

Annual Report 2018-2019



Office of the
Seniors Advocate
Alberta

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Use of terms

Throughout this document, the term “senior” is used. Some people feel that this term and references to “they, “them” and “our seniors” is artificial and segregating. The Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate acknowledges this sentiment. Use of the term in this document is for practical and conventional purposes with no intent to endorse its use or to offend. The Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate recognizes diversity amongst people and the increasing heterogeneity that comes with age. Inclusive policies, programs and services accommodate diversity in all its forms, including age.

In this document the use of the term “the Office” refers to the Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate.

References to senior Albertans

In this document, reference to “seniors tell/told us” or “we hear from senior Albertans” is limited to a sample of older Albertans that connected with the Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate; no claim is made that an identified trend or issue applies to all senior Albertans or represents what all senior Albertans might say. The Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate acts as a voice for seniors issues and refers to senior Albertans in a general sense.

Letter to the Minister

June 28, 2019

The Honourable Josephine Pon
Minister of Seniors and Housing
404 Legislature Building
10800-97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Pon:

I am submitting to you the 2018-2019 Annual Report of the Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate, the third in my term as Alberta Seniors Advocate. This fulfills the reporting requirement as outlined in Ministerial Order 001/2016 and covers the period April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019.

For six months of this time period I was on medical leave for cancer treatment. The Office continued its work but was slowed. There were fewer public engagement and outreach activities than previous years and subsequently, fewer opportunities for Albertans to hear about the Office. Compared to last fiscal, the Office generally sustained its level of resolution support work (individual advocacy). As planned, evaluation of our resolution support service began this year and I am pleased to report that Albertans rate help and support received from the Office high.

Work on analysis of issues and making recommendations (issues advocacy) picked up upon my return later in the year. During the fiscal the Office made two operational recommendations to improve access to information and government programs. I also worked on a report on the Protection for Persons in Care program and will submit this report to you in the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

It has been a challenge since beginning my term September 2016 to establish, refine and sustain the operations of the Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate. The Office staff complement is small and the mandate large. The Office continues to produce because of our belief in the value of the Office for senior Albertans and out of sheer determination. We remain committed to advocacy for seniors and seniors issues into the future.

Respectfully submitted,

[Original signed by Sheree Kwong See]

Sheree Kwong See, PhD
Alberta Seniors Advocate

Letter to Albertans

June 28, 2019

Dear fellow Albertans:

It has been my honour to serve as the Alberta Seniors Advocate since Sept. 1, 2016. This is my submission to the Minister of Seniors and Housing outlining the activities of the Office during the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

For six months of this fiscal year I was on medical leave for cancer treatment. The Office continued its work but was slowed. There were fewer public engagement and outreach activities than previous years and subsequently, fewer opportunities for Albertans to hear about the Office. Compared to last fiscal, the Office generally sustained its level of resolution support work (individual advocacy). As planned, evaluation of our resolution support service began this year and I am pleased to report that you rate our help and support high.

Work on analysis of issues and making recommendations (issues advocacy) picked up upon my return later in the year. During fiscal the Office made two operational recommendations to improve access to information and government programs. I also worked on a report on the Protection for Persons in Care program and will submit this report to the Minister in the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

It has been a challenge establishing, refining and sustaining the operations of the Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate. The Office staff complement is small and the mandate large. We remain, however, determined and committed to advocacy for seniors and seniors issues into the future.

If you need assistance in finding, accessing or utilizing government programs and services; or simply want to offer feedback, share information or an experience, please contact the Office. All information is documented and analyzed to help inform recommendations on the issues faced by seniors, families and supporters. We listen and strive to be your voice.

Sincerely,

[Original signed by Sheree Kwong See]

Sheree Kwong See, PhD
Alberta Seniors Advocate

Executive Summary

This is the third annual report submitted by the Alberta Seniors Advocate, Dr. Sheree Kwong See. During the fiscal year the Office was challenged by the Advocate being absent for six months for cancer treatment. A focus of this year was to sustain and expand the impact of the Office by establishing an informal advisory of senior community informants, advocating with an informal network of other provincial advocates (Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador) at the federal level and by continued public engagement activities (35 meetings and sessions).

To meet our mandate **to provide information and resolution support** to senior Albertans and their families, the Office:

- Opened 1,217 new client cases and closed 1,247 cases (some carried over from last fiscal)
- Engaged in 5,961 contacts with clients and/or external agencies to close cases
- Supported resolution primarily by facilitating self-advocacy and making referrals.

Albertans contacted the Office for information and referral about:

- Income and financial supports (25%)
- House and home supports (21%)
- Social supports (26%)
- Health care and supports (28%).

To meet our mandate **to identify trends and issues impacting seniors**, the Office:

- Analyzed issues raised during resolution support activities and feedback from public engagement activities, and
- Identified areas Albertans had difficulty finding, accessing and utilizing government or government-funded programs and services in each of the four categories above (income and financial supports, house and home supports, social supports and health care and supports).

To meet our mandate **to make recommendations and provide advice to government** for improvements to programs and services, based on analyzed issues, the Office put forward recommendations:

- To review and streamline appeal processes for benefit programs in the Ministry of Seniors and Housing
- To review and update some publically available Protection for Persons in Care program documentation.

The Office worked on a report aimed at making recommendations about the *Protection for Persons in Care Act* administration and purpose for submission in the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

To provide advice and bring the seniors perspective, the Office:

- Provided input to nine government initiatives
- Participated in four government committees and Minister's stakeholder forums
- Provided input to six government-funded community program initiatives and
- Provided input to two other senior services related committees/organizations.

Generally the Office met the goals outlined in last year's annual report by sustaining its level of resolution support activity (individual advocacy) and began an evaluation of its resolution support services, with positive results. For issues advocacy, the Office put forward new recommendations and continues to track progress made on previous recommendations.

The Office, under the current Advocate and Ministerial Order, has been operational since September 2016. This coming year the Office will consult with seniors and stakeholders and make recommendations about the Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate itself.

Mandate of the Office

The Alberta Seniors Advocate was appointed Sept. 1, 2016 and operates under the authority of [Ministerial Order 001/2016](#). The Ministerial Order outlines a number of functions of the Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate. To summarize, the mandate of the Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate is to:

Provide information and resolution support to senior Albertans and their families:

Resolution support: The Office fulfills this function by providing individualized information and referrals to appropriate government programs and/or government-funded/regulated community programs and services. This support work includes making referrals and requests for action under relevant legislation (public assurance).

Identify trends and issues impacting seniors:

Identification of issues: The Office identifies issues that emerge from resolution support activities and by actively seeking feedback on issues of importance from seniors, seniors groups and stakeholder groups.

