

## **AGING ISSUES NETWORK OF NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR**

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Suite W100, 280 Torbay Road, St. John's, NL A1A 3W8  
Telephone: (709) 737-2333 Toll Free: 1-800-563-5599 Fax: (709) 737-3717  
Website: [www.seniorsresource.ca](http://www.seniorsresource.ca)  
E-Mail: [info@seniorsresource.ca](mailto:info@seniorsresource.ca)

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### **Attention: Aging Issues Network members and seniors organizations**

On behalf of the Aging Issues Network Coordinating Committee, I am very pleased to provide you with the Aging Issues Network, Election Guide 2007. I have also attached information on the Aging Issues Network and the list of seniors organizations and community groups that make up the Network. The guide includes summaries of four issues that Network members have researched and worked on over the last year: Housing, Wellness, Social Inclusion and Caregiving. While these are by no means the only issues of importance to seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador, they are some that were identified as priority issues by Network members.

The provincial election presents seniors and seniors groups with a powerful opportunity to raise important issues that affect seniors in this province. It also gives seniors a unique opportunity to have their voices heard and influence future government policies and priorities. The guide not only outlines the Network's position on each of the issues listed but also provides questions that you can pose to political party candidates.

I hope you will find the enclosed information and election guide helpful to you as you engage in your conversations with candidates. If you have questions on any of the material we have sent you or would like to receive more information on the four priority issues, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Alicia Cox, Project Coordinator, Aging Issues Network at the address and telephone numbers listed below. Also, if you wish to learn more about the Aging Issues Network, Alicia will be happy to provide you with the information.

Yours truly

Linda Bowering,  
Chair, Aging Issues Coordinating Committee

Alicia Cox, Project Coordinator  
Suite W100, 280 Torbay Road, St. John's, NL A1A 3W8  
Tel: 737-2333 Toll Free: 1-800-563-5599 Fax: 737-3717

**AGING ISSUES NETWORK  
ELECTION GUIDE 2007**

**Developed by the Aging Issues Network  
Coordinating Committee**

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## **How To Use This Guide**

There are many ways of becoming involved in the political process of an election. As seniors we have power: to assist people who share our vision to get elected, to attend candidate's debates, to coordinate candidate forums and to vote. Yes, **vote** ~ in an informed, aware and knowledgeable manner. This election guide is informed the discussion papers prepared by and supported by the members of the Aging Issues Network. We would like to suggest that you make use of this in any way you wish to raise issues of concern to seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Meet your candidate** ~ Take this election guide to your candidate's headquarters, meet her/him when they visit your area. Find a question relevant to you, your family, community, organization or province. Ask the questions. Raise the issues. Expect the answers.

**Plan a candidates forum** ~ Get together with seniors in your community or organization. Get together with individuals in other communities or organizations and plan a "meet the candidate evening." Take a leadership role in ensuring that issues important to seniors are highlighted.

**Attend leadership meetings** ~ When party leaders visit your community take time to attend. Put a question forward. Bring a friend. Take time to shake hands with party leaders/candidates. Make your presence known, and your issue known. Speak as a voter, yes, but speak as a senior as well.

**Listen to the debates** ~ Take the time to listen to candidates or leaders as they speak about provincial and community issues. Notice how often seniors' issues are profiled and how often seniors' concerns are given serious discussion. Challenge party leaders and candidates on their commitment to seniors issues.

**Take time to vote** ~ We cannot allow apathy and indifference to keep us from voting. Instead seniors must make it known that we are voting for the party or the candidate that has the better policies for dealing with issues important to seniors.

*This page Adapted from: Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Election Guide 2003*

# **Housing**

## **Aging Issues Network Position:**

Seniors want to age well and live independently where they have always lived – if not in their own homes, then at least in familiar surroundings. The Aging Issues Network supports adoption of the Provincial Housing Strategy. There is a need to create more seniors' housing in rural and urban areas through new developments and affordable renovations to existing housing. The Network supports the use of housing models that provide a range of options and choices along the housing continuum and allows seniors to stay in their own home or close to their communities. It is important to that this is developed in consultation at the community level with seniors and families to ensure needs and interests of seniors are met.

