <p>Be more diligent in using plain language in brochures and other communications.</p> <p>Have arranged for a plain language workshop.</p> <p>Developing policy manuals that are in plain language are in the planning phases. They are hoping that all policies will be reworded into plain language.</p> <p>All administrative material will be taken out of any documents that the general public will have to read and put into an internal document.</p> <p>Plain language brochures and pamphlets are being developed.</p> <p>The plain language workshop date is set for the early fall. All policy and planning staff will be attending this workshop.</p>
<p>Business / Government Department Income Security, Human Resources Development Canada</p>	<p>Commitment</p> <p>Bring back information from Forum to the Newfoundland and</p> <p>Progress as of the end of July</p> <p>The Regional Director for the Income Security Program has recently</p>

	<p>Labrador Regional Director of the Income Security program.</p> <p>Will continue to promote in-person service.</p> <p>Make staff aware to give assistance to all clients in filling out forms.</p> <p>*Unique to our province, this office sends individuals out to speak with groups concerning forms and how to fill them out, or an individual can book an appointment. This service is very valuable and has not only been mentioned by the policy makers at this forum but also by older adults in the communities.</p>	<p>changed. The policy maker will be meeting with her in September to discuss the issues from the forum.</p> <p>Will be contacting the Seniors Resource Centre to give an update at that time.</p>
<p>Business / Government Department Royal Bank</p>	<p>Commitment</p> <p>Prepare a summary of the issues and share them</p>	<p>Progress as of the end of July</p> <p>Had a meeting with Vice President of the Royal</p>

<p>with the Vice President of the Royal Bank in NF and Lab.</p> <p>Together share all this information with our National Office.</p> <p>Share information with staff to make them more aware of these issues.</p> <p>Develop a contact with the Seniors Resource Centre. This will allow the Bank to address these and other concerns of seniors.</p>	<p>Bank for Newfoundland and Labrador. Both agreed that these issues were important for this province.</p> <p>Had meeting with staff. Discussed the Literacy Forum and the issues that were presented. Looked at the aging population and how these issues are relevant to all. Staff was specifically reminded to offer assistance to those who are at bank machines.</p> <p>Is planning to have a plain language workshop in the fall when all staff are able to attend.</p>
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When reflecting on the forum the policy makers felt that their awareness of the issues were greatly increased. This was in spite of the short time that was available to them to discuss the issues. In each group, the policy makers were asked to be reporters and recorders. This was done, not only to make the policy makers active participants in each group, but also to ensure that they heard and understood all the issues that were being presented. Each group showed improvement in their plain language writing throughout the day. In the morning session the recorders wrote in a paragraph style, by the afternoon session they were writing in short sentences, leaving white space, etc. Even the evaluations that were completed were written in point form.

Factors Influencing Project

There are many factors that can influence the success or present problems in a project. The specific factors that affected the outcome of this project were:

- Older Adults involved in project – Those that attended the focus groups / individual interviews were very interested in the topics discussed. They said that these were issues that were very important to them and they would like to see such things as “legal lingo”, confusing automated telephone services, etc. fixed.

Those who went on to be involved in the literacy workshop and the literacy forum could see that their issues and suggested solutions were being passed on to the policy makers from organizations that they had discussed. This project would not have been such a success without the work of the older adults. They supported the project coordinator and help bring to light some issues that might not have been if they were not involved. This project was called Listen to Me! and the participants of this project made it clear to the policy makers that they needed to be heard.

- Publicity – The project coordinator submitted an article to *The Literacy Notepad*. This article stated the purpose of the project and what would be happening with policy makers in June. This article was read by those interested in literacy all over the province. The project coordinator received inquiries from those in more rural locations. These organizations were looking forward to seeing the final report. There was also a large amount of media interest in the Literacy Forum. The project was reported on in *The Telegram*, *the NTV News*, *CBC Radio News* and *VOCM radio News*. This helped to increase the awareness of literacy and the interest of individuals who were not involved.
- Community Support – This factor was helpful in many of the communities that were visited. The 50+ Irish Loop Association was very supportive to the project coordinator. This group consisted of representatives (older adults) from communities all over the Irish Loop and an Economic Development Officer from the Irish Loop Regional Economic Development Board. Some of the older adult representatives are also Peer Advocates with the Seniors Resource Centre. These representatives were a key factor in holding successful focus groups. They are seen as leaders in their community. Individuals are more likely to go to group meetings and more comfortable speaking if those representatives are present.
- Sharing Resources – Provincial Committee – The Seniors Resource Centre has recently started a Provincial Coordinators Committee. This committee involves the Centre's staff who do work all across Newfoundland and Labrador. Members of this committee support each other by sharing knowledge about areas in which they have worked. Also when one committee member is in a community, information is given out about all the projects that are ongoing at the Centre. This committee also provided contacts in new areas. Sharing Resources has not only been successful to this specific project, but also to others at the Seniors Resource Centre.
- External Factors
 - Timing – The timing of the project was a major factor. When working with older adults a coordinator has only certain times of the year and of the