Make recommendations and provide advice to government for improvements to programs and services:

Offer advice and make recommendations: The Office analyses resolution support activities and listens to seniors and stakeholder groups to offer advice and make informed recommendations.

Mission, Vision, Values

Vision

All older Albertans have access to programs and services that contribute to a full life.

Mission

The Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate supports older Albertans and families by:

- Providing resolution support
- Identifying and analysing relevant trends and issues
- Putting forth recommendations and advice to government for improvements to seniors programs and services

Values

- Client-centred
- Responsive
- Compassionate
- Collaborative
- Ethical

Meeting our Mandate: Administration

Human Resources

The staff complement in the fiscal year was six full-time and one temporary/salaried employee: the Seniors Advocate, three Seniors Advocate Representatives, an Executive Officer, an Administrative Assistant and an Issues Analyst (temporary/salaried). Occasional staff was also hired to assist with short-term targeted tasks. For the second year in a row, the Office hosted a Bachelor of Social Work student from MacEwan University for a 300-hour practicum between January and April of 2019.

Left to Right: Robin, Cindy, Leslie, Carolina, Marj, Tadra



Left to Right: Seniors Advocate and Georgia (practicum student)



To provide the best service possible to clients, staff engaged in continuous learning. During this fiscal year, professional development focused on the topics of:

- Privacy, protection and information security management (annual)
- Communicating with/to older adults
- Social isolation in older age
- *Alberta's Protection for Persons in Care Act*
- Estimating income for Seniors Financial Assistance Programs
- Emerging issues in well-being, supports and services for seniors (Grey Matters Conference)
- Dementia care
- Program qualification for immigrants
- Continuing Care in Alberta
- Medical Assistance in Dying in Alberta
- Administrative fairness guidelines
- Indigenous peoples and cultures in Alberta

Network of Provincial Seniors Advocates

An informal network of provincial seniors advocates (including provincially appointed advocates from Alberta; British Columbia; New Brunswick; and Newfoundland and Labrador) formed to discuss and advocate for pan Canadian seniors issues. This group travelled to Ottawa in January 2019 to meet with the Federal Minister of Seniors to advocate for seniors ahead of the release of the 2019 Federal Budget.

Informal Community Advisors

The Alberta Seniors Advocate identified five senior Albertans to serve as informal Community Advisors to the role of the Seniors Advocate. The backgrounds of the advisors is intended to provide diverse views on the role and intended actions by the Office, including advising on the future development of a more formal, representative advisory.

New Location

The office was displaced from its location in Edmonton due to a fire in the building summer 2018. The Office needed to work out of three temporary locations for seven months during fiscal before settling in to a new home in Sterling Place (4th Floor, 9940 106 Street) in Edmonton.

Website

Our site (www.seniorsadvocate.alberta.ca) is a public communication tool and an up-to-date information resource. Albertans can contact the Office directly through the website to provide feedback or request assistance.

Web activity this year:

- 15,220 visits, or 1,268 average visits per month (consistently received over 1,000 visits per month between January 2019 to end of fiscal)
- 33,728 page views
- 14,561 users, or 798 average users per month (89.6 % new, 10.4% returning)
- 84% of the people who accessed our website were from Canada (72% from Alberta)
- 6% from the US
- 10% from other areas including France, Brazil, India, China, UK, Russia, Mexico

Social Media — Facebook

The Office uses Facebook for social media engagement (www.facebook.com/AlbertaSeniorsAdvocate). The platform is used to share information, highlight the Office’s community outreach and engagement work and serves as an additional way for Albertans to connect with the Office.

Facebook activity this year:

- 121 Posts
- 234 Likes
- 2,159 Shares (includes an extensive share of 2,000 from a shared Global News story)
- 63,933 People reached (includes an extensive reach of 43,400 from a shared Global News story).

Public Engagement

During the reporting period the Office actively listened to seniors and stakeholder groups during 35 meetings and public engagement sessions (see Appendix A, Section A). Sessions included presentations on the roles and responsibilities of the Office; and presentations on issues of importance to seniors. For public engagement, Office representatives visited 13 municipalities and traveled 11,500+ kilometers (including a flight to Ottawa by the Advocate to meet with the Federal Minister of Seniors). The Office visited five of the 13 communities for the first time. The Seniors Advocate participated in one media interview this year (Appendix A, Section B).

Figure 1. Map of Travel
(* not previously visited)



Financial Summary

This table represents the budget allocated for the Office as well as the actual amount spent during the 2018-19 year. Operational expense line spending was down from previous years. The Office did not need to purchase any new major office equipment or supplies in the year and exercised fiscal restraint in operational spending. There were also staff position vacancies for part of the year.

| Expenses | 2018/19 Budget | 2018/19 Actual |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Salaries | 694,200 | 647,520.69 |
| Benefits | 174,800 | 129,906.51 |
| Travel | 10,000 | 5,517.81 |
| Operational Expenses | 102,000 | 20,513.04 |
| Total | \$981,000 | \$803,458.05 |

Meeting our Mandate: Resolution Support

The Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate is mandated to provide resolution support to senior Albertans and their families. The Office fulfills this role by providing individualized information and referrals to government programs and/or government-funded/regulated community programs and services. This work includes making referrals and requesting action under relevant legislation (public assurance).

Between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019, the Office opened 1,217 new client cases and closed 1,247 cases (1,140 from cases opened during the current fiscal year and 107 from cases that were still active at the end of the previous fiscal).

How does the Office provide resolution support?

A case is opened when Albertans contact the Office:

- For resolution support (i.e., to seek information and support in resolving concerns related to government and/or community programs and services)
- To provide feedback (i.e., to comment on an experience or an issue with community, government or other services).

Resolution cases accounted for the vast majority of cases opened over the reporting period:

