



Seniors Influencing Healthy Public Policy in Nova Scotia

An Action Plan

Community Links
Box 29103
Halifax, NS B3L 4T8
Phone: (902) 422-0914
FAX: (902) 433-9322
Email: admin@nscommunitylinks.ca

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE ACTION PLAN?

The purpose of the Action Plan for *Enabling Seniors to Influence Healthy Public Policy in Nova Scotia* is to ensure that Nova Scotian seniors can: provide support for the implementation of the provincial government's *Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia* (Dec 2005); influence priorities under the strategy; and monitor the implementation of the strategy. In addition it is hoped that seniors will be able to identify policy issues at a federal and municipal level that affect their lives and the things they wish to see improved.

WHO DEVELOPED THE ACTION PLAN ?

Community Links and its members played the lead role in developing the Action Plan with funding support from the Public Health Agency of Canada.. Partners in the process were: the Seniors Secretariat; the Group of IX; Atlantic Seniors Health Promotion Network; and the Public Health Agency of Canada. Brenda MacKinnon of Rising Tide cooperative was contacted to assist with the process.

HOW WAS THE PLAN DEVELOPED?

A series of focus groups was held with senior and senior serving organization in seven regions of the province during the autumn of 2005 to identify the key components of the action plan. A draft plan was developed and taken back for discussion and approval at the Community Links Annual General Meeting in May 2006 and at two further members meetings in an additional two regions of the province in June 2006. The final plan was the result of this process.

WHERE WILL WE GO NOW WITH THE PLAN?

The next step in the process will be to get the plan into the hands of seniors and senior organizations around the province. Community Links will begin to identify parts of the plan which it can help move forward, seek resources and form partnerships with others to this end. This work will need to be coordinated with the work of the Seniors Secretariat in its work to move the *Strategy for Positive Aging* forward.

MORE INFORMATION:

The *Action Plan* and a more complete report on the *Enabling Seniors To Influence Healthy Public Policy in Nova Scotia* project is available for downloading from the Community Links web site at www.nscommunitylinks.ca

VALUES

Active Citizenship/Responsibility:

Seniors and their organizations, senior serving organizations in the community, and governments will commit to the development, analysis and implementation of healthy public policy on seniors' issues.

Rights:

Seniors have the right to be involved and to be supported in their involvement in healthy public policy.

Clarity:

Policy documents and discussion will be in plain language.

Timing:

Policy issues affecting seniors will be addressed in a timely manner based on priorities set by seniors.

Resources:

The resources necessary for seniors to be seriously involved in public policy will be available.

Co-ordination:

A process/mechanism will be supported to ensure co-ordination of senior policy engagement.

GOALS

1. To increase the number of seniors in Nova Scotia who are knowledgeable about the Strategy for Positive Aging and related government policies which will impact on their lives.
2. To increase the number of seniors and others who are equipped and willing to take leadership on or to champion policy issues related to seniors in Nova Scotia.
3. To increase the number of Nova Scotia seniors participating in policy development and oversight of implementation and monitoring (especially as it relates to the Strategy on Positive Aging).
4. To increase the levels of government understanding and support for seniors engagement in public policy and for equitable policy enactment.
5. To increase the ability of community based senior serving organizations to understand and support ongoing efforts of seniors to engage in public policy development, and oversight of implementation and monitoring.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Strategic Action I: Support and develop opportunities for information sharing and network development around senior policy issues.

| ACTION Provincial and local | MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS/FACILITATOR | TOOLS TO HELP* |
|--|---|---|--|
| 1. Ensure seniors and senior serving organizations are well informed about the Strategy for Positive Aging and other policies which affect their lives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government ▪ Seniors' Secretariat ▪ Provincial Organizations that serve seniors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group of IX • Community Links • CHBs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters/communiqués, community forums, town halls • Annual meetings/Seniors' Secretariat Consultations • Newspaper inserts on current government initiatives and policies |
| 2. Ensure up to date information and research is available to seniors to support their involvement in influencing policy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government (Community Counts) ▪ Seniors' Secretariat ▪ Provincial Seniors Organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group of IX • Community Links • Provincial Organizations which serve seniors • CAP Sites • Universities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource databank that allows seniors to do this simply and effectively • Recent research reports • Focused government funds to community issues |
| 3. Build coalitions and partnerships with like minded groups, allies and champions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual seniors ▪ Senior organizations ▪ Senior serving organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHBs • RDAs • United Way • Other Community Development Organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource bank of people and materials which can help to facilitate. |
| 4. Connect regularly with local politicians and media on policy issues affecting seniors. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual seniors ▪ Seniors' organizations ▪ Senior serving organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group of IX • Community Links • Provincial Organizations which serve seniors • Local media • Local MLA, MP, municipal councilor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using media effectively - role of local government - how to build effective two-way relationship with political parties |

*In many cases tools may already exist. They need to be identified and made more widely available.

Strategic Action II: Support and develop senior leaders and other seniors who have the potential to become leaders.

| ACTION <i>Provincial and local level</i> | MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | TOOLS TO HELP |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1. Provide recognition and support for current senior leaders in order to help with the “burnout” issue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government ▪ Seniors’ Secretariat ▪ Seniors and senior serving organizations ▪ media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NS Network, CVI • Community Links • CHBs • RDAs and other community development organizations • RNS • Municipal government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sessions that support development of current and future leaders, e.g. succession planning • Active seniors profiles (local paper) |
| 2. Provide opportunities for new senior voices to be heard and for new leaders to develop | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government ▪ Seniors’ Secretariat ▪ Seniors and senior serving organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural and new immigrant associations • Seniors’ groups that support diverse populations • Recent retirees groups • Heritage Canada | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sessions and resources which focus on raising awareness around equity, accessibility, diversity and inclusion |
| 3. Ensure that senior leaders and potential leaders have access to existing resources and training on policy engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government ▪ Seniors’ Secretariat ▪ Provincial and community seniors’ and senior serving organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Links • Group of IX • Public Health Agency of Canada • CHB’s • CCN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops and resources on what policy is and how to influence it. |
| 4. Provide trained facilitators in communities to help support /develop leaders and potential leaders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government ▪ Seniors’ Secretariat ▪ Provincial and community seniors’ and senior serving organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Municipal gov’t ▪ Community Links ▪ CCN ▪ CHB’s ▪ Envision? ▪ RNS ▪ University Ext. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing leadership development curricula/ programs |

Strategic Action III: To help reduce barriers and support inclusion and accessibility so that all seniors in Nova Scotia have the opportunity to be engaged in healthy public policy.