Three priority areas specific to housing were identified:

- 1) Affordable supportive housing,
- 2) Affordable and accessible subsidized housing, and
- 3) A provincial home maintenance and repair program.

## **Affordable Supportive Housing**

### **The Facts:**

Accessibility and home support needs impact considerations for seniors' housing. According to a Statistics Canada survey in 2001, 12.4% of the population had at least one disability, but among people 65 and older, the disability rate increased to 40.5 per cent.

In a review of supportive housing models in Newfoundland, Abbott and Parfrey (1998) noted "one in eight (seniors) needs help with dressing and washing, and one in four needs help with cooking and housework." More than half of those over 75 need assistance with at least some routine activities of living.

Several municipalities and community groups have snow removal programs to help seniors clear a path to their homes. In some cases, such as with through with the Labrador Friendship Centre, these programs have been extended to include summer yard maintenance. These types of programs should be supported and encouraged.

### **The Questions:**

- **Do you support the creation of more affordable seniors' housing in rural areas/urban areas/my community?**
- **What types of development would you support related to the supportive housing needs of seniors across the continuum of housing? (i.e. support to remain in own home, enhanced timely home care services, improved access to community resources, affordable assisted living, increased seniors cottages, increased nursing home beds)**
- **Seniors need to live in supportive communities that are senior friendly. How would you or your party ensure that communities take a senior friendly approach in development/programs/services?**
- **How would you involve seniors in the process of creating new developments?**

### **Affordable Accessible Subsidized Housing**

#### **The Facts:**

The number of senior households in Newfoundland and Labrador with affordability problems has increased, with three of every four senior women living alone (Housing Strategies Newfoundland and Labrador). Cost increases such as home heating, insurance, municipal tax rates, variable real estate values, repair and maintenance costs can pose a major burden on seniors living on fixed incomes. Poverty reduction strategies need to look beyond LICO (low income cut offs) to understand the face of poverty for seniors. Along Labrador's North Coast, 44 percent of residents have housing problems and are without the financial resources to solve those problems on their own. (Newfoundland and Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, Labrador North Coast Housing Needs Survey, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador. 2003).

Seniors and people with disabilities are placed in a compromising situation because there are no alternative housing options available. . There are long waiting lists for affordable seniors rental housing, for example:

- Glen brook Lodge has 18- 1 bedroom, 2 – 2 BR units and a 3-4 year wait list.
- St. Luke's cottages wait list is 7+ years.
- Newfoundland and Labrador Housing has only 1.3% of their units that are accessible in the whole province.

**The Questions:**

- **How would you or your party deal with the rising costs for seniors to remain in their own homes?**
- **What would you or your party do to address the need for affordable and accessible housing?**

**Provincial Home Maintenance and Repair Program****The Facts:**

According to the 2001 Census, 84 per cent of seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador owned their own home. 93 per cent of seniors in this province are living in the community, that is to say, in residences other than institutions. “ (Healthy Aging for All In the 21<sup>st</sup>. Century-Seniors Profile). However, the high rate of home ownership does not mean that the housing available to seniors is affordable, supportive or adequately meets their needs. Homes may require major repairs or modifications to improve access. In rural areas demand is more for the home repair program than for rental housing as so many seniors own their own homes. Out of 4,000 people on the wait list with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing for home repairs, 1,000 – 2,000 are seniors (30%). The wait time is significant, 2.5 – 3 years for regular repairs.

**The Questions:**

- **How would you or your party address the growing need for increased homes with accessible features?**
- **Would you or your party support increased funding to the provincial home repair program?**
- **What other strategies would you or your party offer to meet the home repair needs in our province?**

## Caregiving

### Aging Issues Network Position

The Aging Issues Network supports the development of a universal, accessible, comprehensive, portable, publicly funded and delivered home care program. The program should be based on need, not ability to pay. The program should include prevention, maintenance, rehabilitation, long-term care substitution, acute care substitution, and end of life care. This should be part of a national program with national standards and federal contributions.

The Aging Issues Network recognizes the value of programs to support informal caregivers, such as the Caregivers Out of Isolation program.

The Aging Issues Network further notes the value of measures to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of care in institutions.

