

# Seniors and Housing

Sept/Oct 2005

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## Up Front Leo Poirier



As the price of real estate rises, accompanied by corresponding rent increases, many seniors find it hard to find suitable accommodations. Senior housing has been one of Government's great gifts to Nova Scotia, allowing seniors to live in dignity and security. From the 1960's to 1994, new housing for seniors was built in all parts of the province. Subsidized primarily by the federal government (Canada Mortgage and Housing), and administered through the provincial Department of Housing, this program has been available to seniors of modest incomes who are still able to live independently. Rent is paid according to income, allowing lower income seniors to live in the same level of comfort and convenience as those with somewhat higher incomes.

Since federally funded construction of new public housing for seniors ended in 1994, and the Provincial Department of Housing merged with the Department of Community Services, the housing situation for Nova Scotia seniors seems to have deteriorated. One of the problems that has arisen is that some seniors buildings are also now used to house non-seniors, some of whom who have physical and mental disabilities. This can and has caused problems, leaving seniors feeling insecure in their own homes.

Another issue is the relative lack of assisted living alternatives for seniors. There is an ever growing need for enriched or assisted accommodation for seniors, where independence can be maintained, but differing levels of help, care and companionship are available. Living in isolation can be both physically and emotionally detrimental to many seniors.

Privately owned and operated senior housing alternatives are available, but these are out of the reach of many seniors. I believe that all seniors in Nova Scotia deserve a place to live with dignity and safety. The establishment of a National Housing Trust Fund for social housing has been a solution posed by local seniors groups. Co-op housing and affordable alternatives for people with modest incomes also deserve federal financial support.

A wide spectrum of housing options needs to be available for seniors-the fastest growing segment of our provincial population!

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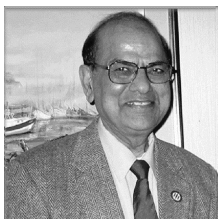
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## Susan King Joins the Community Links Staff

In August, Community Links welcomed Susan King to our staff, as Field Worker for Cape Breton/Strait area. Susan will be working with the Preventing Falls Together Program and several other Community Links' projects, including helping to build capacity among volunteers in communities in Cape Breton and Eastern Nova Scotia. Susan comes to us with a strong background in community development. She will be working from her home near Sydney, NS. Susan can be reached at 902-539-6098 or by email: [sking@nscommunitylinks.ca](mailto:sking@nscommunitylinks.ca)

## Prem Dhir Named to Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission



The Community Links Board would like to congratulate Prem Dhir on his appointment to the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

earlier this summer. Prem is Community Link's immediate Past President and Board member for DHA # 4 (Colchester-East Hants). As a member of one of Nova Scotia's visible minorities, Prem hopes to bring his experiences and insights to improve awareness of human rights issues for all Nova Scotians, but especially those from visible minority communities. Well done Prem!



## e-bulletin Launched

Thanks to the work of our summer intern, Amy Logan, Community Links sent out its third e-bulletin in September. The e-bulletin is meant to bring our members up to date about upcoming events and news in a one page monthly format. Those who do not have access to the internet can request to have our e-bulletins mailed to them by contacting 902-425-1128 Or writing to us at Box 29103, Halifax, NS B3L4T8



## SIPT Project Wrapping Up

The Seniors Influencing Policy on Transportation Project is drawing to a close, with the final report available soon. Three groups around the province worked on different ways to bring attention and advocacy to the issue of affordable, community based transportation for seniors and others in need of the service. The Digby-Annapolis group has undertaken a number of activities leading up to creating a proposal to present to federal representatives, stressing the need for its renewal of core capital funding for a rural transportation system. This group would like your help. Please address a letter of support to the Honourable Harinder Takhar, Federal Minister of Transportation or to The Honourable Robert Thibault: West Nova or The Honourable Scott Brison: Kings Hants. These letters can be sent to Carol Welch for inclusion with the Digby-Annapolis group's presentation to Federal representatives. Carol's address is: PO Box 1177, Westport, NS, B0V1H0 or email your letter to Carol at [carolwe@tartannet.ns.ca](mailto:carolwe@tartannet.ns.ca)