| ACTION <i>Provincial and local</i> | MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | TOOLS TO HELP |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>1. Explore creative ways to include seniors who are normally excluded from involvement in influencing policy</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government ▪ Seniors ▪ Seniors' Secretariat ▪ Senior serving organizations, locally and provincially | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group of IX • Community Links • Provincial Organizations which serve seniors • DHA's | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sessions for family members of seniors living in nursing homes • TV, radio, church bulletins, editorials, home visits |
| <p>2. Piggyback information sharing, information gathering and research on existing seniors events and activities (e.g. community dinners, Seniors Expo's) to ensure greater involvement of more seniors.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government ▪ Seniors ▪ Seniors' Secretariat ▪ Senior serving organizations, locally and provincially | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local organizations that serve and involve seniors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple "How To" Templates for Action |
| <p>3. Work to remove barriers to involvement (e.g. Transportation costs; meeting costs; literacy levels; technology).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government ▪ Seniors ▪ Seniors' Secretariat ▪ Senior serving organizations, locally and provincially | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group of IX • Community Links • Provincial Organizations which serve seniors • NS Network, CVI • CBT Associations • CAP Sites • CHBs • Municipal government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear language resources • IT (information technology) accessibility workshops |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>4. Train advocates in communities who will work to support inclusiveness</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Senior serving organizations ▪ Seniors' Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Links • Provincial Organizations which serve seniors • NS Network, CVI • CBT Associations • CAP Sites • Municipal Gov't. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing community development and advocacy training |
|--|--|---|--|

Strategic Action IV: Ensure that training and education sessions and resources are available to support seniors’ engagement and government employees’ understanding of policy

| ACTION <i>Provincial and Local</i> | MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY | POTENTIAL PARTNERS | TOOLS TO HELP |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>1. Ensure tools and resource leaders needed to engage other seniors in influencing policy development, implementation and monitoring are available throughout the province.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government ▪ Seniors ▪ Seniors’ Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group of IX • Community Links • Provincial Organizations which serve seniors • CHBs • Municipal government • CCN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building workshops at local level – teaching seniors and leaders of seniors how to develop and implement policy and evaluate and measure outcomes |
| <p>2. Ensure internal systems are in place to train people in government on how to engage seniors in policy issues.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government ▪ Seniors ▪ Seniors’ Secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group of IX • Community Links • Provincial Organizations which serve seniors • CHBs • Municipal government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple fact sheets on seniors’ issues |
| <p>3. Ensure that there is consistent and equitable interpretation by government employees of policies affecting seniors.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government ▪ Seniors ▪ Seniors’ Secretariat ▪ Capacity building initiatives, locally and provincially | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group of IX • Community Links • Provincial Organizations which serve seniors • CHB’s • Municipal government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops on policy engagement for government officials with focus on seniors’ issues |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>4. Hold sessions with seniors to identify areas of training required and their ability and willingness to become engaged.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government Seniors ▪ Seniors' Secretariat ▪ Senior serving organizations, locally and provincially | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group of IX • Community Links • Provincial Organizations which serve seniors • CCN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "How to" manual on policy development for general senior population including why it's imperative to be involved • community facilitators in regions |
|--|--|---|---|

List of Abbreviations:

| | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| CAP | Community Access Program | CVI | Canada Volunteerism Initiative |
| CCN | Coastal Communities Network | DHA | District Health Authority |
| CHB | Community Health Board | RDA | Regional Development Authority |
| CBT | Community Based Transportation | RNS | Recreation Nova Scotia |

Appendix i: Methodology

The focus groups were part of Community Links member meetings held throughout the province and these members were asked to invite representatives from other community organizations, which represent or work with seniors. A draft plan was developed and taken back for discussion and approval at the Community Links Annual General Meeting in May 2006.

Focus group members were asked to respond to the following questions:

- ★ Do you think it is important for seniors and representatives from seniors serving organizations to monitor and have input into the province's Strategy for Positive Aging?
- ★ How would you, or the group you represent, do this, i.e. have input and monitor?
- ★ Who would you need to work with in order to influence healthy public policy?
- ★ What barriers or obstacles do you think make it difficult for you and others to be involved?
- ★ What do you need to help you do the work?
- ★ What structure or vehicle might enable seniors to engage in influencing policy?

A steering committee composed of representatives from Community Links staff and board, the Seniors' Secretariat, the Group of IX, Atlantic Seniors Health Promotion Network and the Public Health Agency of Canada, together with the consultant for the Project, Brenda MacKinnon, met throughout the duration of the project to monitor its progress and offer advice and suggestions.

Appendix ii: Focus Group Summation

It was decided that a focus group would be held within the boundaries of each District Health Authority, nine in total. However, only seven were held, as two attempts in District 2 and one attempt in District 4, were not successful. Weather and conflicting obligations by seniors groups and those providing leadership to seniors groups in the area were contributing factors. Numbers ranged from 8 in the Springhill-Amherst-Oxford area to 25 in the Halifax Regional Municipality. A draft of the Action Plan was reviewed at subsequent Community Links members' meetings in District 4 and District 2, and at the Community Links Annual General Meeting in May, 2006

Appendix iii: Notes from Focus Groups

DHA 1 – Bridgewater (18)

Do you think it is important for you and other seniors and representatives from senior serving organizations to monitor and have input into the provinces Strategy For Positive Aging?

Yes

- If there is going to be such a strategy seniors are the ones to have a say*
- Also, those who serve seniors need to be involved*
- Group needed clarification of the process used for the development of Strategy. Most were not aware of it.*
- In order to have clout, seniors need to have input.*
- Document needs to be an active document*
- Document is like a compass - Government is Captain of the Ship – Seniors are the hands to keep things moving*

How would you, or the group you represent, do this, i.e. have input and monitor?

Input?

- Draft policy statement or brief from the group.*
- Letters to the editor*
- Be at the table for any further discussion*
- Follow up with Seniors Secretariat to see what is happening*
- Communications between and among respondents*
- Local politicians need to be accountable - or to monitor*
- Follow up with politicians*
- How do we get it across to seniors groups that they need to be involved?*
- Linkages need to be fostered between groups*
- Need to be representatives from groups even if the whole group is not interested*
- Guest speakers on strategy could help inform and inspire input*
- Groups should focus on parts, which are of interest to them in particular*
- Suggestion boxes for seniors*
- Short presentations which are practical and focused on the issue, eg Tea and Company, speakers on various topics would be purpose of the group*
- Don't need a committee to do this*
- Get one group to draft a letter and have other groups to sign*
- Community Health Board Wellness funds could support some enabling things like food?*
- Toastmasters Club could help with informing seniors groups and motivating*
- Pathways to Health, i.e. Guest speakers*

Monitor?