### The Facts

Many people 65+ in NL have a chronic disease

- 50.9% have arthritis or rheumatism
- 50% have high blood pressure
- 20% have heart disease
- 18.7% have diabetes

(Statistics Canada, 2003)

- 60% of 85+ year olds; 47% of 65-74 year olds receive some form of in-home help (help provided varied from general housekeeping to personal care)

The Statistics Canada report, "A Portrait of Seniors in Canada 2006," is available at <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=89-519-XWE>.

Only 3% of seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador are immigrants, according to Stats Canada 2006 information. That fact does not negate the importance of ensuring that culturally sensitive Caregiving services are available on an equitable basis, whether for immigrants or First Nations people.

The National Evaluation of the Cost-Effectiveness of Home Care (Hollander and Chappell 2002) concluded that investing in home care **saves money and improves the quality of life for people** who would otherwise be hospitalized or institutionalized in long-term care facilities. In fact, the Hollander study showed that "the costs for home care clients, by level of care, are 40% - 75% of the costs of facility care, with the two lowest levels of care at about 40%, intermediate levels at about 65%, and the highest levels of care at about 75% of the cost of facility clients. The study showed that home care and home support services could help to achieve saving governments' money and improving care and the quality of life for clients.

### **The Questions:**

**-Would you or your party support an increase in the investment in home support to allow the people of the province to maintain their independence, improve their quality of life and remain in the comfort of their own homes?**

An estimated 20% of all nursing home beds are currently occupied by residents who require low levels of care and whose needs could be better provided in supervised care, either in a personal care home or through home support, thereby opening a number of beds for those who require higher levels of care.

**How would you or your government address this issue?**

### **Family and Informal Caregivers**

#### **The Facts**

For seniors, it has been estimated that 80% of the care is provided by family and friends. Family caregivers have needs related to: awareness, recognition and information; respite options and increased financial support and funding.

The Conference Board of Canada indicates that 16% of Canadians live more than 1000 kilometres away from their parents, 14% live between 400 and 1000 kilometres away, and 14.5 % live between 100 and 400 kilometres away from their parents. This is not expected to change, meaning family caregivers will not be available to provide everyday assistance.

A March 1998 paper prepared for the Maritime Centre of Excellence in Women's Health stated that almost one in five of the unpaid, informal caregivers are women between 45-64 years of age who spend an average of 28 hours per week in a Caregiving role. Many of these women are in the paid workforce, with over 46% reporting some eldercare responsibility. Relying on the informal support network to provide assistance in everyday activities may not be realistic in the future, as women who work have less time to provide care.

### **The Questions:**

The recently established Telehealth service has been promoted as a service to provide a 1-800 telephone advice line staffed by Registered Nurses who can offer advice. **How would you or your party ensure that the staff are able to address the needs of seniors and caregivers?**

Providing services without necessary equipment makes the job more difficult. Caregiving supplies are expensive. When family or friends provide care, the costs are borne by the individual or family. The Aging Issues Network recognizes that equipment such as wheelchairs and lifts are available on loan from the Canadian Red Cross and that financial aid for equipment and supplies such as incontinence diapers may be available pending a financial assessment, however if the individual was institutionalized these costs would be covered. **How would you or your government address this issue?**

Advocacy groups have called for the implementation of a Canada Pension Plan Caregiving Provision that is similar to the CPP Child Rearing Provision. Just as the Child Rearing provision would not count the years when one was raising children under age 7, a Caregiving Provision could exclude the period of time when individuals experienced reduced earnings because they stopped working or experienced fewer hours to be the primary caregiver of a dependant family member. This would allow caregivers to increase the CPP payment at the time of their retirement. **Would you or your party support this policy change?**

## **Paid Caregivers in the Home**

### **The Facts**

One of the main dissatisfaction factors is the inconsistency of workers and lack of continuity of care. Casual employment and an ongoing turnover in staff do not promote or allow the development of trusting relationships or continuity of care.