months to work with. Summer and the Christmas season are times of the year when older adults like to take for themselves. Also, to ensure the success of focus groups, the last three days of the month should be avoided as those are pension cheque days.

- ❑ Prior Commitments - Meetings may have to be rescheduled because of other commitments that the older adults may have. This could include other meetings in the community, vacation time, etc.
 - ❑ Transportation - Transportation can also be a problem. In many of the communities that the project coordinator held focus groups, many of the participants did not drive and had to walk to the meeting or find alternate transportation.
 - ❑ Weather - The weather is always a factor when working with older adults. If the weather is bad or very nice, the number of participants may be fewer. This is very unpredictable and cannot be helped. The weather can also be a factor for the coordinator if focus groups are done within the Newfoundland winter season. Anticipating a bad winter, the project coordinator planned focus groups and individual interviews for Southern Shore area for before Christmas.
 - ❑ Financial - The resources for the project were also limited. A larger survey area would have allowed a more thorough look at the province and the barriers that older adults face.
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- ❑ Government / Business Support – The policy makers from the organizations who were involved in the literacy forum also made the project a success. Those who attended were very interested in literacy and how their organization could change to make their services more Senior Friendly. Unfortunately, some organizations were not as supportive of the project as these were. This could not be avoided. It was unfortunate not to see some of the major stakeholders in Newfoundland and Labrador in attendance. However, it was encouraging that some other organizations, which could not find a representative to attend the forum, were interested in the Final Report and what they could do without being directly involved.

Impact of Project

The Seniors Resource Centre will be developing connections with the organizations that attended this forum. Also the older adults that participated in the forum were interested in being involved in any follow up by the policy makers.

This project has made an impact on various sectors in the community that not only deal with older adults, but also with those who deal with the public in general.

- The Seniors Resource Centre itself is in the process of changing brochures to ensure they can be more easily read. All new and existing project/program staff are made aware of the various literacy issues and how to make their project's/program's information more accessible to all older adults. The Centre is also planning a plain language workshop for all the staff to insure they understand the importance the Centre is putting on literacy.

- The Seniors Resource Centre has offered its services to the business community. The Literacy Advisory Committee for this project has already been involved in reviewing brochures that are being used by the Seniors Resource Centre itself and have agreed to stay in place to review any documents that older adults may use. They have agreed to meet regularly, and to do any follow up that is a result from the project. Many of the commitments that have been made by the policy makers will take time and, as the project comes to a close, it is imperative that the work of the project coordinator be followed up and the connection between the Seniors Resource Centre and these organizations be developed. The older adults involved in this project and also others that are involved with the Seniors Resource Centre are willing to work with the Advisory Committee to make the services of these organizations as Senior Friendly as possible.

- The organizations that are interested in any follow up initiatives that this project creates are:
 - Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland
 - The Bank of Montreal
 - Royal Bank
 - Scotiabank
 - Better Business Bureau
 - CAIFA, Great West Life
 - Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Human Resources and Employment
 - Income Security, Human Resource Development Canada
 - Consumer and Commercial Affairs, Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Government Services and Lands
 - Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Health and Community Services
 - Income Security, Human Resources Development Canada
 - Newtel Communications/ Aliant Telecom
 - Newfoundland and Labrador Housing
 - Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, Literacy Branch
 - Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland and Labrador
 - Rabbittown Learners Program
 - Frontier College

□ Teachers on Wheels

The Seniors Resource Centre and the Literacy Advisory Committee will be directly working with these organizations to ensure change.