- Keep on top of politicians for a report back*
- Government and opposition members*
- Community Health Board does monitor and could be a tool for keeping others informed - has necessary contacts*

- Needs to be two-way communication
- Write to Community Health Board for help
- Community Links can keep members informed
- Let Seniors Secretariat know - give them feed back
- Use strength of 32 Community Health Boards, which from time to time can work together on issues, eg. Smoking
- Linking of groups and networks for province wide response
- Getting to the right person is important
- Use others who will keep with the effort - and may have resources

Who would you need to work with in order to influence healthy public policy for Nova Scotia?

- Community health boards
- Politicians
- Seniors Secretariat
- Recreation directors
- Family Resource Centres
- Others with related issues
- Municipal Governments
- South Shore Health
- VON
- Kiwanis/Service Clubs
- Second Story Women's Centre
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Police
- Seniors Groups
- Nova Scotia Federation of Seniors
- Town Development Division
- Media

What barriers or obstacles do you think would make it difficult for you and others to be involved?

- Government - arrogance - you have to keep at them - it is not always user friendly
- Access is not easy - telephone systems which are electronic/automated and refer you all over the place are hard for seniors
- Computer access may be a barrier for seniors
- Transportation to meetings is an issue
- Personal health issues may be limiting
- Not always the will to make it easy - few options - need to make it easy in some way
- Inertia/apathy - may have tried once and can't go there again
- Lack of motivation
- Young people not involved - there needs to be encouragement for them to get involved
- Prime targets should be 50 +
- Media not easy to access
- Money/cost
- Insurance costs

- Information not easily available
- Awareness/people don't know how to get involved
- Communications barriers e.g. hearing, literacy
- Government changing - things get lost when this happens
- Lack of experience/ knowledge of how to do
- Public speaking a fear of some people

What would you need to help you do the work?

- Encouragement and validation of skills and knowledge
- Resources for training
- Training tools
- Pat on the back
- Recognition
- Train the trainer/ not always appreciated by seniors
- Encouragement of the capacity which they have already
- Sharing of experience of those who have already done it - seniors often have been involved before
- Positive attitude to literacy issues - are services in place?
- Staff of organizations can be advocates (e.g. Home Support) they can bring issues back from seniors who are clients and senior serving organizations can work on issues
- Nursing Homes residents meetings can be utilized
- Information on which Departments to approach
- Financial assistance
- More information on services and resource already out there.

What structure or vehicle might enable seniors to really engage in influencing public policy?

- Not the government
- Fewer restrictions
- Group of IX - feed into it
- More local structures would be better which can feed up to groups like
 - Community Health Boards
 - Local politicians
 - Community Links
- Media
- Some kind of Advocate Structure
(stick like a dog with a bone)
- Policy is often undermined in the implementation through the discretionary power of government staff who are not applying policy as it was intended. They are not looking at the bigger picture of policy and, in practice, narrow the view.
- There needs to be training within government structures on how to exercise authority properly so that good policy is not undermined.

DHA 3 – Annapolis Royal (5)

Do you think it is important for you and other seniors and representatives from senior serving organizations to monitor and have input into the provinces Strategy For Positive Aging?

Yes

- Very important*
- Must in particular have a rural voice*
- Don't understand rural issues*
- Division of resources – human and financial*
- Difficult to understand seniors' issues if you are younger*

How would you, or the group you represent, do this, i.e. have input and monitor?

Input?

- Lobbying*
 - through other organizations, eg Community Links, Seniors, NSCBTA*

Find out what seniors want

- focus groups*
- telephone interviews*
- adequate notice*
- go back to seniors*

-How do we make them listen?

- Nurture relationships with politicians*
- Maintain groups like Community Links, etc, which can work with seniors to help them influence*
- Educate seniors to see they do have a voice - /point them in right direction*
- Self-esteem needs to be raised*
- Need to shift thinking to the fact that people can influence, eg smoke free policy*
- Mechanism for where to go to for information on whom to contact*
- Need to go to seniors themselves*
- Literacy is an issue*
- Also, physical limitations*

Monitoring?

- Ensure plain language reports coming out on what is happening*
- Various means e.g. radio*
- Information in doctors' offices*
- Specific recommendations could be related to particular mandate or organizations can be followed*
- Nursing homes a place for information - children of seniors*
- Each organization has responsibility to see what is related and following*
- Talking to politicians –let them know about how they feel – good (lots of honey), bad*
- Let them know you are watching*

Who would you need to work with in order to influence healthy public policy for Nova Scotia?

- Community Health Board
- Public Health Board
- Politicians (local and provincial)
- Community organizations
- Seniors/whoever will help
- individual
- groups
- Municipal government/resources
- Data person – researchers
- Seniors Secretariat
- Group of IX
- Raging Grannies
- Funders
- People with political influence
- Nursing homes
- Unions that have staff in nursing homes
- Doctors
- Do not limit partnerships
- People/passion/time/money/skills
- Recreation
- Pharmacies

What barriers or obstacles do you think would make it difficult for you and others to be involved?

- Lack of Money/food
- Time
- Timing/notice
- Awareness of ability to influence
- Literacy issues
- Technology
- Physical abilities of seniors
- Patience=length of time for things to happen
- Geographic/transportation
- Weather
- Length of meeting
- Leadership/lack of
- Technology
- Telephones
- E-mail dependent
- On-line funding applications
- Information overload
- Where things are held - come to smaller areas/locations

What would you need to help you do the work?

- Communications on potential issues of importance for action
- Workshops on advocacy/policy influence
- Leadership/mediator between different personalities
- Bring in diverse opinions
- Training offered in accessible locations and time/enabling funds
- Get out into community
- Means to take it back to community
- Time
- Funding sources for facilitation and support
- Knowledge of where to get training/mechanism to get information out
- Networking opportunities

What structure or vehicle might enable seniors to really engage in influencing public policy?

- Need to know who to talk to- at a government level or who might be willing to advocate with seniors or on their behalf
- Data/research capacity
- Focus on where can make most impact
- Committee/steering committee/ group=responsible for monitoring
- Might be little group but needs to be co-ordinating
- Nova Scotia Health Promotion is someone within to talk to
- Within community central body to contact = in area is Community Health Board (resource poor)
- Community Health Board a wonderful partner/maybe not leader
- Some structures in place on certain issues, e.g. smoke free, healthy eating
- Every community is different
- Whatever in place: Need to know who players are who are already working on an issue respect what is already being done
- Grassroots
- Provincial
- To feed information both ways
- Look at structures which have already worked
- Sometimes top down doesn't set up systems which work to get information back
- Evaluation built in throughout

DHA 5 - Springhill (8)

Do you think it is important for you and other seniors and representatives from senior serving organizations to monitor and have input into the provinces Strategy For Positive Aging?