Paid caregivers believe that having more respect for home care workers in today's society is one of the top three ways in which the working conditions in the sector would be improved for those who work in the system. Paid caregivers recognize the need for standardized training and education, basic knowledge and skills that address the increasingly complex nature of their clients. To date Newfoundland and Labrador has no systematic training program for home care workers. The need for training on the care needs of specific client groups (Alzheimer's, visually impaired) was identified, as the most needed training. In addition, education with respect to topics including palliative care, abuse/neglect was identified as important and necessary. The most common barrier to training was cost. The majority of home care providers were not given paid time off for training. Standardized training is essential to address the increasingly complex needs of the care recipients, to ensure safe, quality care is provided. The importance of safe working conditions and protections for caregivers is essential.

### **The Questions**

**-What steps would you or your government take to reduce the turnover of home support staff? Would you consider an increase in wages? (similar to those working in institutions) What about compensation for travel time?**

Issues related to the delegation of nursing tasks to home support workers was identified as a significant issue for caregivers, formal and informal, and for the Association on Registered Nurses of NL. Registered Nurses are often responsible for supervising a large number of home support workers, and have concerns about their legal liability and their professional responsibility to provide training and adequate supervision. **How would you or your government address this concern?**

**-What steps would you or your government take to ensure that paid home support workers have adequate support and training?**

### **Institutional Care**

#### **The Facts and Questions**

Long term care in Newfoundland and Labrador is being studied with a view to revising the legislation regulating long-term care facilities. Discussion with advocates indicated that the legislation covering Nursing Homes is outdated and is currently being reviewed. A consultant in long-term care has been examining issues with respect to nursing home with a provincial working group.

Recommendations have been submitted to the Department of Health and Community Services.

Nova Scotia has established a new minimum care standard of 3.25 hours of care /day/resident. New Brunswick will phase in a minimum standard of 3.5 hours by 2008. In oil-rich Alberta the government has been slow to respond to a May 2005 Auditor General's report on Seniors Care and Programs that found "31% of the basic standards relating to care were not met by long term care facilities his staff visited. Advocates in Alberta have been calling for legislated standards for continuing care that are clear, public, and include a plan for real enforcement. The funding for the minimum standard of care to 3.6 hours was provided in 2006 budget. The minimum hours of direct resident care is currently 3-3.2 hours/ 24 hours. Would you/your party anticipate any changes/initiatives in this area?

There was a recognized standard that the staffing complement in the nursing home setting in Newfoundland and Labrador be 20% RN, 80% LPN, but that standard has been eroded for a variety of reasons. Concern exists that the skill mix will be altered to 20% RN, 20%, LPN, 60% PCA, or 20% RN, 40%, LPN, 40% PCA. Would you/your party anticipate any changes/initiatives in this area?

## Wellness

### The Aging Issues Network Position

Seniors need information and opportunities to maintain and improve their health. This can be supported through access to information and programs. Topic areas include **physical activity, nutrition, oral health, mental health, and medication use**. To ensure all seniors are able to access programs and information effectively information need to be presented in a variety of ways with sensitivity to literacy issues. There needs to be promotion of information and programs available to seniors. Existing community resources such as schools and municipal recreation staff should serve as a means for seniors to access facilities and programs. The barrier of cost should be minimized for seniors.

Some seniors are particularly vulnerable and experience greater barriers to accessing information, programs and services. The establishment and support of seniors advocate would provide support to this population.

### Physical Activity

#### The Facts

Physical activity contributes to a reduction in illness and premature death and to the reduction of health care cost, according to the Canadian Fitness & Lifestyles Research Institute report.

The CFLRI report states:

1. Physical inactivity was related to ¼ deaths from heart disease in 1993.
2. When physical activity was increased by 16% there was a reduction of heart disease. Thus saving \$700M from 1981 - 1995 (14 years) and \$190M in 1995 alone.
3. The Conference Board of Canada estimated that a 1% increase in physical activity could lead to annual health care savings of:
  - \$10.2M for Ischemic Heart disease
  - \$877,000, for adult onset diabetes
  - \$407,000, for colon cancer.
4. The 1995 CFLRI estimated a 10% increase in physical activity would result in savings of \$5 Billion. Costs avoided would include medical care, sick leave and lost revenues from taxes resulting from premature deaths.

Liability can pose a barrier to community programs, particularly when accessing facilities for programs. There is a need to investigate facilities for promotion of programs such as schools, public buildings and homes.

Promotion and minimizing cost barriers are important to allow seniors to become involved in structured fitness programs. .