## **ASHRA: Projecting the Housing Needs of Aging Atlantic Canadians**

**By Barbara Murray, ASHRA Project  
Coordinator**

The Atlantic Seniors Housing Research Alliance (ASHRA) is a consortium of universities, seniors' organizations, housing developers, service providers and government departments. ASHRA is taking a community research approach to address the unique housing challenges facing seniors in Atlantic Canada. The crucial involvement of community collaborators, partners and stakeholders will provide valuable insight into the housing needs of seniors and identify problems and concerns specific to each province. Research results will aid in informing public policy development and community groups will increase their capacity to engage all three levels of government in the implementation of recommended changes.

The Nova Scotia implementation and stakeholder teams, co-chaired by Archie MacKeigan (The Cove Guest Home and Continuing Care Association of Nova Scotia) and Cathy Crouse (Metro Community Housing Association and former Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging), are composed of more than 20 representatives of community and government organizations in addition to private sector and academic members. Community Links is represented by Leo Poirier, Board member for HRM/East Hants

## **Housing Options for Seniors**

Housing options available to Canada's rapidly aging population narrow as the everyday demands of living become more onerous and increasing assistance is required. Health status and income levels are important determining factors for the type of supportive housing options that will be available to an individual. Additionally, the needs and wants of contemporary seniors are very different from those of their parents and we know very little about how these differences will impact future living choices.

## **Unique Features of Atlantic Canada's Senior Population**

The population of seniors in Atlantic Canada differs from that in other Canadian provinces in three main respects. First, the proportion of the region's senior population is higher and growing faster when compared with trends in other provinces, resulting in a greater demand for a variety of housing options. Second, the income level of the region's seniors is lower than the national average and housing solutions available in other parts of the country may not be financially feasible for many Atlantic Canadian seniors. Finally, when viewed nationally, a larger proportion of the Atlantic Provinces' population, including seniors, lives in rural areas. While a variety of urban area housing options are being developed, rural areas may need to devise different strategies.

## **Project Design**

This project is divided into four phases. Phases One and Two will focus on the demand for housing by Atlantic Canadian seniors. Phase Three will focus on the

supply of housing options/choices and housing policy. Phase Four will focus on the development of policy recommendations and dissemination of results. The project will be undertaken over a 4 year period.

The project will develop a detailed profile of Atlantic Canadians and their housing needs over a 20 year period and match that profile with emerging options in housing choices. The research will use Census Canada data in combination with health and wealth predictors to construct a geo-demographic model; survey more than 2400 individuals on their housing and service preferences; and undertake focus groups in all four provinces. An inventory of seniors housing supply will be constructed, and profiles of housing options available in other regions and countries will be prepared. In addition, the project team will undertake research into housing policies, support programs and other determinants of both supply and demand. The project will culminate with an Atlantic Seniors Housing Conference in the Spring of 2009.

A report will be prepared at the completion of each phase of the project and a website – [www.ashra.ca](http://www.ashra.ca) will provide electronic access to the geo-demographic model and other research components as activities are completed. The results of the project will inform public policy development and provide community and seniors organizations with a greater capacity to engage in planning and advocacy initiatives. In addition, researchers will present the findings at workshops and scholarly conferences and to publish the results in academic journals.

This research project is made possible through the funding support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation,

and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, as well as the support of participating universities (MSVU, Dalhousie, UPEI, MUN and UNB).