Yes

How would you, or the group you represent, do this, i.e. have input and monitor?

Input?

- Need financial resources
- Petitions, letter campaigns, demonstrations

- Easy, clear way to have input
- Do your research (resource centre to gather information)
- Know facts
- Get people on side
- Look for allies – like-minded
- Be open to new collaborations and partnerships
- Don't reinvent – connect with others who have valuable input
- Research centre/library – policy work resource bank
- Existing orgs like Community Links can provide “connectedness”

Monitoring?

- Communicate with MLAs, MPs at outset, need to know you are monitoring, no surprises
- Make it part of the strategy – mechanisms must be included
- Need ways to improve as well
- Determines impact
- Sharing the info with other groups involved
- Continue working with allies
- Let them have input
- Be inclusive – remember that the “weakest link” has needs as well

Who would you need to work with in order to influence healthy public policy for Nova Scotia?

- Department of Community Services
- Department of Health
- Nova Scotia Association of Health Organizations
- Government
- Health Authorities – institutional
- 1st – Community (volunteer) orgs (seniors within)
- 2nd – NS Federation of Seniors (Group of IX)
- Lieutenant – Governor (informed)
- Minister of Health (Seniors Secretariat)
- Nova Scotia Health Promotion
- Provincial Ombudsman
- Media – build relationship

-Depending on the issue you may have to pull in other government departments like Housing, Transportation, Status of Women (remember gender balance and support goes both ways) – policy specific interest

What barriers or obstacles do you think would make it difficult for you and others to be involved?

- Lack of simple easy access
- Lack of clarity
- Financial – money
- Lack of senior friendly communication system with consistent information to population affected and ease of response

- Two-way communication needed, must be interactive
- Lack of recognizable brand signage – visual branding of information for seniors – how do I know it's important and that I should be interested?
- Inability to work with media (lack of tools)
- Government grant applications – language, legalese, jargon are cumbersome, intimidating (should be at grade 6-7 level)
- Technology – lack of training, interest – need it for accessing government programs
- Transportation (rural)
- Timeliness
- Literacy

What would you need to help you do your work?

- Workshops (town halls) on strategy
- Prioritizing issues and explaining through media ensuring that clarity is paramount
- Communication support
- Enabling funds – transportation, etc
- Skilled individuals to provide assistance
- Provincial support organization for assistance
- Infrastructure (office, equipment)

What structure or vehicle might enable seniors to really engage in influencing public policy?

Community Links + for co-ordinating – already have connections

DHA 6 - New Glasgow (6)

Do you think it is important for you and other seniors and representatives from senior serving organizations to monitor and have input into the province's Strategy for Positive Aging?

Yes

How would you, or the group you represent, do this, i.e. have input and monitor?

Input?

- Involve seniors at the highest level – seniors doing things for seniors (particularly outside metro)
- Young people can't speak for seniors
- Seniors need to be valued
- Want results vs bellyaching

Monitoring?

- accountability measures have to be in place
- feedback from stakeholders
- mechanism for effective communications links that is heard
- collection of feedback in a way that is effective

Who would you need to work with in order to influence healthy public policy for Nova Scotia?

- Community Links
- Seniors clubs
- Heart and Stroke, Canadian Cancer Society, United Way
- Churches
- Community Health Boards and District Health Authorities
- One organizational voice
- Group of IX not working – need to meet us at our level
- Organizations that think outside the box and provide clear understandable information
- Government
- Specific interest groups, ie transportation, financial support
- Department of Community Services
- Fostering positive relations with youth important, fostering intergenerational support

What barriers or obstacles do you think would make it difficult for you and others to be involved?

- Seniors must recognize that they have rights and responsibilities and that they must accept them
- Lack of involvement by municipal governments at seniors' tables
- Lack of interest, apathy
- Lack of awareness of issues seniors are dealing with, i.e. housing, recycling (new garbage regulations esp. in seniors apartments)
- Lack of simplicity in implementation
- Lack of transportation influences engagement
- Confusion among seniors as to who speaks for whom
- Lack of willingness to engage in positive change
- Gobbledygook; lack of language clarity
- Need an effective link from paper to action
- Leadership (lack of)
- Lack of trust – too many processes leading nowhere
- Getting voice heard in rural areas
- Centralization (government and politicians)
- Lack of dollars/sustainability
- No follow through on grants
- Too much government focus on diversity
- Help with technology – fear
- Financial (help with computer courses, etc)
- People who are skilled at imparting information in user-friendly way

What would you need to help you do the work?

- Contact with policymakers
- More interaction
- Need knowledge (simple/clear)
- Simple system to understand
- Research, up-to-date data

- Recruiting and engagement tools to collect the “united” voice
- Need ways to create trust in the system, create synergy
- Create linkages and let people understand why they are part of the solution
- Need success stories relevant to seniors from peers
- Hone in on opportunities to hear from seniors – piggybacking event for government to listen

What structure or vehicle might enable seniors to really engage in influencing public policy?

- Get grassroots participation and use existing structures, like Community Links
- Credible, trustworthy organization to carry work forward
- Cross-sectoral partnerships
- Must be sustainable, have stick-to-it-ness

DHA 7 – Antigonish (11)

Do you think it is important for you and other seniors and representatives from senior serving organizations to monitor and have input into the province’s Strategy for Positive Aging?

Yes

How would you, or the group you represent, do this, i.e. have input and monitor?

Input?

- Find a champion for your cause
- Being part of local discussions, for example, through seniors councils
- Making local – provincial connections
- Local MLA –all levels of government
- Educate yourself, have research, know facts – don’t rely on emotion to sell your point
- Connecting with organizations that have the local facts (VON)
- Local + regional linked with national brings credibility
- Networking with those focusing on same issues – strength and voice

Monitoring?

- Use Internet
- Dialoguing with local MLA and other levels
- Make sure reporting procedures in place
- “More” rural lens needed esp. transportation

Who would you need to work with in order to influence healthy public policy for Nova Scotia?

- Ombudsman
- Municipal governments
- All levels of government
- Know who has political clout
- Know politician’s vision
- Finding counterparts provincially (stronger voice)

- Have community organizations on side
- Involve Community Health Boards
- Diverse partners who have similar issues – Group of IX
- Faith communities
- Development associations
- “Invisible” seniors in care complexes
- Community Links
- Seniors’ Secretariat

What barriers or obstacles do you think would make it difficult for you and others to be involved?