## **The Question:**

**-What approach would you or your party take to ensure that older adults have access to physical activity programs?**

## **Healthy Eating**

### **The Facts and The Questions**

94% of survey respondents age 65-74 report having enough to eat. Researchers point to the consumption of high calorie, low nutrient value food as the main concern for seniors in NL. **What steps would you or your party take to encourage seniors to make healthy food choices?**

62% of seniors who have retired rely on the Old Age pension, the GIS and CPP to survive. 62% of females over 65 in this province live on less than \$15000 per year. **What steps would you or your party take to ensure access to healthy foods such as (dairy products/fresh fruit and vegetables)?**

**-What steps would you or your party take to enhance the access (variety of foods) available through meals on wheels programs?**

In the Canadian Community Health Survey compiled in 2003, 26% of respondents from NL reported eating between 5-10 fruits & vegetables compared to 39% from other areas of Canada. **Does you or your party see promotion of healthy eating among seniors a priority for our province? What steps would you take to narrow the gap?**

## **Oral Health**

### **The Facts and The Questions**

Finances are often a barrier to people having their dentures repaired. MCP does not cover dental health. In NL among those with incomes of less than \$30K only 21% have their own dental insurance. **How would you or your party address this issue?**

Access to dental services in long-term care facilities, rural, remote and first nation communities is limited. Newfoundland and Labrador has the lowest rate of oral health specialists in the country - 31 per 100, 000 people (Canada average 58 per 100, 000), dental hygienists number 15 per 100, 000 (Canada average 75 per 100, 000). In 2003, 57% of seniors in Ontario consulted an oral health professional, in NL only 18%. **What steps would you or your party take to increase the access to dental services for seniors (living in rural/remote/long term care)?**

Dietary choices such as soft drinks versus milk products can impact oral health. **What steps would you or your government take to increase seniors' access to healthy food options?**

## **Mental Health**

### **The Facts**

Penny MacCourt of the British Columbia Psychogeriatric Association believes policies related to seniors' mental health are too often situated within the biomedical model, meaning a narrow focus on acute care. Instead MacCourt feels that there must be a wider range of non-medical interventions and community based services, given that the needs of many seniors are often related to disability and/or weakened social support systems (MacCourt, 2004; Whalen, 2006).

The prevalence rates of depression are significantly higher among seniors in long-term care facilities and/or with chronic medical conditions. Kirby (2006) placed considerable focus on adequate community and recovery-based alternatives to institutionalization for seniors with mental illness, citing that 20% of Canadian seniors have mental illness. Further to this, 80-90% of seniors in nursing homes are afflicted with mental illness or cognitive impairment. Between 15 and 25 percent of nursing home residents suffer from major depression while another 25 percent have the symptoms of mild depression (Conn, 2002). The provider driven model that is in place limits the effectiveness of the Canadian mental health sector.

Seniors are seen as placement problems and there is a practice of "warehousing" seniors with mental illnesses rather than focusing on recovery (Canadian Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and technology, 2006). The committee recommends that funding is allocated to ensure those with mental illnesses receive equal treatment to those with physical illnesses (Whalen, 2006).

### **The Questions**

**-Given the growing population of seniors in the country and the province, and the increase in late life mental illness that will accompany it, what are you or your party's plans to address the mental health and support services needs of seniors?**

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, "aging in place" is a critical element in the health and independence of older persons (Ross Cravit, 2006). Most older persons want options so that they can live in their own home within a familiar community where they know their neighbours and have access to services and transportation. Seniors need to feel connected to their community in order to be healthy. They need support from family, friends and their community to be able to handle difficult situations and to feel they have some control over their lives. **What steps would you or your party take in developing senior-friendly communities that support and encourage seniors to get involved and to feel valued that will also support the mental health needs of seniors?**

**What would you or your party do to ensure that the skills among staff of long-term care facilities pertaining to mental illness are upgraded?**

## **Medication Use**

### **The Facts**

Issues related to medication use for seniors are polypharmacy, adverse effects of drugs, taking non-prescribed drugs and outdated drugs (this includes over the counter, prescription drugs and herbal remedies). Drug misuse often leads to an exorbitant personal expense and is a large ever increasing cost to our health care system in Newfoundland and Labrador. The combination of drugs, the number of drugs and the drug dosage alters their sensory perception and potentially results in injury. Often these falls and injuries are inappropriately labelled as part of the natural aging process and not viewed as a drug related problem. Complicated directions for drug usage and a person's inability to understand the impact can have a profound effect on their overall wellness. Add to these risks the fact that seniors metabolize drugs differently clearly there is a need to find strategies to ensure appropriate drug use.