Conclusion

One of the major barriers to gathering information related to literacy, especially with older adults, is the stigma that is attached to the word. Most do not want to be branded "illiterate". In order to allow for participants in focus groups and individual interviews to feel comfortable with the project coordinator, she would begin each session by asking, "Are there any barriers in your day to day lives that keep you from getting the information you need?" This question would begin a discussion that would snowball. Also, all focus groups and individual interviews were conducted informally. As the project coordinator, I believe this was the key to gaining the information. Once the project coordinator relaxed and let the discussion take on a life of its own the issues began to come out.

With respect to working with older adults, timing of focus groups and individual interviews need to be precise. The project coordinator was fortunate to work with others who have conducted group work in this region and were able to advise her of the best times.

Also, the project coordinator worked hard to get the organizations involved with the forum. Some were skeptical an arrival of what information could be offered and did not intend to spend the whole day. However, as the day progressed, they found the Forum more and more interesting and realized how much it would benefit their organization.

Even though this project was geared directly at older adults, the project coordinator has found that these issues that have been identified are not only relevant to older adults but also to the general population. This is important to the business community because any organization that deals with people can benefit for this project.

The Seniors Resource Centre has been recognized this year by the PGI Golf Tournament, for its accomplishments in literacy. The project coordinator was awarded an Epson colour printer on June 20, 2002 for the Centre's work.

A major achievement for myself, as project coordinator, has been how rewarding this project has been. With the assistance of the Seniors Resource Centre and Teachers on Wheels, support has been given to a woman who is teaching her neighbour to read. This experience has been so rewarding because this gentleman has developed much more independence in such a short time. This

accomplishment has helped others realize that older adults can and do want to learn and that the saying “You can’t teach old dogs, new tricks”, is indeed a myth.

Final Recommendations from Policy Makers:

The following recommendations have been taken directly from the evaluations completed by policy makers at the Literacy Forum.

1. Don’t be afraid to start at the local level. Changes can be made in local offices by changing your own business practices. The first step is to become aware of the issues.
2. There is a continuing need to raise and promote awareness among policy makers. The issue of literacy can be raised with management who have the power to increase awareness of these issues at the National (head) office level.
3. Review and revise forms when necessary. Currently, some of the organizations represented are redesigning forms that are used by the public. The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Human Resources and Employment is considering developing separate forms for people in policy and another set for those who need their services. The Seniors Resource Centre is willing to work with any organization which would like to develop plain language material.
4. Assist the public in filling out any forms. This recommendation was highlighted at the forum in the screening of the video, “Literacy Matters”. If help is readily available to assist someone in completing a form the client is more likely to get the help they need.
5. Allow for an individual to be available to assist older adults and the general public when dealing with new technology. Standardization of technology would increase understanding and decrease the need for help.
6. Promote feedback by clients. Organizations should be concerned about what opinions the general public may have of them.
7. When designing forms, consult with the people who will be filling them out. Use a sample population.
8. Involve older adults.
9. Contact Federal government departments and suggest they use their own guidelines for literacy when developing forms. Provincial departments should

develop and follow similar guidelines.

10. Share issues with branches/ managers of participating organizations. This can be done through group forums or individually.
11. Keep a close dialogue with the Seniors Resource Centre. Build upon connections that were made at the Literacy Forum.
12. The Seniors Resource Centre's Literacy Advisory Committee could review any forms that are going to the public, new technology that is to be used, etc. This would give the older adult population a voice with regards to these issues.

Appendix 1

**Issues & Suggested Solutions
Identified by Older Adults**

**Issues and Suggested Solutions
Identified by Older Adults**

Forms

Issue	Suggested Solutions
<p>Too difficult to understand. Language. *This becomes a problem because people have to try to “translate” or “interpret” what is being said. Some older individuals find that they do not read important material from their bank because of the type of language used.</p>	<p>Use plain language. This applies to all printed material that would be used by any organization. “Lawyer Lingo’ should be removed.</p>
<p>Hard to see fine print. Printing too small.</p>	<p>No fine print. Larger font.</p>
<p>Two or more questions have similar wording.</p>	<p>Have tips for each question.</p>
<p>Too many exceptions to rules.</p>	
<p>Sending out information that is not relevant to older adults.</p>	<p>Do not send applications, (such as credit cards) unless requested. Have government department’s work together. Develop a computer program that screens seniors by their social insurance number. Therefore only those who fit the criteria get the information.</p>
	<p>Other Suggestions:</p> <p>Have a toll free number printed in large bold print should accompany all information. Help lines should always have an option to speak to a person.</p>
	<p>...Forms Continued...</p> <p>Have a person available to fill out all forms with the client.</p> <p>Representatives from Insurance companies explain policies to individuals.</p> <p>Create radio and television ads</p>

informing everyone about important changes so older adults will not lose out on information.