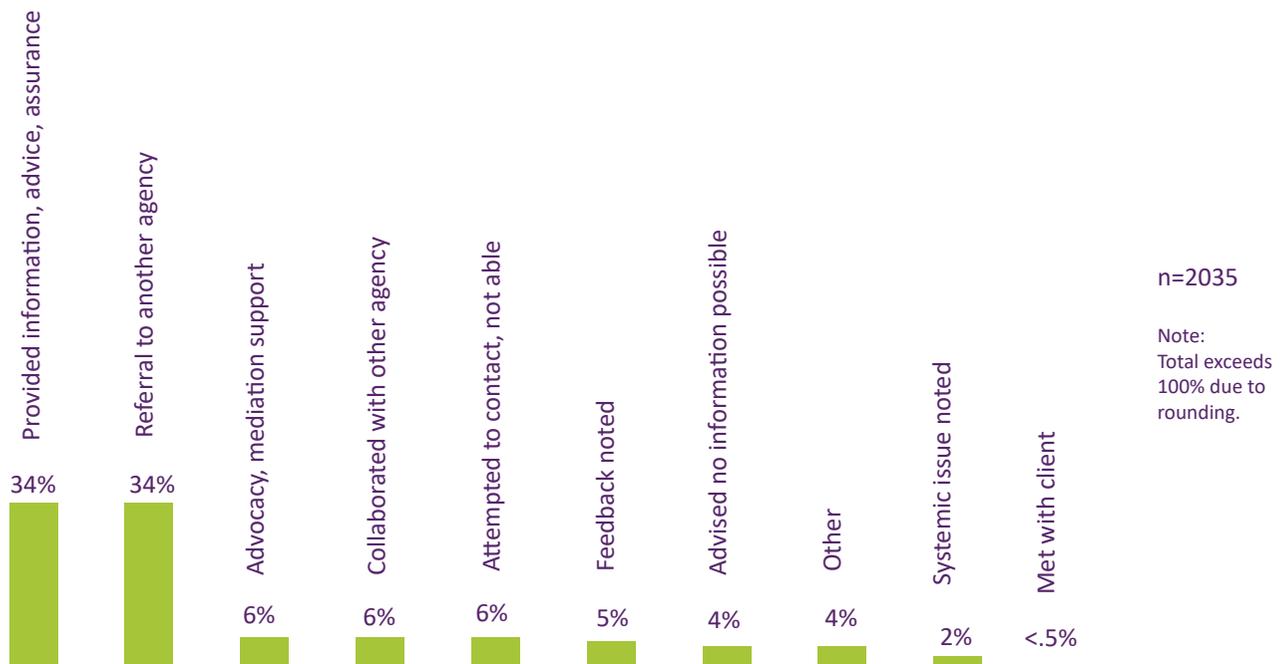
- 1,160 cases (95%) were resolution cases
- 57 (5%) were feedback cases.

Resolution support actions often include multiple contacts with clients/their representatives as well as external agencies, including other government agencies. Contacts by Office staff to resolve closed cases totalled 5,961:

- Contacts with clients/representatives totalled 5,169 (ranging from 1 to 70 contacts per case, averaging 4.1 contacts per case)
- External contacts with agencies/parties totalled 792 (ranging from 1 to 24 contacts per case; and of cases having external contacts, averaged 3.8 contacts per case).

Coding the actions by Office staff to resolve the closed cases, the Office for the most part supported resolution by facilitating self-advocacy and referral to other agencies (see Figure 2, first two bars). Though less often, when required the Office advocated on behalf of clients (advocacy support) or collaborated with other agencies to support resolution. Appendix B lists the agencies the Office referred to during the fiscal year.

Figure 2. Action(s) by Staff to Resolve Cases (Closed Cases)



Where possible and reasonable, data on follow-up with clients indicated that often the Office is a sounding board for clarifying available options, and as such clients often take other action after contacting the Office. In large part clients acted on the information, advice and referral provided by the Office (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Action(s) by Client (Closed Cases)

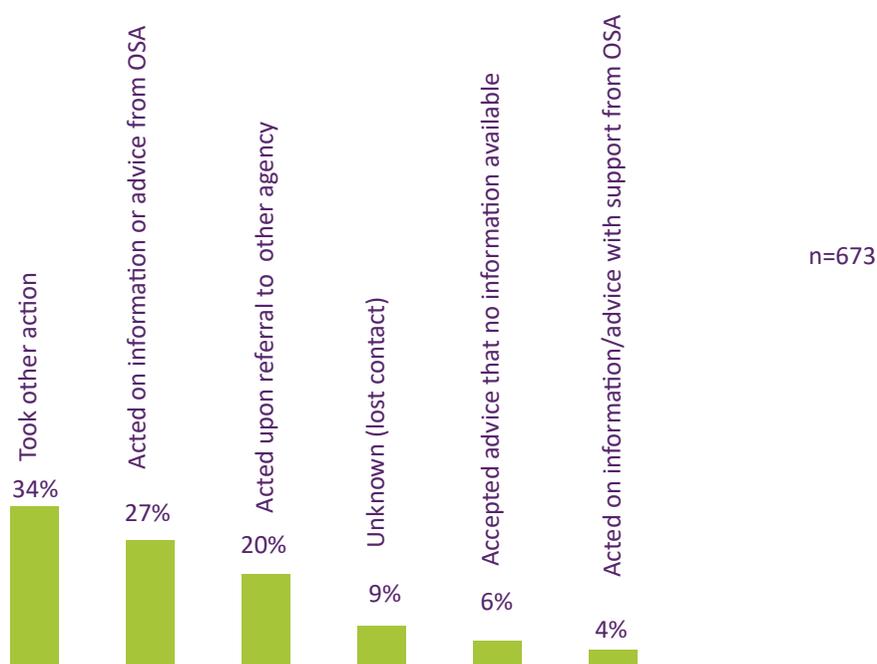
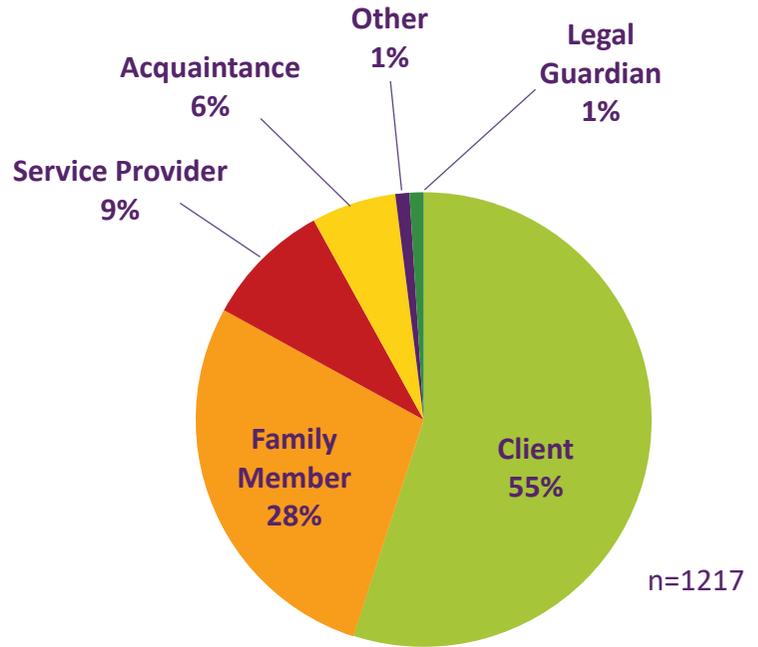


Figure 4. Initial Contact Distribution



Who are our clients?

Figures 4 and 5 outline how clients contact the Office and their initial contact for a case (e.g., senior themselves, family member calling for a senior). Typically, seniors in need of resolution support contact us themselves and that contact is by telephone.