Seniors comprise 12% of the population of Canada and use 30% of prescription drugs and 40% of the over the counter drugs. People, over the age 65, use 2 to 6 prescription drugs and 1 to 3+ over the counter drugs. Drug reactions/interactions requiring hospitalization ranks 5<sup>th</sup> among the top preventable threats to older people. Many of these reactions are the underlying cause of disabilities and morbidity in seniors. Drug companies have played a role leading seniors to believe the benefits of their products. Advertising by drug companies leads to many seniors self medicating and/or demanding drugs from their health professional. Drug reactions and interaction lead to increased risk of falls and other injuries that are often thought to be part of the natural aging process rather than the result of drug complications.

### **The Questions:**

Our government in Newfoundland and Labrador has made a commitment to strive for Wellness for our province. Phase I: 2006 -2008 strategy includes the development of a Provincial Injury Prevention Strategy based on a review of current injury prevention practices. Integral to this strategy must be a program for the prevention of drug misuse among seniors. **What steps would you or your party take to ensure that the issues related to medication use are addressed?**

In the 2000 report "Seniors Bridging the Medication Awareness Gap in Atlantic Canada", it was noted that "42% of older adults in this province (Newfoundland and Labrador) are illiterate with respect to reading skills." **What steps would you or your party take to ensure that this group receives the health information they need?**

**-How would you or your party ensure that physicians routinely review medication regimes and continue their education about new medications?**

**-What steps would you or your government take to ensure that the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Line staff are prepared to respond to seniors questions related to medication use?**

## **Education**

### **The Questions**

**-How would you or your government encourage media promotion of health related issues for seniors?**

**-How would you or your government support seniors/other community groups to get more involved in health promotion activities related to (physical activity/healthy eating/oral health/mental health/medication use)?**

## **Advocacy**

### **The Facts:**

It is important that seniors who are informed and concerned activists take steps to assist other seniors, as some of them are unable to do this for themselves due to a number of reasons – limited education, poor health, low income, inaccessible transportation systems, or lack of understanding of the policy development process.

At the moment in Canada each province and territory, except Prince Edward Island, has its own Ombudsman's Office. The problem encountered in Newfoundland and Labrador is that if a senior has a complaint with a Federal Department, for example, about their Federal payments, such as Canada Pension or Old Age Security, the present Office of the Citizens Representative cannot deal with it. With a National Ombudsman's Office in place, the Provincial Office of the Citizens Representative could seek help from the National Office when assisting seniors with complaints against Federal Departments of Government. .

Seniors often have unmet legal needs. A legal advocate program could draw on models currently existing in Vancouver, British Columbia. Under such a program, a legal information counsellor, supervised by a member of the law profession of Newfoundland and Labrador, would provide telephone consultation to advocates, seniors, and community workers.

It may be that the current Newfoundland and Labrador Office of the Citizens Representative could, with additional staff, provide such a program, as referred to above, for seniors. In the meantime, the services that they now do provide are valuable to seniors and their caregivers, and they should be encouraged to call that office when seeking solutions to problems encountered in Government nursing homes, board and care homes, or assisted living residences. Seniors should be encouraged to join forces with other seniors whose goals are compatible with their own.

There are already a number of groups, organizations, and branches of government in Newfoundland and Labrador that provide services which seniors can take advantage of. However, one major problem, which needs to be addressed, is the lack of communication to seniors of the existing programs. We can form groups, access funding, and develop any number of good programs, but if seniors or their caregivers, are not aware that these programs exist, nothing is gained. Finally, the three levels of government – Municipal, Provincial, and Federal – need to be more conscious of this problem when allocating funding or developing new programs.