Inviting a guest speaker come into the community helps.

Peer Advocates have arranged for a variety of guest speakers in the communities that they live. The communities visited which have Peer Advocates are Trepassey, Calvert (Ferryland) and Bell Island.

Those who attended the sessions would like to see presenters come to help with additional types of forms.

At one of the meetings I passed out an evaluation. It was to be done orally. One gentleman stated: "If all forms were written like this then I wouldn't have a problem."

Plain language can increase profits of businesses. For example, a Canadian insurance company, "unveiled its 'simple English' Select Homeshield Policy for home insurance. Sales increased 38%, from \$58 million to \$79 million in the same year."¹

Bank Machines

Issues	Solutions
Where card goes	Have a bold sign on the machine where the card goes, e.g., Insert Card Here.
Too many slots to put the card.	Eliminate slots in bank machines that are not used by public. Those that are used by public, label clearly.
Screen is cloudy.	Sharpen contrast.
Glare from screen.	Develop a non-glare screen.
Screen is dull.	Put brighter lights on the screen.

¹ Plain Language Service, Homepage, www.pls.cpha.ca, 28, Feb, 2002.

Both background and foreground are too similar in colour. Instructions not clear. Inconsistency between bank machines.	Have black printing on a white/yellow background. Have all bank machines the same.
	Another Suggestion: Have a bank representative available to help older adults learn how to use the machine.

Many older adults said that technology is so advanced that these suggestions should be simple solutions.

Interac

Issues	Solutions
Keys are stiff.	Buttons should be easy to press.
Keys are too small.	All buttons should be same size. Have chequing, savings, etc. buttons a different colour.
Glare from screens.	Non-glare screens
Both background and foreground are too similar in colour.	Change colour of screens. Make them similar to bank machines.
All machines are different.	All machines should be the same. Have all the keys in the same place, instructions in the same order, etc.
	Another Suggestion: Mandatory regulations should be put in place to service machines.

Bills

Issues	Solutions
Not clearly stated.	All account numbers should be the older adults telephone number.
Too many numbers and digits on bills. (See Light and Power Bill)	Numbers on these bills should only be the account number and the amount owing, ie. Relevant numbers
Confusion over time frame a person is	Have bills sent out every two months but

billed for. (Older adults were concerned that the bills they receive are for a two month period, however, they only get paid in one month periods.)	have bills broken down into one-month periods.
Advertising on bills.	The utility and other bills that older adults receive need to have only the minimum amount of information. Mail-outs from these companies should have only one topic per letter. Have these letters in plain language.

Automated Telephone Services (including telephone banking)

Issues	Solutions
No human contact.	
Maze of options.	
Options spoken too fast.	The person on the automated system should speak slowly and clearly.
Options went by too fast.	Have a key to press in order to change the speed of the recording. Have a longer break between options.
Too many options per number.	Have one option per number.
Options that are listed do not apply.	Have an Other option.
Services assume you have everything for the call in front of you, and that you are able to write things down.	At beginning of call, alert the caller as to what they may need, eg. Social Insurance Number
Use of the pound sign.	Change the pound key name to number sign key or do not use these keys at all. When you are told to use the pound/number sign key say it is to the right of zero.
Use of incorrect information. (These systems are not updated when changes are made within the company.) Not understanding how to use this type of technology.	Update Systems Organizations should train their staff to deal with seniors who may not understand the technology.
	Other Suggestions: State an approximate waiting period that a person would have to be on hold. Have the option of leaving a message and again having an estimated waiting time to accompany the message.

	For those numbers which have automated services, have an optional toll free number.
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Medication

* When discussing medication the older adults generalized the issues but had various solutions for not understanding the instructions.

Issue	Suggested Solutions
<p>Wording of instructions. Not understanding the instructions.</p>	<p>Have the tops of the bottles labeled with different colours.</p> <p>Have the first two or three letters of the prescription name, bold and in large print on the top of the cap of the medication.</p> <p>Accompany this with clear instructions, for example, take pink (or Abc) at breakfast, lunch and dinner.</p> <p>Pills could be put in Blister Packages. This is a package that the pharmacist fills for you. The pills that one takes at breakfast on Monday are in one section, at lunch are in another, etc. Each is filled for a week.</p> <p><i>“The medical profession needs to be trained better to deal with seniors.”</i></p> <p>To heighten older adults’ willingness to ask more questions, the consultation area should be more private.</p> <p>Print name of medical condition on bottle. eg. Sore throat.</p> <p>In rural areas a large number of the local pharmacists sat and discussed medication with their older adult clients. Many stated that they found their pharmacist very helpful</p>

Secondary Issues and Suggested Solutions.