Figure 5. Method of Initial Contact

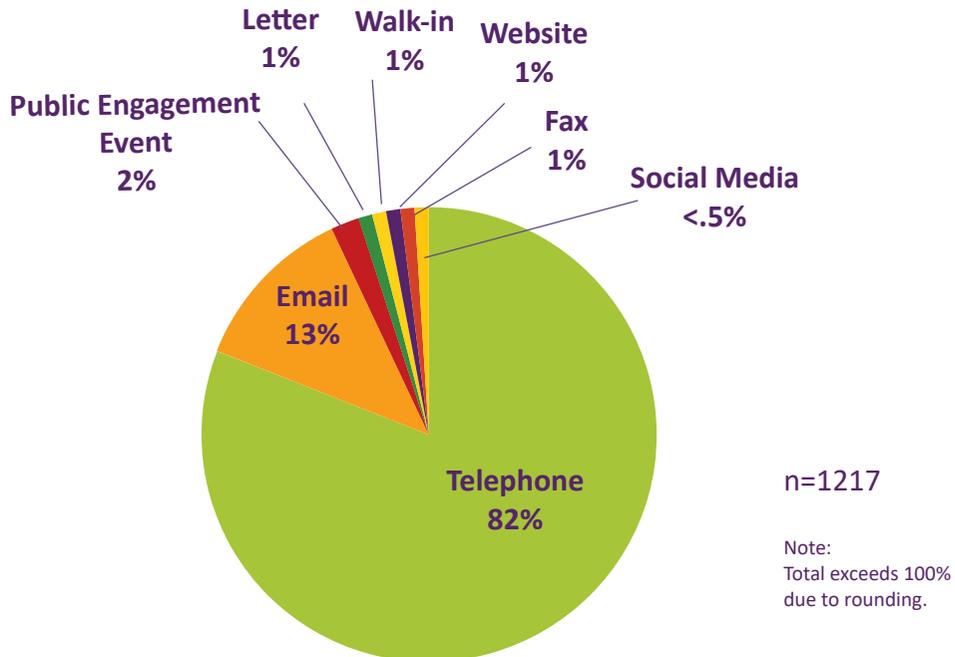
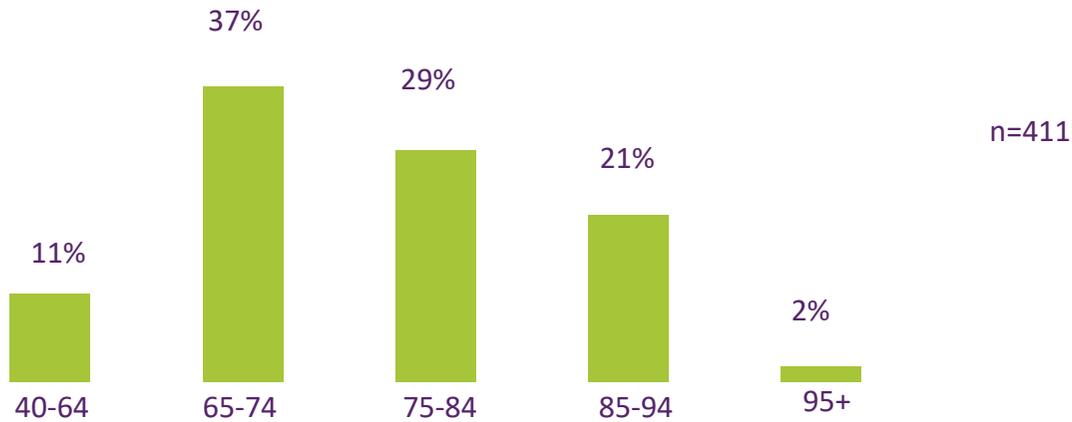


Figure 6. Age Distribution of Clients



The Office does not routinely probe a client for demographic information if not relevant for resolution support. For available data, Figures 6-8 outline client characteristics. The typical client is female, between 65 and 94 years of age and contacts us from anywhere in the province, though in large part from the urban areas of Edmonton and Calgary.

Figure 7. Sex Distribution of Clients

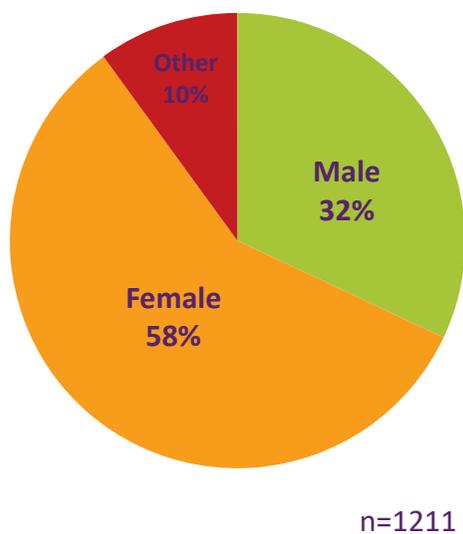
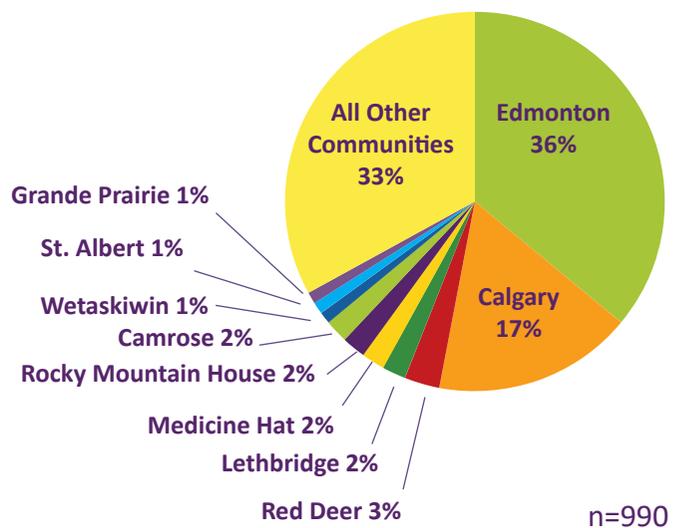


Figure 8. Location Distribution of Clients



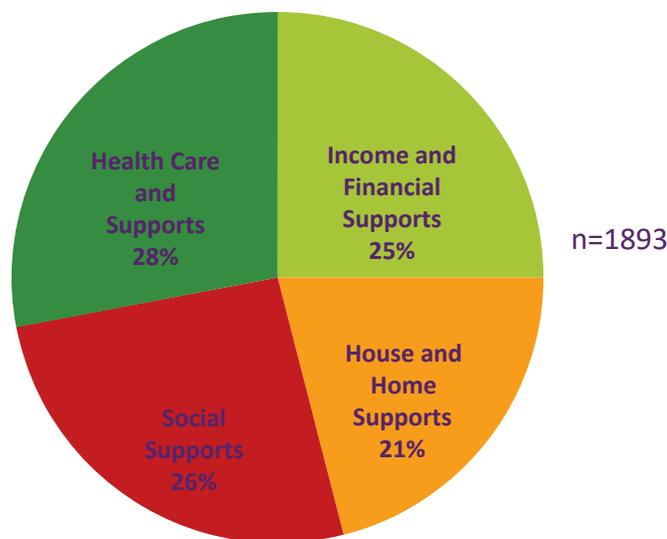
Note: Other=Unknown or Not Applicable (e.g., group of clients)

What do our clients contact us about?