### **The Questions**

**-How would you or your party encourage seniors to become self-advocates?**

**-What steps would you or your party take to ensure seniors/seniors organizations are aware of the programs available to them?**

**-How would you or your party encourage all levels of government (municipal, provincial or federal) to consider the needs of seniors when allocating funding?**

Access to information about care how to find a suitable care facility, available support services and how to access quality care is important for seniors. **How would you or your party ensure that this information is widely available to seniors and caregivers?**

**-What kinds of programs would you or your government support to meet the legal and advocacy needs of seniors?**

## **Social Inclusion**

### **Aging Issues Network Position:**

Seniors need to feel connected to their community in order to be healthy. They need support from family, friends, and their community to be able to handle difficult situations and to feel they have some control over their lives. They need a safe healthy environment both indoors and outdoors and access to health and community services. The Aging Issues Network identifies the value of developing supportive communities with programs that promote senior friendly transportation, friendly visiting, resident centered approaches to care, strategies to increase access to community activities, and intergenerational activities. Financial barriers to societal participation need to be mitigated to the greatest extent possible. Poverty reduction should look beyond the LICO (Low income cut off).

### Strategies to Increase Social Inclusion:

1. Economic and Financial: programs that support considerations for individuals living on a fixed income need to be expanded. Some municipalities offer seniors discounts on taxes or payment programs for property taxes. Insurance should be affordable on vehicles for seniors. It is a major impediment to maintaining a personal vehicle and independence.

### **The Question:**

**-What strategies would you or your party propose to address economic barriers (lower the financial strain) for seniors?**

2. Friendly visiting in the community and institutional setting.

A variety of different community groups offer visiting programs in both community and institutional settings. Further development of these types of programs should be supported and encouraged. Organizations that involve seniors should be encouraged to foster social contacts and relationships between members and within the community

**The Question:**

**-What ways would you or your government support community groups to offer programs such as friendly visiting?**

3. Improved, resident centred approaches to institutional care are required. Although the proportion of the senior population living in residential care settings is small, this group is a vulnerable group. The high degree of vulnerability and the accountability expectation of the public necessitates special attention to this issue.

**The Question:**

**-How would you or your government ensure that the dignity and individuality of each senior living in long-term care facilities is respected?**

4. Transportation to community recreation and activities.

Availability and affordability of transportation is a major issue facing seniors today. Subsidies should be available for transportation used by seniors particularly to participate in community-based social activities and to meet needs such as shopping and medical appointments. In rural and urban areas, private transport (taxi, bus, van) needs to be made available and affordable, i.e. subsidized and time-sensitive. Snow Clearing / removal of snow is also an important part of transportation and community access because it impedes a person's ability to get out

**The Question:**

**-How would you or your party address transportation needs of seniors?**

3. Access to activities in community.  
Activities need to be **accessible** geographically and in terms of rate of frequency. Affordability should not be an issue to curtail participation. Lack of sensitivity to offer a variety of age-appropriate activities Programs should be community based and not dependent solely on volunteers for their operation. Municipal recreation associations need to be supported and encouraged to extend their program offerings beyond youth to include seniors, and to consider intergenerational opportunities. Seniors need to be involved and can serve as excellent resources in developing community recreation programs.

**The Question:**

**-What ways would you or your government support community groups and municipalities to offer programs that are senior friendly and meant for seniors?**

5. Awareness of the need to educate all about the needs of seniors through initiatives, such as intergenerational activities.

Intergenerational programs are activities that increase cooperation interaction and exchange between any two generations. These programs can be mutually beneficial; they provide children, youth and older adults with opportunities to volunteer while contributing to society. With family members living further apart from each other people are losing their natural intergenerational opportunities

**The Question:**

**-In what ways would your government support the development of intergenerational programs?**

6. Access to information through support of literacy programs for seniors

Often there are programs available to assist seniors but they are unaware of the availability or where to go for assistance. The peer advocate phone line at the Seniors Resource Centre, the Provincial Guide to Programs and Services prepared by the Seniors Resource Centre and the Warm Line in Corner Brook are examples of sources of support and information referral. These sources and others like them should be further supported and promoted to ensure that more seniors are aware of where to find this information. Resources such as the Seniors Guide to Programs and Services should be widely distributed and promoted with seniors' groups and organizations.

**The Question:**

**-How would your government ensure that seniors have access to the information they need to know?**