- Lack of money at all levels – research, focus groups, implementation, core funding
- Red tape everywhere
- Time factor – changes picture
- Clarity around who does what, who speaks for seniors
- Divisions of jurisdictions and no communication among them
- Coles Notes on how to write a proposal – is it a service that Community Links could offer? Business plans, strategic plans or another organization to help with that
- Need money to get money
- Monies needed for community capacity building and planning
- Clarity around criteria – how to access programming, who to go to, who does what
- Seniors’ voices not being heard, e.g. home care
- Apathy
- Same volunteers engaged in many orgs – volunteer burnout
- Accessibility issues for diverse communities
- Urban vs rural threat –cities getting the attention – rural getting smaller/older
- Global picture impacting on local – priorities changing
- Inflexibility, fearing change
- Technology and its use – can hold people back but also a positive
- Literacy – 54% province wide
- Social ex/inclusion, poverty

What do you need to help you do your work?

- Communicating effectively to get message out
- Skills for proposal writing, business and strategic planning
- Seed money
- Whose who list? Whose where? What do they do?
- Existing organizations like Community Links, Seniors Secretariat, could act as a resource databank (senior friendly) eg Inverness-Richmond Literacy Association directory
- Finding champions that can move your organization forward – they have to be connected and respected
- Volunteers need support and recognition – need to be thanked
- Help with knowing which issues to tackle, the issues where there is potential for positive results – picking the right fights
- Learn to celebrate the positive and the small successes

- Retirees moving into communities or back to communities – use them
- Skills bank – who has which skills
- Nurturing leadership, mentoring
- Short modules on leadership skills development – Recreation NS, RCIP

What structure or vehicle might enable seniors to really engage in influencing public policy?

- Follow chain of command – bring people on board throughout the process – from grassroots up
- Bring issues to Seniors Federation AGM
- Seniors Secretariat (need to be influenced)
- Community health boards can be advocates but not solely focused on seniors' issues
- Community Links

DHA 8 - Cape Breton – Gaelic College (11)

Do you think it is important for you and other seniors and representatives from senior serving organizations to monitor and have input into the province's Strategy for Positive Aging?

Yes

- Concern? Inclusion of all seniors
- Need safeguards for rural seniors
- Rural seniors voices must be heard

How would you, or the group you represent, do this, i.e. input and monitor? Input?

- Time spent on educating all seniors
- Making certain as many seniors as possible know about this
- Need for conduit
- How to make it accessible?
- Needs to be clear and brought to level of understanding which works for all
- Clear language
- Don't use acronyms. Be Clear!!!
- Don't assume seniors know or understand
- Need facilitators who can use good communications
- Interesting
- Not easy to engage in issues
- Need to make links to their own lives
- Skills development for seniors – technology
- Need people who will speak out.
- Individual networking very important/informal systems/people who will ask others what they think
- Lesson plan
- Organizations can be crucial (such as Community Links)
- People from outside + insiders as translators
- Protest/Lobbying e.g. Pensioners – Prescription drugs
- Conduit – champion

Monitoring?

- Protest/Monitoring*
- Knowledge of Strategy*
- Input comes back through some organization*
- Mechanism for feeding back what is happening*
- Politics – need group of individuals rather than just individuals*
- Who takes responsibility?*
- Organization communication*
- Increasing profile of provincial organizations*

Who would you need to work with in order to influence healthy public policy for Nova Scotia?

- Seniors' Secretariat (voice of seniors to government)*
- All seniors' organizations which relate to government*
- Retired people's organization at provincial level*
- Gray Tigers/Raging Grannies*
- Municipal Councils – Town Hall meetings*
- Members of the Legislative Assembly*
- CAP sites*
- Firefighters*
- Development Associations*
- Community Health Boards*
- District Health Authorities*
- Seniors' organization at community level*
- Public Health Agency of Canada - Population Health –Seniors Directorate*

(need a simple structure for communication)

What barriers or obstacles do you think would make it difficult for you and others to be involved?

- Lack of clear language*
- Not knowing or understanding what is involved or who is affected*
- Too much information, too much going on creates confusion*
- Some seniors' groups eg New Horizons are not really concerned by issues/social interests*
- Young seniors more interested in issues, not older seniors*
- Lack of time*
- Rural seniors lower expectations – leads to complacency*
- Culture and history*
- Resources*
- Negative image of seniors' group – keeps others out*
- Current technology that is confusing not race to bill*

What do you need to help you do the work?

- Food and social time*

- Knowledge of technology
- Facilitator to help them use technology or other sources
- Training for seniors
- Money/core funding
- Need volunteers and people to run things, be involved
- Time/skills
- Community development/Facilitation skills
- Sustainability – financial – community buy in
- Support for enabling funds for items like transportation, facilities
- Ways to bring seniors' groups to work together
- Clearinghouse to find and identify and inform people about systems already in place
- Don't reinvent the wheel
- Use what is already in place
- Coalitions
- Resources for networking and sustaining things already in place
- Face to face contact (opportunities)
- Navigation of the system
- Clear communication skills
- A way to make it happen at local level
- Need to see they can play a role in this
- Organizations need different approaches to be effective
- Combine activities opportunities for different needs
(needs to be effective at local level)
- Get more out of rural person
- Are rural seniors more accepting of status quo than urban seniors
- Is self-sufficiency a good thing or a bad thing or a myth?
- Still need services
- Population declining because services not there
- Seniors to take more responsibility

What structure or vehicle might enable seniors to engage in influencing policy?

Local level:

- Recreation Departments in community to identify groups=local level=know who is out there
- Municipal councils – ask them to bring people together / not likely to happen
- Health centres – Community Health Boards
- Bring seniors groups together (who to do)
- Encourage groups to share resources
- Community Links
- Flow Chart tool – local and provincial level template for navigation

DHA 9 – Dartmouth (22)

Do you think it is important for seniors and representatives from seniors serving organizations to monitor and have input into the provinces Strategy for Positive Aging?

A resounding “ yes”

- *it is important for “new” seniors to have a voice*
- *there is a need for input from Caregivers*
- *because the document is based on input from seniors it makes sense for seniors to follow up*

How would you or the group you represent , do this, i.e. input and monitor? Input?

- *Attend meetings around the strategy*
- *Appoint representatives in one’s group to attend the meetings re strategy*
- *Educate yourself and your group about the strategy*
- *Call Secretariat to get on the list Re Strategy roll out*
- *Section the strategy out into the sections of particular interest to them*
- *Hold focus groups in own area on strategy (aging in dignity)*
- *Network out to other groups on issues of mutual concern*
- *Become really familiar with the document - quote and use to justify your own case for action*
- *Write a brief*
- *Circulate brief to other groups (process to use for gaining support)*

Monitoring?