The reasons Albertans contact the Office can be categorized into one or more of four main issue categories. The total number of issues coded for the 1,217 cases opened in fiscal were 1,893; some cases had more than one key issue and this year, cases were coded by as many key issues as applicable. Figure 9 shows the distribution of issues in the four categories: income and financial supports; house and home supports; social supports and health care and supports.

For each category, a case example highlights the nature of the coded issues and the number of contacts with the client and/or external agencies to resolve the case.

Figure 9. Key Issues Categories



Income and Financial Supports case example: Linking a senior with financial programs and additional resources

A senior contacted the Office of the Seniors Advocate seeking information about federal and provincial benefits (Guaranteed Income Supplement and the Alberta Seniors Benefit) and financial supports for medical supplies. A Seniors Advocate Representative worked with the senior to connect him with the right resources to address his questions on the benefits and introduced the client to the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors Program, a resource for potential assistance with eligible medical supplies. By connecting with the Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate, this senior was able to find the information needed and receive financial assistance from a program about which he was not previously aware.

Three client contacts to resolve the case.

House and Home Supports Case Example: Dispute resolution around repairs in apartment



A senior Albertan living independently called the Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate for assistance in determining who was responsible for a plumbing issue in her suite – the tenant or the landlord. The Office provided information on legislation governing this area and a dispute resolution service. Using the information and referrals provided by the Office, the tenant was able to get her issue resolved to her satisfaction.

Three client contacts + three external contact = six contacts to resolve the case.

Social Supports case example: Expediting driver's licence reinstatement



The Office was contacted by an adult child of an 86-year-old parent whose driver's license was temporarily suspended following a stroke. After receiving medical clearance, the senior applied to have her licence reinstated and faced a four to six week waiting period. This length of time to wait was creating hardship. The Office investigated on behalf of the client to see if there was a process to request expedition of the application and relayed information to the client to empower the client to work with the agency to have the license reinstated as soon as possible.

Four client contacts + one external contact = five contacts to resolve the case.

Health Care and Supports case example: Providing advice and connecting a family with resources to support care



A family member of a senior became concerned with recent changes in the senior's health that affected independent living. The senior did not want to leave her home as she was the caregiver for an adult child with Down Syndrome. The Office provided advice on getting family members together, setting up a Power of Attorney, requesting health assessments and options for supporting the senior and adult child to receive care. The senior was admitted to a care facility to meet her care needs and her adult child moved in with another family member.

11 contacts with the client to resolve the case

Evaluation: Resolution Support

How do clients evaluate resolution support provided?

In December 2018, the Office began evaluating its resolution support activities. Clients whose cases were closed during fiscal and who consented to take part in a survey, were asked to rate the help and support received from Senior Advocate Representatives (SARs) on a scale of one (not at all) to 10 (very). Clients were also asked if they would contact the Office again.

Seventy-two respondents surveyed showed that Albertans think highly of the resolution support received:

- Helpful average score = 8.0
- Supportive average score = 8.4
- Contact again average score = 8.7

Dividing the scale into a binary (below 5; 5 and above), 92% of respondents said they would contact the Office again if need arose.

In open-ended comments respondents said:

“Confident in the Office’s role for helping seniors.”

“Appreciated the SAR getting back so fast and providing resources that helped.”

“Very thankful for the support.”

“Very responsive. Highly positive experience.”

“Very encouraging to get a follow-up call to see how things went, was not expecting that.”

At the same time, respondents commented on the limitations of the Office:

“The Office has no power or authority but it was helpful with explaining why things are the way they are.”

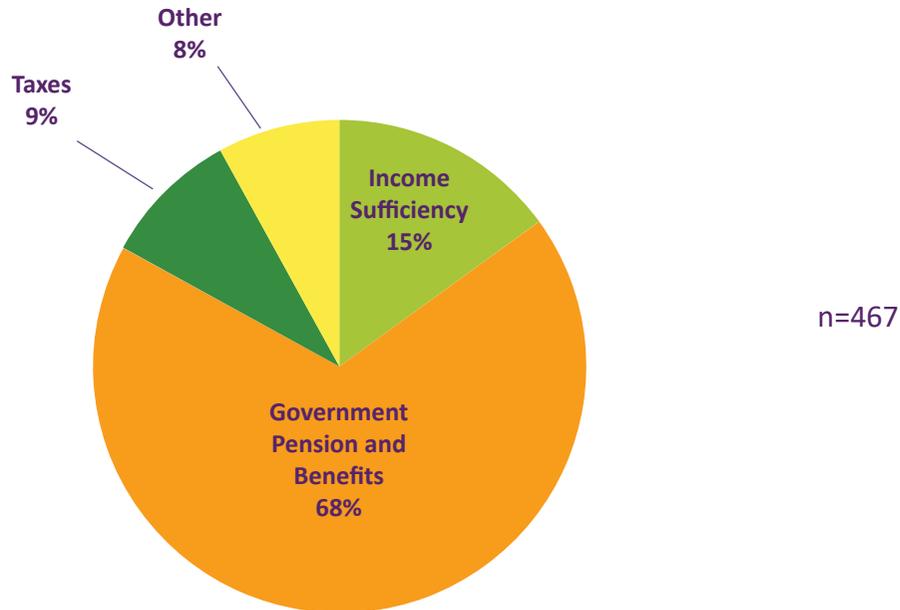
“The SAR was great and did what she could, however the Office is very limited to what they can do. The Office needs more power.”

Meeting our Mandate: Identifying Trends and Issues

The Office is mandated to identify issues and trends impacting seniors. The Office identifies the issues based on resolution support (1,217 opened cases) and from public engagement activities that involve meeting with stakeholders and seniors groups (35 meetings and sessions).

Overall, analysis of trends from feedback and resolution support activities continue to highlight that some seniors and their families experience barriers to finding, accessing and utilizing relevant government programs and services. From case work, figures 10 to 13 show the distribution of issues emerging in each of the four main categories outlined above and visually summarizes the trends “we hear”. Cases could be captured by more than one sub-issue in the main category. Feedback heard during public engagement often repeated themes that emerged from case work.