Hospital Signs

Issue	Suggested Solutions
Signs confusing.	<i>Improve existing signs.</i> Have easily identified volunteers at the entrance of the hospital. Have an in house telephone available that is easily accessible for older adults.

Health Pamphlets

Issue	Suggested Solutions
Difficult Language. Those who do not understand all the information in these pamphlets might lose vital information.	<i>Give only the basics of the medical condition. Those who require more information can ask for it.</i> Eliminate all medical terms. Use common language. People should have an option to get the more complicated version. Have a video available for older adults to rent out. For those who do not have access to a VCR, provide use of a private viewing room.

Doctor/Hospital Appointments

Issue	Suggested Solutions
Difficult language.	<i>Appointments should be typed with the</i>

	<p><i>basic information that was needed, eg. date, time, place and any special requirements.</i></p> <p>Have someone give patients a reminder call.</p> <p>Have specific information that is important to procedures such as, fasting for a certain amount of time, etc. on a plain slip of paper in plain language.</p> <p>Have a toll free number available for general information. Have other seniors explain medical procedures to them and possibly show them a video on the topic.</p> <p>The problem for some older adults was that the information was written by their doctors. This information is very hard to read and many times they cannot understand it.</p>
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Provincial Government Numbers

Issues	Suggested Solutions
<p>Finding telephone numbers in the provincial government pages.</p> <p>Availability of toll free numbers. There are no toll free numbers for provincial departments.</p>	<p>Have government departments send out a small, plain language booklet, which would have the names and toll free numbers of all provincial and federal departments.</p> <p>Those who did not have difficulty were the people who used the ‘frequently</p>

	called numbers' section to get a transfer to that department. However, this section is no longer in the government pages of the telephone book.
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Grocery Shopping

Issues	Suggested Solutions
Inability to read labels. (no pictures)	Pictures on all items.
Packaging and location of certain items constantly changing. (Many of the participants who shared this, lived in fairly small communities. They found that if they did have a problem finding anything, they would ask the people who worked there.)	<i>Do not change packaging.</i> Do not move around shelves. This lead to a suggestion that: There should be a person on staff at the grocery store on certain days who will shop with older adults and help older adults pick up their groceries.

Instructions

Issue	Suggested Solutions
Language. (Cannot understand because of the way instructions are worded.)	Make instructions easier to understand, i.e., plain language. Break down instructions into easy to read sections. One of the methods of instruction identified was caller ID telephones. Many of the participants found the same problems which were identified with the

	banking machines. The screens of the caller ID telephones have a glare therefore the person answering the telephone cannot see the number of who is calling. The other problem with this kind of telephone was that the instructions for setting it up are complicated. Those who did mention it said they would like to see instructions in plain language, so they could be understood.
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During the course of all interviews and focus groups the participants were asked for suggestions on how older adults could learn how to read and write. One lady continuously stated that she was “too ‘old’ to change” and she became dependent on her child years ago. In another meeting, when looking for their ideas of how one would like to learn how to read it was suggested by one individual that “... someone sixty-five and over would not want to bother learning how to read and write.” By others it was stated, “(p)eople who can’t read have a method to go by...” Another lady quickly disputed the former statement due to the fact that “... (her) sister taught someone eighty to read. Now she can make a shopping list and does a lot of things for herself.” For those who think it’s too late, the happiness of a woman who has recently gained independence in this small area, should give them a shot of inspiration. This should eliminate the doubt that older adults can, and will, want to learn.

The solutions that were suggested were:

- Have classes at a location where all feel comfortable. These classes would be informal and very small, and would meet the needs of older individuals. Transportation is an issue that would have to be considered.
- Have ‘one on one’ individual sessions at the older adults’ home. It was first suggested that the teaching individual would have to be from the community because he/she would know who they were helping. However, this seemed to be a problem because of the size of the communities they would be from. “Everyone knows everyone’s business.” This is the main reason why some of the banks in the post offices are not used.
- To have ‘one on one’ in home service to be done by someone outside the community. The person who would be employed there would have to be

consistent in order to build a relationship with those who he/she would have to help.