- *When new policy or program announced check it against strategy. Eg. Self Managed Care Program which was brought in last year - does not match what the Strategy is saying.*
- *Media watch*
- *Need some group to monitor so Secretariat doesn’t step out of bounds*
- *Group of IX has the ear (many not clear on what Group of IX is)*
- *Attend Seniors’ Secretariat Consultations (Fall and Spring)*

Who would you need to work with in order to influence healthy public policy?

- *Community Health Boards*
- *Department of Health*
- *Politicians*
- *Department of Transportation*
- *Key government department*
- *Municipalities*
- *Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities*
- *Members of Parliament*
- *Service groups*
- *Canadian Federation of Independent Business*
- *Medical Society*
- *Doctors without Barriers*
- *Local Level*
 - *churches*
 - *seniors clubs - by taking a proactive approach by including it on agendas*

- *Halifax Seniors' council*
- *Councils of seniors*
- *Multicultural Association*
- *Universities - researchers*
- *Health Promotion program at Dalhousie University*
- *NS Association of Social workers*
- *Gerontology Association*
- *Legal Council/Public Legal Information*
- *Seniors' Law - C Bar Association -Elder Law*
- *Pharmacists*
- *Non-profits like Red Cross and Victoria Order of Nurses*

What barriers or obstacles do you think would make it difficult for you and others to be involved?

- *Health issues*
- *Transportation*
- *Fixed incomes (economic barriers)*
- *Literacy levels*
- *Gender/poverty - women living on fixed incomes*
- *Racial discrimination*
- *Language barriers e.g. French*
- *Time management - need for balance - may make it difficult for busy seniors to engage in policy issues*
- *Non-profits have limited resources/limited staff time for policy engagement*
- *Need to know about what happening - don't always*
- *Not easy to disseminate information that is needed (competition from conflicting sources)*
- *Physical barriers, e.g. hearing, mobility*
- *Processes need to be inclusive*
- *Lack of self-esteem by some seniors makes it difficult for them to speak out*

What do you need to help you do the work?

- *Documents in plain language (get rid of jargon)*
- *Food!!!!*
- *Realistic time lines for activity*
- *Agendas in advance of meetings*
- *Financial resources for transportation, caregiver support, etc.*
- *Build in recreational activity into meetings - fun*
- *Changing venues in order that groups can get to know each other in their own communities*
- *Tools to communicate*
- *Help in engaging individual seniors who are not connected to a group*
- *Money for advertising and promotion*
- *Dedicated leadership*
- *Way to engage youth in issues - intergenerational approaches*

What structure or vehicle might enable seniors to engage in influencing policy?

- *Community Links could serve as a vehicle*
- *Group IX*
- *Seniors' Secretariat*
- *Seniors' councils*
- *Clearinghouse*
- *P.O.W.*
- *Churches might provides some infrastructure for information sharing*
- *Champion for thinking through - spearheading.*
- *Each group to do own work but Champion could serve as a funnel? Community Links*
- *Senior Safety Coordinators could be a resource*
- *Video - information piece on issues - could be shown pre meetings - would help with issues of literacy problems*
- *Local radio stations could be involved*
- *Program on Cable TV*

Appendix iv: Key Topics and Themes Emerging from Focus Groups

Seniors know that information and help is available and that work is being carried out in Nova Scotia on seniors' issues, but they feel there is no co-ordination and/or common approach to allow seniors to have input and exert influence on the government strategy. Community Health Boards, Community Links, seniors and service clubs, Federation of Nova Scotia Seniors, Seniors' Secretariat and in some cases the media, are repeatedly suggested as organizations which could help to educate, communicate and involve seniors in the process. They do recognize that collaboration is key and the power of networking cannot be underestimated. The structure for engagement must be multi-level; from local organization, to local community, to district, to the provincial level. Also, all organizations that affect/have links to seniors must be part of engagement web.

There are challenges for rural seniors of distance, funding, and low representation

Technology can be a barrier. Seniors have been left behind, with no training in e-mail, filling in funding proposals on-line, and Internet research. In many cases, internet access is not available.

Seniors often get tied up in bureaucracy. There is red tape, hoops to jump through, and no way to identify who is who in government. This can be totally frustrating

Literacy is still a problem. In Nova Scotia, forty-six per cent of seniors have low literacy skills, and this figure is even higher among older seniors. This translates into comprehension problems and concerns around health care access and medication usage. Illiteracy or low literacy can lead to reluctance to speak up at meetings and difficulty in attempt to communicate through writing letters and reading documents.

Plain language documents and dialogue are crucial

Don't make assumptions that people know about or are aware of how they can be engaged in the policy dialogue.

Appendix v: Common Threads

i. Common Threads

- a) All participants knew about two or more organizations working for/with seniors but few groups had more than a couple in common. Those mentioned most frequently were community health boards, Community Links, Seniors Federation, Seniors' Secretariat, different levels of government – municipal, regional, provincial. Apparently very few knew about the Group of IX.
- b) Language and literacy – most groups had a concern about the absence of “plain language”, the difficulty of reading and understanding the current information and the ability of many to read and comprehend.
- c) Lack of resources to enable participation, cost of travel, no public transportation in many areas. Most felt institutionalized seniors were not included in the information gathering or sharing. Fixed incomes, especially among senior women, prevents participation. Knowledge transfer - how do you manage that – if you have transportation, you will get to a place where knowledge can be transferred
- d) Leadership and volunteer burn out is a concern – many felt the absence of leaders who are equipped to deal with government. Many suggested that leadership/skills training would be a good start to enabling seniors to take an active role in something as intimidating as “a government strategy”. Dedicated leadership is key – must figure out a way to support that. Those in communities where people were active noted that volunteer burnout and lack of time to do it all by so few was a big concern.