Figure 10. Income and Financial Supports

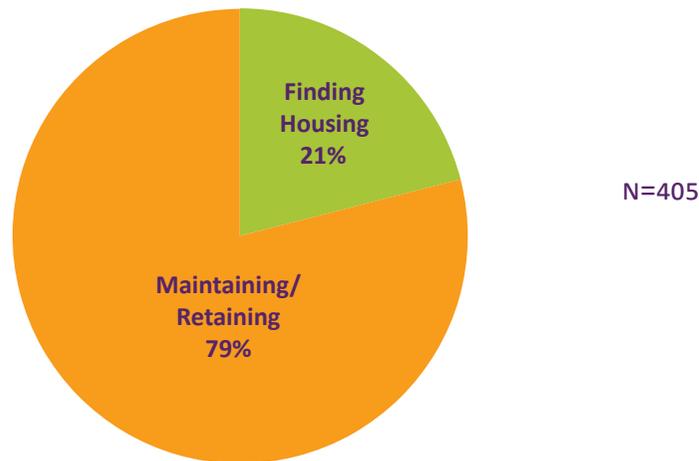


For the income and financial supports category, seniors tell us availability and/or eligibility for government pensions and benefits (provincial and federal) is not always clear. The OSA is contacted by seniors seeking information about accessing supports that may be due to them (e.g., Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement, Alberta Seniors Benefit) and to inquire about benefits available for special circumstances, such as to support health needs, homes, or for legal costs (e.g., making a will). In particular, we heard about barriers to access arising from processing times; and from program rules and regulations that are not flexible in dealing with changing life circumstances. At the federal level, for example, we heard senior couples involuntarily separated (i.e., when one enters continuing care) experience processing barriers to receiving GIS benefits as singles in a timely way. At the provincial level, for example, we heard the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program one-time limitations on appliances do not reflect current realities of shorter appliance life cycles.

We continue to hear that for some seniors income sufficiency is a significant challenge. A special group voicing concerns are seniors transitioning from Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) to seniors benefits at age 65. For other seniors we heard that benefits, even if receiving the maximums, are insufficient to keep up with increased costs of living. Related, we hear concerns that thresholds are too strict with some seniors marginally above eligibility thresholds needing support but unable to access supports.

We heard from seniors concerned with the financial impacts of some taxes. In particular, we heard some seniors living in subsidized housing perceived the carbon levy rebate as having a negative impact because it increased income and subsequently increased rent owed to housing management bodies. Seniors contacted the OSA for referral to resources to deal with other financial matters such as banking.

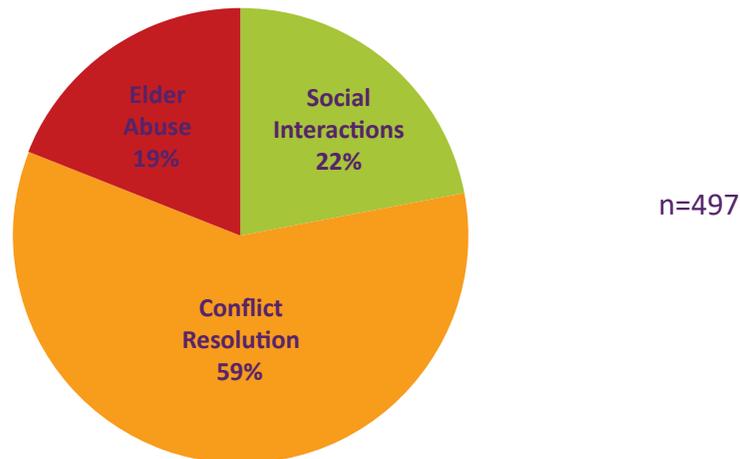
Figure 11. House and Home Supports



Issues arising from the house and home supports category pertain to communal living as well as individually owned/rented homes. Issues in this category often overlapped with financial issues. Challenges that seniors experience in maintaining/retaining housing include rising costs (utilities, rents) and conflicts with management and others living in the neighbourhood or same building. We continue to hear about the lack of resolution support mechanisms to deal with conflict and the challenges some seniors in subsidized housing face understanding rent calculation. Seniors reported issues with infrastructure (out-of-service elevators), pests and hoarding. Others did not know about the Seniors Home Adaptation and Repair Program (SHARP) program or could not qualify. Some seniors expressed challenges finding help with home maintenance (general contractors, plumbers, snow removal) and other home supports (e.g., grocery shopping).

The other challenges seen in this category are the lack of targeted seniors housing, difficulty finding affordable housing and/or accommodation that meets specific needs (e.g., mental health or cognitive challenges, smoker, cannabis user, rural resident needing subsidized housing, accessibility challenges arising from scooters, pets). The Office heard from seniors experiencing eviction needing to find housing under tight timelines, and seniors needing support obtaining damage deposit refunds and help with moving expenses.

Figure 12. Social Supports



Issues arising within the social supports category often overlap with financial and home issues. In the area of conflict resolution, Albertans contacted the Office for information to deal with family conflict including looking for resources for mediation support and legal issues arising from disputes, commonly around wills, personal directives, power of attorney, guardianship and trusteeship. The Office commonly heard concerns about individuals abusing these responsibilities. Albertans also contacted the Office seeking referral to mechanisms to deal with conflict in settings beyond the family (e.g., law enforcement).

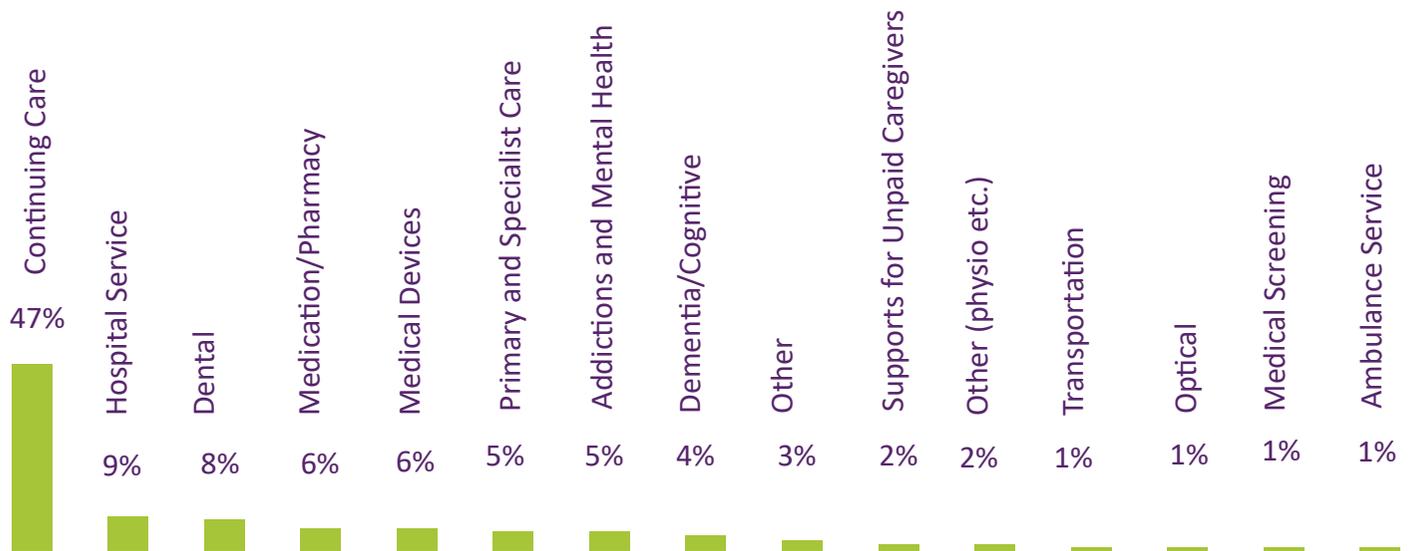
In the area of abuse, Albertans sought information and advice on recognizing and dealing with financial, mental and physical abuse for individuals living on their own or in care. Albertans also expressed concern over seniors being taken advantage of by scams and frauds.