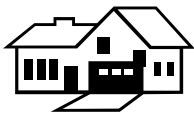
For more information about the ASHRA project please visit our website at [www.ashra.ca](http://www.ashra.ca) or contact: Dr. Donald Shiner, Principal Investigator at [donald.shiner@msvu.ca](mailto:donald.shiner@msvu.ca)

## Community Links to Hold Members Meetings

Community Links Board and Provincial Coordinator Sandra Murphy will again be holding members meetings in all districts this fall. Over the summer, we sent out a members survey and membership renewal form. The information from this survey, as well as feedback from our members last fall and at our AGM, will be used in planning the program for the members meetings. At each meeting, Sandra Murphy hopes to address one or more issues of concern identified by members. In addition, members can give input into the development of a provincial strategy for ongoing involvement of seniors in public policy development and monitoring.

To find out about and to get involved in a members meeting in your area, contact the Community Links Office at 902-425-1128 or the Board member in your district (see last page of the newsletter for your Board representative). You can also view information about the meetings on our website:

[www.nscommunitylinks.ca](http://www.nscommunitylinks.ca)



## Current Housing Options for Nova Scotia Seniors

### Home Adaptations

Many seniors are able to continue to live in their own homes as they age in spite of physical limitations which may develop. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is Canada's national housing agency and offers the **Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence** program. This program involves forgivable loans of up to \$3500 to help with the costs of minor adaptations that meet the needs of seniors with age-related disabilities. They could be:

- handrails;
- easy-to-reach work and storage areas in the kitchen;
- lever handles on doors;
- walk-in showers with grab bars;
- bathtub grab bars and seats.

To find out more about this program, contact CMHC Halifax Office at 902-426-3530 or visit the website Website: <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/>

### In Home Assistance

Organizations like the VON, RCMP Senior Safety and other non-profit groups offer services to help seniors stay in their homes by providing support and personal contact. Transportation to appointments, check-in phone calls and friendly visiting are only a few of the services offered by community groups and non-profit organizations. Services vary in different areas of the province. For information about services in your area, contact your local branch of the VON, your municipal government, or local

library. There is also a wealth of information available through the Seniors' Secretariat *Programs For Seniors* booklet, available at your local library or by calling 1-800-670-0065

A number of private companies around the province also offer strategies to help seniors stay in the home. In addition to health care and respite care, many of these companies offer services like grocery shopping and daily check-in phone calls. Look in the yellow pages under **Home Health Care**.

### Veterans Independence

Veterans Affairs offers home assistance through the Veteran's Independence Program. Assistance can include lawn maintenance, housecleaning and other help to allow veterans to stay in their homes.

<http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/>  
click on Clients/Veterans Services/VIP Program/Veterans Independence Program

### Subsidized Apartment Living

For seniors who wish to move out of their own home, but are able to live independently, Community Services offers the Seniors Rental Housing Program "This program is designed to provide adequate, affordable rental housing to senior citizens and other individuals in need. Residents are charged rent based upon income. This program is managed by the Regional Housing Authorities and is cost shared by the Province of Nova Scotia, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the relevant municipality. In order to qualify seniors must complete an application form and meet the criteria relating to income, residency, and need.



In addition to existing subsidized housing, the Province of Nova Scotia has recently provided some subsidies for private-public affordable housing projects around the province. Some of this new construction will be targeted specifically for seniors. For information about new government supported affordable housing, contact the Regional Housing Authority in your area.

## Continuing Care

Many private seniors housing complexes around the province offer a variety of living options from apartment living to full nursing care. Seniors' Secretariat has listings of these types of facilities around the province in its *Programs For Seniors 2005* booklet. You can pick one of these up by visiting your local library or by contacting the SCS at [scs@gov.ns.ca](mailto:scs@gov.ns.ca) or 1-800-670-0065

**The Continuing Care Association of Nova Scotia (CCANS)** is another resource for those seeking information about housing for seniors who can no longer remain in their homes. CCANS maintains a large member registry of retirement and nursing homes and other continuing care facilities. CCANS may be contacted at 7001 Mumford Road, Tower 1, Suite 215A Halifax, NS B3L 4N9 Phone 902-956-0090

## On the Lighter



### Side:

## *Ten things we can learn from dogs:*

1. When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.
2. When it's in your best interest, practice obedience. .
3. Take naps, and stretch before rising.
4. Run, romp, and play daily.
5. Eat with gusto and enthusiasm.
6. Be loyal.
7. Never pretend to be something you're not.
8. If what you want is buried, dig until you find it.
9. Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.
10. On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree.