Appendix vi: Distinctions/Differences

- e) Rural concerns showed up in all but the Halifax group. The Halifax group appeared to be more aware of issues and more involved in the policy-making arena. Seniors in the Halifax group also have higher access to services. It is important to note that this is not the case across the province.
- f) All groups seemed to have difficulty with the concept of monitoring. Many responses didn't seem to fit and it appeared they looked at monitoring as a "communication question".
- g) Participants had differing opinions on whether the government was able to help or should be depended on. Some felt that policy is often undermined in the implementation stage through the discretionary power of government staff who are not applying policy as it was intended. They are not looking at the bigger picture of policy, and, in practice, narrow the view. There needs to be training within government structures on how to exercise authority properly so that good policy is not undermined
- h) Some people put forth suggestions that were mentioned only once, but are worth noting:
 - Involve the doctors; use their office to disseminate information.
 - Organize a lobby/letter writing.
 - Use nursing homes to educate the children of seniors to get them involved.
 - Use pharmacies and pharmacists to promote seniors involvement in policy
 - Use Cable TV
 - Celebrate small successes

Glossary

Advocacy

Advocacy is defined as "the act of speaking or of disseminating information intended to influence individual behavior or opinion, corporate conduct, or public policy and law." (Working Together: A Government of Canada/Voluntary Sector Joint Initiative: Report of the Joint Tables, Voluntary Sector Task Force, Privy Council Office, Government of Canada, August 1999. <http://www.vsr-trsb.net/publications/pco-e.pdf>)

Citizen Engagement

The process of informed dialogue and deliberation among individual citizens, usually involving the exchange of ideas and values, opportunities to learn from each other, decisions on best ways to move forward, and formation of partnerships to act on solutions.

Collaboration

A process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can explore constructively their differences and search for (and implement) solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible. Collaboration is a mechanism for leveraging resources; dealing with scarcities; eliminating duplication; capitalizing on individual strengths; building internal capacities; and increasing participation and ownership strengthened by the potential for synergy and greater impact. (University of Victoria. *Voluntary Sector Knowledge Network*. <http://vskn.ca>)

The National Network for Collaboration has developed a framework into which various levels of collaboration fit. It provides a useful way of understanding the structure and organizational implications of different levels of activity.

| Levels | Purpose | Structure | Process |
|------------|--|--|---|
| Networking | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dialogue and common understanding• Clearinghouse for information• Create base of support | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loose/flexible link• Roles loosely defined• Community action is primary link among members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low key leadership• Minimal decision making• Little conflict• Informal communication |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Co-operation or Alliance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match needs and provide co-ordination • Limit duplication of services • Ensure tasks are done | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central body of people as communication hub • Semi-formal links • Roles somewhat defined • Links are advisory • Group leverages/raises money | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitative leaders • Complex decision making • Little conflict • Formal communications within the central group |
| Co-ordination or Partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share resources to address common issues • Merge resource base to create something new | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central body of people consists of decision makers • Roles defined • Links formalized • Group develops new resources and joint budget | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomous leadership but focus in on issue • Group decision making in central and subgroups • Communication is frequent and clear |
| Coalition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share ideas and be willing to pull resources from existing systems • Develop commitment for a minimum of three years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All members involved in decision making • Roles and time defined • Links formal with written agreement • Group develops new resources and joint budget | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared leadership • Decision making formal with all members • Communication is common and prioritized |
| Collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accomplish | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| | <p>shared vision and impact benchmarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build interdependent system to address issues and opportunities | <p>used in shared decision making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles, time and evaluation formalized • Links are formal and written in work assignments | <p>high, trust level high, productivity high, ideas and decisions equally shared</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly developed communication |
|--|--|---|---|

Community Links

Community Links is a provincial association of 185 community organizations building healthy communities and enhancing the quality of life for seniors in rural Nova Scotia through community development and volunteer action.

Group of IX

The Group of IX is an independent organization dedicated to improving the well-being of Nova Scotia seniors. Their primary role is to strengthen the voice and presence of seniors in government decision making. They fulfill that role by serving as an advisory body to the Nova Scotia Senior Citizens' Secretariat – the government agency that influences and supports policy development across government on behalf of Nova Scotia seniors. They also provide advice to other government departments upon request. Currently, they are providing advice to the Minister of Health on the Seniors' Pharmacare Program and continuing care services.

Policy

A Policy is a plan of action agreed to by a group of people with the power to carry it out and enforce it. (Capacity Building: Linking Community Experience to Public Policy, Health Canada 2000)

Policy Capacity

The ability to collaboratively generate and apply knowledge, networks, contracts and processes to ensure sound policy development in both the sector and the government, in a way that benefits the sector and the public. Communication is key: it is important that organizations establish two way flow of information with their membership/constituents, deriving input from them and delivering policy information to them. (Working Together: A Government of Canada/Voluntary

Sector Joint Initiative: Report of the Joint Tables, Voluntary Sector Task Force, Privy Council Office, Government of Canada, August 1999. <http://www.vsr-trsb.net/publications/pco-e.pdf>)

Policy making

Making choices to bring about change. Regardless of the approach and methods used, policy making is a political process.

Policy Process

There are many ways to approach influencing policy. The following is a summary of some of the possible steps:

Steps to Influence Public Policy

1. Pick an Issue

- Understand what's happening with the issue.
- Do your research.
- Decide on your goal.

2. Find Partners & Allies

- Consider who is interested in this issue.
- What resources and skills can we offer each other?

3. Plan Your Action

- Decide who to lobby.
- Determine your short term goals.
- Decide what strategies you'll use.

4. Implement Your Plan

- Carry out your plan.
- Keep track of the tasks to influence the policy.

5. Evaluate Your Action

- Consider where you started and where you are now- what were the successes, the challenges, what was the outcome?

Developing Rural Seniors Skills for Influencing Public Policy
Community Links, 2003

Public Consultation

Canvassing of views of stakeholders and clients in the process of developing sound public policy, often through forums, round-tables, and advisory bodies. Public consultation is part of, but not synonymous with, public involvement.

Public Information Techniques

Ways to inform the public about policy issues and to engage them in a policy development process. The Institute for Public Participation defines public information techniques as passive and active techniques. Passive techniques include printed material, information repositories, advertisements, press releases, conferences, web sites and television ads. Active techniques include briefings, hot lines, technical assistance, central information contacts/centers, simulation games, expert panels, field trips, open houses and community fairs.

Public Involvement

A range of activities and relationships, including two-way communications, public education, stakeholder consultation, citizen engagement, advisory bodies, partnerships, and joint decision-making. This includes a continuing dialogue, where all participants are open to influencing each others decisions. (Health Canada. Office of Consumer and Public Involvement. Public Involvement: Framework and Guidelines. 2000. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/ocapi-bpcp/framework_guides_doc1_e.html#1)

Public Policy

A set of interrelated decisions taken by public authorities concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them.

Public Policy Development

The complex and comprehensive process by which policy issues are identified; the public policy agenda is shaped; issues are researched, analyzed and assessed; policies are drafted and approved; and, once implemented, their impact is assessed. (*Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue*. p. 3.)

Public Policy Dialogue

Interaction between governments and non-governmental organizations at the various stages of the policy development process to encourage the exchange of knowledge and experience in order to have the best possible public policies. (*Building Blocks for Tobacco Control: A Handbook*. WHO: France. 2004, pp 68-69. Adapted)

Seniors' Secretariat

The Senior Citizens' Secretariat is the provincial government agency responsible for coordinating the planning and development of policies, programs and services for seniors.