In the area of social interaction, Albertans told us there are barriers to maintaining social interaction including lack of recreational and social activities in care facilities and accessing transit in community (fees, lack of routes and changing routes). Some seniors reported experiencing loneliness/isolation, ageism and barriers to continued social interaction related to employment, maintaining driver's licences and seeking formal educational opportunities.

Figure 13. Health Care and Supports

n=523

Note: Total exceeds 100% due to rounding.



Issues that arise in the health care and supports category are broad. Issues overlap financial, housing and social supports categories but within the context of health. Albertans contacted the office to give feedback about issues (e.g., wait times for surgery) or for assistance finding and navigating health related information, funding sources and supports (e.g., dental services, BiPAP/CPAP machines and other medical devices, transportation costs for healthcare, prescriptions and pharmaceuticals, finding physicians). We heard supports should be broader to support health (e.g., grief and loss support; access to more home care assistance) and prevent disease and should be available at end-of-life (e.g., palliative care). We heard supports are vital for persons with dementia, mental health challenges and for caregivers. As we have heard in casework previously, sometimes policies and mechanisms for dispute and conflict resolution in health care settings (e.g., visitation banning policies, Patient Relations, Protection for Persons in Care) were not easy to navigate or able to bring satisfactory resolution for concerns. We heard with some urgency the plight of some seniors transitioned to home from hospital without adequate home supports in place.

The majority of issues coded related to continuing care. Families contacted the Office when experiencing challenges transitioning to higher levels of care, including challenges when desiring to live at risk and not transition (age in current place). We heard concerns about lengthy waits for placement, frequent moves between facilities and challenges keeping seniors in their home community or keeping couples with different health needs together. Related, we heard of financial challenges when couples incur new costs when separated because of different care needs. When in institutionalized care the Office heard of challenges with perceived negative outcomes from inadequate staffing levels and quality of care, including concerns about medication administration; as well as concerns over environmental factors such as food quality and lack of activities and stimulation.

Meeting our Mandate: Advice and Recommendations

The Office is mandated to make recommendations and provide advice to government for improvements to programs and services. Based on the Alberta Seniors Advocate's expertise in aging and interactions with seniors (from resolution support activities and public engagement), the Office provided a seniors perspective and advice to:

Government initiatives:

- Alberta Resident and Family Councils Act Toolkit (Alberta Health) (May 2018)
- The Care, Safety and Quality of Addiction and Mental Health Services survey (Alberta Health) (August 2018)
- Plans to review the *Police Act* and implications for seniors (Alberta Justice and Solicitor General) (September 2018)
- Processes and available resources to assist applicants for the Aging Well in Community Grant program (Seniors and Housing) (October 2018)
- A government led initiative exploring integration of community based senior services based on a British Columbia model (Seniors and Housing) (October 2018)
- The *Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities* with respect to increases to the Alberta Seniors Benefit (Seniors and Housing) (November 2018)
- A Toolkit for Developing a Coordinated Response to Elder Abuse (Seniors and Housing) (November 2018)
- A Toolkit for Developing an Intergenerational Initiative (Seniors and Housing) (November 2018)
- Guidelines for Inclusive Design: Universal Washroom Facilities (Alberta Infrastructure) (December 2018)

Government committees and Minister's stakeholder forums:

- Minister of Seniors and Housing Seniors Advisory Forum (June, November 2018)
- Minister of Seniors and Housing Budget 2019 Consultation (February 2019)
- Minister of Health's Annual Continuing Care Forum (October 2018)
- Alberta Health's Continuing Care Collaborative Committee (April, May, December 2018; February 2019)

Government-funded community program initiatives:

- Input meeting with the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council's Assisted Transportation Network for Seniors initiative (April 2018)
- Input meeting with the Seniors Communication Access Network (SCAN) Committee, a group developing a central communication hub within the City of Edmonton (October 2018)
- Input to a Covenant Health's Innovators Challenge Going Beyond the Conversation brainstorming session to identify challenges in seniors health and wellness and to set priorities (October 2018)
- Consultation with a representative from the Alberta Council on Aging on ageism and the development of ageism in children (October 2018)
- Input and brainstorming during an update and priority setting session with Age Friendly Edmonton (November 2018)
- Input and brainstorming focus group on seniors health and wellness with the College of Licenced Practical Nurses (March 2019)

Other senior services related committees and organizations:

- Vision for Seniors' Services 2030 Conference, Alberta Association on Gerontology Vision 2030 Planning Advisory Committee (October, December, 2018; February 2019)
- American Association of Retired Persons on ageism initiatives (November 2018)

Based on analysis of issues arising from resolution support activities and listening to stakeholder and seniors groups, the Office makes recommendations for improvements to government programs and services. Recommendations and outcomes of recommendations can be found on the Seniors Advocate website (<https://www.seniorsadvocateab.ca/reports>) as these become available throughout the year.

Recommendations are of two types: administrative/operational and systemic.

Administrative/operational recommendations pertain to identified operational issues that if remedied may improve finding, accessing and/or utilizing a government program by Albertans. These are addressed to the relevant administrator(s) having jurisdiction of the operational process, normally a Deputy Minister(s).

The Office put forward:

- Recommendations to review, clarify and streamline appeal processes for benefit programs in the Ministry of Seniors and Housing
- Recommendations to review and update Protection for Persons in Care program out-dated web content, contact information and fact sheets.