The ***More Than Shelter: Housing Policy Kit for Seniors in Atlantic Canada***, is a publication of the **Atlantic Seniors Health Promotion Network**. This kit is available free of charge from Community Links. Contact us at 902-425-1128 or by e-mail at [admin@nscommunitylinks.ca](mailto:admin@nscommunitylinks.ca) The kit will help seniors and seniors' organizations in their efforts to promote the development and implementation of housing policies, programs and services that will meet the needs of the aging population in Atlantic Canada. Funding for the project was by the Population and Public Health Branch Atlantic Regional Office, Health Canada



# Notes and Notices

## Senior's Secretariat Fall Consultation



October 11 at Holiday Inn Harbourside  
Dartmouth, NS

For more information, call the  
Seniors' Info Line 1-800-670-0065

Email [scs@gov.ns.ca](mailto:scs@gov.ns.ca)  
or visit the website  
[www.gov.ns.ca/scs/](http://www.gov.ns.ca/scs/)



*"The Story is Changing"*

## Alzheimer Society

### 16<sup>th</sup> Provincial Conference

October 16 and 17

Membertou Trade and Convention Centre  
Sydney, NS

Contact: Linda Bird  
Coordinator, Programs  
902-422-7961

[educate@alzheimer.ns.ca](mailto:educate@alzheimer.ns.ca)  
[www.alzheimer.ns.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ns.ca)

**Contact Us:** Community Links  
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[www.nscommunitylinks.ca](http://www.nscommunitylinks.ca)

## *Caregiving: Exploring Healing*

Finding Meaning in Caregiving:  
Caring, Compassion and Connection

A one-day conference sponsored  
by the VON of Greater Halifax

Thursday, November 8, 2005  
8 AM to 4 PM

Presbyterian Church of St. David  
1537 Brunswick Street, Halifax  
Registration fee of \$25 includes boxed lunch

For more information call VON 455-6655  
Email: [volunteer@vonhalifax.ns.ca](mailto:volunteer@vonhalifax.ns.ca)



## 2005 Canadian Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion

### Conference

November 6-8, 2005  
Westin Nova Scotian  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Keynote Address by Stephen Lewis

For complete conference information or to  
register visit the website at

[www.injurypreventionconference.ca](http://www.injurypreventionconference.ca) or  
contact Shelley at [purpledog@sympatico.ca](mailto:purpledog@sympatico.ca)

## Community Links Board of Directors 2005-2006

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<b>Sheila Hoeg</b> -New Glasgow 902-755-7524 <a href="mailto:sheilahoeg@vonpictouco.ns.ca">sheilahoeg@vonpictouco.ns.ca</a>		DHA# 6 Pictou
- <b>Evelyn Lindsey</b> -Antigonish 902-863-5461 <a href="mailto:re.Lindsey@ns.sympatico.ca">re.Lindsey@ns.sympatico.ca</a>		DHA# 7 Antigonish/Guysborough/ South Richmond/Inverness
<b>Leo Poirier</b> -Dartmouth 902-469-3907		DHA# 9 Halifax Regional Municipality/West Hants

### We want your contributions!

Members are invited to send in articles, stories, notices of events, etc for publication in this newsletter. The theme for the next issue is *Celebrating the Success of Senior Organizations*, and the deadline to submit material is November 1, 2005. Send your submissions to [admin@nscommunitylinks.ca](mailto:admin@nscommunitylinks.ca) or call 902-425-1128 for more information