Strategy for Positive Aging

The Nova Scotia Government's Strategy for Positive Aging (Dec 2005) reflects the insights and experiences of the more than 1,000 Nova Scotians who provided direct input during its development through public and stakeholder meetings of the Task Force on Aging and submitted written responses to the Discussion Paper. The Strategy is a guide for helping all sectors create senior-friendly communities.

Appendix viii. Sample Tools for Engagement

How to Engage – Sample Tool 1

10 Lessons learned by seniors impacting policy: (*Voices of Experience*, Community Links, 2004)

- 1. Commit to your issue-** Believe what you're doing. You need conviction that your issue is important and commitment to follow through. Never give up. Keep trying to get your message across to other people. "Speak your voice loud and clear."
- 2. Knowledge is power-** Learn all there is to know about the policy you're working on- be well informed. Read, do research, talk to experts-do whatever it takes. Pay close attention to what is said and written. Ask questions until you understand the issue. Once you have the information you need, share it with others in a way that helps them to understand, too "It is necessary to understand the topic thoroughly, especially when you meet politicians. Know your facts!"
- 3. Plan, prepare, strategize-** Have a well-mapped-out strategy and time line- know what you're working toward. Know that it's doable. A step-by-step approach is what gets results. People need to know what the objectives are and what they need to do to achieve them. Timing is important. The more people who are interested in the issue, the more likely it is you will succeed. Start small and take advantage of opportunities to spread your message and build support. It's also important to keep track of what you're doing so you can assess how effective your activities have been. Be frequently checking up on how well your plan is working, you can change course if you see that what you're doing isn't getting the result you want. "Change comes from an intentional action plan and strategy." "Little changes are great if there are a lot of them moving toward a big change."
- 4. There's strength in numbers-** One is a lonely number. There is more power in a larger group and much more support for each other. As well, changing policy can be a labour-intensive job. Many hands make light work!
Within your own group, have regular meetings, keep everyone in the know and encourage everyone to participate.
Networking-making connections, forming partnerships, and working cooperatively with other groups- is vital to success. The power and feeling of strength you get from a lot of groups working together is amazing!
"Numbers count with government. We can make government listen if there are enough people participating."
- 5. You CAN overcome apathy-** It can be frustrating when others don't see how changing a policy will make their lives better. Motivating people can be very difficult. Some people feel that there's no point in trying to influence government. Others just want to sit back and "Let George do it."

People need to feel part of a group in order to become involved. The first step in overcoming apathy is to make people feel welcome and valued. Create an atmosphere where everyone feels that they have something to offer and that what they contribute- however small-is important. It's also important to understand your issue so well that you can explain it clearly, catch people's interest and imagination, and help them to see how a particular policy affects them. "We as seniors may hesitate, but with determination we can make a difference. First, we must find that determination on a particular issue and then act on it."

- 6. Meet with politicians whenever you can-** Taking your issue directly to politicians can be very effective when trying to make a point about policy change. MLAs, MPs, provincial and federal Ministers, municipal Councilors- anyone who holds elected office needs to know what his or her constituents think. Your voice counts, so use it!
If you can't physically meet with a politician, write. Send letters and information that supports your points. Find out who makes or influences the policy you're interested in and make contact. "The voices of seniors are valuable."
- 7. Working for policy change develops skills-** In addition to what they learned at workshops, seniors developed a range of skills as they worked on their issue. They learned what policy is, how it is developed and what they need to do to influence it. They developed skills for getting people involved, collecting information, getting feedback from the public and presenting their ideas to others, verbally and in writing. "I gained a notebook of new ideas and ways of trying to approach them."
- 8. Participation builds confidence-** Participation can have personal benefits- many seniors said they felt more confident as a result of the skills they learned in workshops and developed while working on their issue. They felt better informed and found that hearing about what others had accomplished gave them the confidence to take action themselves. "I'm more self-confident about sharing my opinion with my group."
- 9. Meeting and learning from others makes life interesting-** Working on a policy issue offers many opportunities for meeting and learning from a range of people you might otherwise never know. You'll be exposed to new ideas, new approaches to old problems, and have the benefit of other people's experience. You'll meet people who share your ideas as well as those who see things from a completely different point of view. You may work hard, but you won't be bored. "For me, the most worthwhile thing was visiting with seniors older than myself to hear their stories."
- 10. Just do it!-** You can only succeed if you try. If you don't try you are guaranteed to fail. Everyone won't always agree with you, so be prepared for both positive and negative reactions, but don't let other people's opinions deter you. Don't be afraid to try to make change. "Get involved and have fun!"

How to Engage – Sample Tool 2

Information Sharing and Network Development:

- Build coalitions and partnerships with like-minded community groups, allies and “champions” who can help you work toward your goals

| What to Do | Who Can Help |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Make a list of the community groups who share your interests – invite a representative to attend your group’s meeting or get on the agenda of another group’s meeting– decide what you can do together more effectively than as individual groups ➤ Together, map out a plan so you know where you are going and why – address the 5 Ws (who, what, when, where and why) so that people know who is responsible and accountable, and what is needed to achieve success ➤ If you don’t have resources needed within the group, search out someone who has credibility, has earned trust, a “champion” who is interested in promoting your issue – brief them and ask them how they can help and why it is important that they do | <p>Community Health Board Directories are available to see who’s who in the community</p> <p>Community Health Board Wellness Funds</p> <p>Regional Development Authorities and other Community Development Organizations, i.e. United Way</p> <p>Municipal governments</p> <p>Health Promotion Clearinghouse (www.hpclearinghouse.ca) –linking people and organizations involved in health promotion to community resources and expertise – covers areas like volunteer development, advocacy and policy development, using research, grant and proposal writing, board development</p> |

How to Engage – Sample Tool 3

Information Sharing and Network Development:

Connect regularly with local politicians and media on policy issues affecting seniors

| What To Do | Who Can Help |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Decide who in your group will be responsible for this regular communication, i.e. a standing committee, the chair ➤ Make a list of politicians and media which need to be kept informed in an ongoing way ➤ Have someone from the local media talk to your group about what works best for them so that the relationship works for your group and for the media as well. ➤ Invite politicians to a regularly scheduled meeting so that you can inform them about your mandate (what you are trying to achieve) and how it is important that you | <p>Local media Local, provincial and federal politicians</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>have a good working relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Invite media and politicians to special events and activities, i.e. annual meetings, volunteer awards dinner➤ Take time to acknowledge the importance of good, informed relationships with both media and politicians – say thank you | |
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