In one community they said that they would like to see a Teachers on Wheels program. Actually, the Centre has connected Teachers on Wheels and a person who has been asked by a neighbor to teach him how to read. This older adult may have not realized until his spouse was no longer with him that he had so much difficulty. "Here continuity makes contacts." For a person to offer help in the community they must make a social connection with the people they are trying to help.

We have also discussed in great detail how older adults could adapt to using new technology. "Technology makes us dependent" is a phrase that has been said several times. Older adults use technology on a limited basis, and society needs to find a way to make it easier to learn and to remember. This is why we need older adults involved. For example, many seniors are on a fixed income limiting the number of times they can afford to pay for transportation. Therefore, a trip to the bank or bank machine may only be made once a month. Between visits, they may not remember specifics about a bank machine. That is why it is so important to have these bank machines as "Senior Friendly" as possible.

Appendix 2

**Issues Discussed &
Recommendations by Policy Makers**

Issues Discussed and Recommendations by Policy Makers

Forms

Issues	Recommendations
Should I fill out above line or below. _____. Ex. <small>First name</small> _____ <small>Last name</small>	Clarify where to fill out.
Small Print.	Use both front and back of form. Spread out all the information. Increase size of font.
Inadequate space for all information in certain place, therefore you must go to another section to find out information.	When I <u>must</u> refer to another part of the form for information help me get there. Simplify.
Key points are hidden or excluded. Example: Home support Application Has the most important information at end.	Put relevant information up front. Save me the trouble of completing a form only to find out at the end that I do not meet the criteria.
Jargon.	Plain Language.
Not enough spacing.	Use more white space. Blocked form.
Most important points are never highlighted – especially insurance forms. Watch how questions are worded.	Highlight main points. Focus on positive not negative.
	Promote feedback.

Banking Machines/ Interac

Issues	Recommendations
Glare on screens.	Report it to your bank so it can be upgraded. Develop non-glare screens.
Background design. (blends too much) Keypad too small.	Design problem. Report it to your bank. Design problem. Report/complain to Head Office.
No consistency in types of machines. They all look different.	Report it. Standardize. Especially keyboard. Standardize prompts – make them more similar across different bank machines.
Some locations lack lighting. Slots not labeled.	Better lighting. Put machine in high “people traffic” areas. Not hidden in dark corners. Label slots clearly.
Who is responsible for training customers to use these machines?	A specific person should be responsible. Even in stores that have ABM’s.
When I have to swipe card myself, I can not figure out which way to do it.	Standardize interac also. Clarify. Have more identifiers on machines.
Small buttons.	Need to be clearer and larger.
Colour. Screens are hard to read.	Not enough contrast. Change colour used on screens. Eg. black on white.
Clarity.	Make instructions more clear. Again, Standardize.
Slots to insert your card are not easy to find.	Clearly identify the “Insert your card here” slot. Use visuals.

Bills

Issues	Recommendations
Too many numbers on bills. Why? For example, NF Power Bill, or for office use only sections.	Hide the unnecessary information. (Maybe bar code it)
Billing date vs. Due date.	Bold Due date and Amount due.
Too many blocks with money information.	Give me a specific amount. Simplify.
Interest rates hidden.	Show me the costs.
Difficult to read.	Use Plain language.
Too much information.	Eliminate what is irrelevant. eg. Office Use Only sections.
Small print.	Larger print.
Bills should leave out advertising.	Stick to billing issues, such as balance and payments, due dates and amount due.
Finding payment amount different for different bills.	Most common bills should use same format.
Future billing.	Only include information that is relevant and current.
Print too small.	Larger font.
Too much information in such a small space.	More white space.
Most important information is stuck on end.	Prioritize information. Logical sequence.
Irrelevant information. Do not know what you are paying for.	Put sales pitch at end. Itemize bills.

Automated Telephone Services

Issues	Recommendations
Should not be used in service industry.	Eliminate.
Options too confusing. Too many options.	Zero out option. Make the number of choices smaller.
Cannot understand instructions.	Clarity of speaker.
Options too fast.	Slow down. Stick to the most important.
Using letters and numbers.	Avoid using letters.
Not letting customers know when you will get back to them on voicemail. Can not get a person.	Leave a time, such as 2 hours. Should have an option up front to get a person. If there is not a person to speak with, tell us up front.
Too much irrelevant information.	Option to skip certain information.
Don't know what you need when you call an organization.	Prompt at beginning. "You will need the following – ie. Last months bill, etc."
	Could organizations offer special service to seniors? For example, a pin number so they can access an individual.

Medication

Issues	Recommendations
Taking similar looking medication could be a disaster.	Put purpose of medication on bottle. For example, for cough. Avail of a community health nurse to organize.
Many prescription containers do not have "take with/without food."	Use bright label. Many may not remember what their pharmacist/ doctor said.
Instructions difficult to understand.	Plain Language.

Appendix 3

Literacy Forum Agenda

Seniors Resource Centre
Literacy Forum
Listen To Me!
Fluvarium
Thursday, June 6, 2002

10:00

Welcome

Charles S. Rennie - Chair of the Board of Directors
of the Seniors Resource Centre

Honourable Judy Foote - Minister of Education

Overview of the project

Rosemary Lester - Executive Director

Summary of focus group evaluations

Diane Kieley - Project Evaluator

Mary's Story

Mary is a Student of the Rabbittown Learners Program. She took part in "Memory Lane", stories of Learners from Rabbittown. Mary would like to share her story entitled "**Life**".

Comment:

10:30

Small group work

What does this say?

An exercise to stress the importance of plain language.

11:15

Report back from small groups (5 minutes per group)

What did we learn from this exercise?

11:45

Video - "Literacy Matters" - This video was developed by the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy. This video stresses the importance of using plain language in an organization.

Continued...

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12:00

Writing for your Audience... Plain Language Solutions

- Della Coish - Director of the Literacy Development Council of
Newfoundland and Labrador

12:30

Lunch

1:00

Lunch time guest speaker - Peggy

Peggy tells us her story of how she became involved in Literacy.

1:15

Video - "Getting Connected" -

This video was developed by the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging. The topic
is technology and older adults.

1:30

Small group work

Listen To Me - Identify major issues and suggestions for change.

2:30

Report back from small groups (5 minutes per group)

3:00

Summary of day's discussions & recommendations for follow

up

Clarice Cole - Project Coordinator

3:15

Evaluation of the day

Diane Kieley - Project Evaluator

3:30 - Closing and Thank You

Appendix 4

Poster

Brochure

ABM Brochure

Appendix 5

**Forms changed
as a result of
the Literacy Forum**

Appendix 6

Interim Report

Published Materials

Press Clippings

Interim Report

The purpose of the project, *Listen to Me*, is to learn from older adults, through individual interviews and group settings, what they believe are their obstacles regarding literacy and technology. Older adults will also express their ideas on how these obstacles can be overcome. The information will be taken to representatives of organizations that are in a position to help and those who have been identified, by older adults, as being barriers. The project was funded by the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada and sponsored by the Seniors Resource Centre in St. John's.

The primary goal of this project is to ease the adjustment to technology where older adults have no other choice but to use it, to improve the skills of those who find it difficult to read certain materials and to improve the readability level of many forms that older adults have to use. Simply put, allow these services to become more senior friendly.

The project began in August 2001 and will run until August 2002. To date the project coordinator has contacted leaders of community groups within the Health and Community Services - St. John's Region and immediate outlying areas. She has held focus groups in Trepassey, with twelve older adults, St. Mary's, St. Mary's Bay with attendance of nine, St. Vincent's, St. Mary's Bay with fifteen, Calvert, with an attendance of nine, Pouch Cove, eight, Bell Island, eight, the Goulds six, Torbay, ten, Maplewood Apartment's, eight and eighteen individual interviews.

The major issues included; difficulty completing and understanding forms from government, banks and insurance companies. Other major issues were centred on banking technology, such as bank machines and interac. Those who were interviewed also suggested that automated telephone services were a problem. **It has been mentioned that older**

adults need to have human interaction. Of the older adults that were consulted on this issue, many realized that this is probably not possible because new technology insists on automated systems. Another major difficulty is with respect to understanding instructions for prescriptions.

In a changing population, as many Newfoundlanders out-migrate, we must not make the assumption that all older adults have family to help them. We, as a society must understand that because one is aging does not mean he or she is also dependent on others. The topic of dependency is one that came up throughout each and every meeting. Many admitted that they depend on their children to fill out forms or call certain places for them. Some have said that this is because they are now getting slower and cannot keep up with the technology (or so society tells them). Others say it is because they enjoy being dependent on their children because it is now their turn to be cared for.

There is a broad spectrum of implications for older adults who find it difficult to use technology or who have difficulty reading and writing. Those with these problems (being able to complete or read different forms) may lose out on various services, including benefits from government agencies, payments for damage incurred due to the fact they did not understand their insurance, etc. Those who do not have access to banks and have to rely on bank machines and find it difficult to use them, may find themselves carrying more cash, or relying on others to get cash for them, which may lead to many other problems, including abuse.

Those with difficulty understanding health related information, for example, prescriptions, appointments, and proper consumption of medication are in serious jeopardy of creating more health problems.

Older adults who participated in both the group and individual meetings suggested solutions for all topics discussed. More importantly, when discussing literacy, many said that plain language would be a significant factor in understanding documents, including health-related literature. Those who have problems cannot comprehend many of these documents. It was mentioned that the Old Age Security and Canadian Pension Plan information line was very easy to understand, even though it was an automated service. If all automated services could be structured

like this one, older adults said they could use them. All issues and suggested solutions are listed in the attached document.

On May 3, 2002 the project coordinator is holding a literacy workshop for specific older adults from the focus groups or individual interviews. There are a total of twelve older adults invited. These older adults were chosen because of their valued contribution to the project. From this workshop we will hope to discuss the issues and solutions that the project coordinator has gathered to see if all areas have been covered and to focus on what older adults see as the most important aspects of this research.

On June 6, 2002 a literacy forum has been scheduled at the Fluvarium. Those organizations that have been identified by the participants will be invited, including literacy organizations that may benefit from this research. A formal invitation to this forum will follow. These organizations will be made aware of the barriers that older adults are facing and what they see as solutions to such barriers. The representatives will be given the opportunity to pass on any information they learn from this forum to others within their organization in order to stimulate a positive response and change. Positive change will allow older adults to use services more readily. Moreover, literacy providers will be able to prepare more suitable offerings for older adults.

The project coordinator will then document outcomes outlining the Literacy Forum. This will include recommendations from the involved parties and a list of what each organization has been designated to implement. This report will also include networks to aid the continuation of activities that will help to alleviate and/or reduce literacy/technology related obstacles. The project coordinator will then present the report to designated organizations.

As was mentioned by many of the older adults that participated in the group meetings, and also reported but the National Advisory Council on Aging, "Most business, however, appear to be hearing impaired when it comes to listening attentively to the voices of their older consumers. The current generation of older consumers should not wait until the baby boomer tidal wave forces businesses and industries into action. By then, it will be too late. To have their voices heard, they need to become more

vocal, filing complaints, making demands, and teaching businesses that they are wrong to ignore them. The need for older consumer action is now."²

Appendix 7

Literacy and Technology Resources

²National Advisory Council on Aging, Writings in Gerontology, Seniors and Technology (17), pg 45, Sept 2001.

Literacy/ Technology Resources

Creating Plain Language Forms for Seniors: A Guide to the Public, Private and Not-For Profit Sectors. Canadian Public Health Association. Ottawa, Ontario. Copyright 1998.

Working with Low Literacy Seniors: Practical Strategies for Health Providers. Canadian Public Health Association. Ottawa, Ontario, Copyright 1998.

Communicating with Seniors: Advice, Techniques and Tips. Division of Aging and Seniors, Health Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Copyright 1999.

Communicating with Print With/About Seniors. Minister of Supply and Services Canada. Copyright 1990.

Getting Connected: Resource for Older Adults. Coordinated by Nova Scotia Centre on Aging, Mount Saint Vincent University. Copyright 2001.

Everyday Technology and Older Adults: Friends or Foes? Coordinated by Nova Scotia Centre on Aging, Mount Saint Vincent University. Copyright 2001.

Websites

National Adult Literacy Database
<http://www.nald.ca/>

Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland and Labrador
<http://www.nald.ca/nfldlit.htm>

Clear Language and Design Centre (CLAD)
<http://www.eastendliteracy.on.ca/clearlanguageanddesign>

Plain Language Action Network (PLAN is an American Website)
<http://www.plainlanguage.gov>

Web Usability for Senior Citizens
<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20020428.html>
or <http://www.nngroup.com/reports/seniors>

Computers Made Easy (for senior citizens)
<http://www.csucchico.edu/~csu/seniors/computing.html>