Systemic issue recommendations pertain to identified issues arising because of system structures or processes, remedy of which will likely require structural, organization and/or policy changes. These recommendations are addressed to the relevant minister(s).

The Office worked on a report aimed at making recommendations about the implementation and purpose of the *Protection for Persons in Care Act*. This report will be submitted to the Minister in the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

Looking Back, Looking Forward and the Long Game

Individual Advocacy. Looking back, the Office set a goal to sustain its level of support activity and begin evaluating resolution support activity. The Office generally did sustain its level of support activity. Evaluation of service began and sampled clients rated help and support from the Office high; and a high percentage would contact the Office again for resolution support.

Looking forward. With increasing pressures on time and resources, the goal looking forward must remain realistic. The goal for individual advocacy going forward is to sustain the current level of resolution support activity and monitor that clients continue to find it helpful and supportive.

Issues Advocacy. Looking back, the Office set a goal of forwarding new recommendations and tracking uptake of previous recommendations. Recommendations are posted on the Alberta Seniors Advocate website when a response is received and approved by the Minister for posting.

New recommendations targeting operational issues came forward. Work on a report on larger systemic issues around the Protection for Persons in Care program reflected a more in depth look at supports related to dementia care, an issue highlighted last year. Advocacy around federal income support in a meeting with the Federal Minister ahead of the 2019 Federal Budget reflected a look at income insufficiency for some seniors, also an issue highlighted for focus last year.

Tracking uptake, there has been a positive response to some operational issues submitted at the Deputy Minister level. On larger systemic issues, for recommendations submitted in previous fiscal years at the Minister level (two on ageism and another on sponsorship breakdown), the Office is awaiting responses.

Looking forward. The Office will track uptake of recommendations and implementation of the recommendations. The goal is to continue analyzing issues outlined in this report and in previous fiscals to identify additional opportunities for improvements to programs and services. The Office will make new recommendations.

Long Game. The Office under the current Ministerial Order and Seniors Advocate has been operational since September 2016. It is time to reflect on the scope of mandate, resourcing for the mandate and future directions for the Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate, including possible creation of legislation for the Office. Thinking about the long game, a target for this upcoming fiscal year is to engage with seniors and relevant stakeholders and to make recommendations to the Minister about the Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate itself.

Appendix A

A) Meetings and Engagement Activities

- April 3, 2018—A Seniors Advocate Representative spoke to the Alberta Council on Aging in Red Deer about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate and provided an update on the issues the Office has heard since opening. (Red Deer)
- April 4, 2018—Seniors Advocate Representatives met with Home Care staff in Rocky Mountain House to provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate and to hear about their initiatives and concerns. (Rocky Mountain House)
- April 4, 2018—A Seniors Advocate Representative spoke to the residents, family members and staff of Clearwater Centre in Rocky Mountain House about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Rocky Mountain House)
- April 4, 2018—Seniors Advocate Representatives met with Continuing Care Counsellors in Rocky Mountain House to provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate and to hear about their initiatives and concerns. (Rocky Mountain House)
- April 4, 2018—A Seniors Advocate Representative spoke to the residents, family members and staff of Westview Lodge in Rocky Mountain House about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Rocky Mountain House)
- April 26, 2018—A Seniors Advocate Representative spoke to the residents, family members and staff of Cathedral Manor in Calgary about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Calgary)
- April 27, 2018—A Seniors Advocate Representative spoke to the residents and staff of Shalem Manor in Calgary about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Calgary)
- April 27, 2018—A Seniors Advocate Representative spoke at the Calgary Retired Teachers Association Conference, “Steppin’ Out 2018” about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Calgary)
- May 17, 2018—Staff from the Office of the Seniors Advocate met with staff at the Hanna Lodge to get input about the issues they are seeing in their community. (Hanna)
- May 17, 2018—A Seniors Advocate Representative spoke to residents of the Hanna Lodge in Hanna about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Hanna)
- May 18, 2018—A Seniors Advocate Representative spoke to service providers in the Town of Hanna at the Hanna Learning Centre about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Hanna)

- May 18, 2018–Office of the Seniors Advocate staff met with representatives at the Hanna Learning Centre to learn about the issues they are seeing in their community. (Hanna)
- May 23, 2018–A Seniors Advocate Representative met with members of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) men’s group and shared information about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Edmonton)
- May 30, 2018–Staff from the Office of the Seniors Advocate met with the CEO of Calgary Heritage Housing staff to learn about what they are hearing from seniors in their community. (Edmonton)
- June 8, 2018–As part of Seniors Week, representatives from the Office of the Seniors Advocate hosted a display booth and provided information to seniors attending the Ice Cream and Pie Social Seniors Week event in St. Paul. (St. Paul)
- June 12, 2018–A Seniors Advocate Representative spoke to seniors and members of the community in Wabasca about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Wabasca)
- June 19, 2018–Staff at the Office of the Alberta Seniors Advocate met with the Office of the Newfoundland Seniors Advocate via conference call to share information about the roles and responsibilities of both offices. (Edmonton)
- June 21, 2018–Staff from the Seniors Advocate Office participated in a conference call hosted by Carya to learn about an integrated services initiative in British Columbia. (Edmonton)
- June 28, 2018–A Seniors Advocate Representative presented to members of the Senior Moments group at the Wetaskwin Primary Care Network and provided information about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Wetaskiwin)
- July 11, 2018–A Seniors Advocate Representative provided information about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate to seniors from across Alberta through the Seniors Centre Without Walls program hosted by the Southside Primary Care Network (PCN) in Edmonton. (Edmonton)
- July 18, 2018–A Seniors Advocate Representative spoke to residents at Manor St. Joachim about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Edmonton)
- July 24, 2018–A Seniors Advocate Representative spoke to seniors at the Edmonton Indigenous Seniors Centre about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Edmonton)
- Sept 12, 2018–A Seniors Advocate Representative provided information about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate to the Central Alberta chapter of the National Association of Federal Retirees (NAFR) in Red Deer. (Red Deer)

- Sept 21, 2018–Representatives from the Office of the Seniors Advocate met with a representative from St. Michaels’ Health Group in Edmonton to learn about programs and services offered at the centre and planned community outreach programs. (Edmonton)
- Oct 2, 2018–A Seniors Advocate Representative met with a representative from Strathcona County RCMP to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate and seniors’ traffic safety issues in the community. (Sherwood Park)
- Oct 3, 2018–A Seniors Advocate Representative spoke to seniors at the Innisfail Seniors Conference about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate. (Innisfail)
- Oct 3, 2018–Staff from the Office of the Seniors Advocate attended a Multicultural Health Broker Circle meeting to talk about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate and to hear about seniors’ issues from members of the group. (Edmonton)
- Oct 24, 2018- The Seniors Advocate met with representatives from Covenant Health’s Network of Excellence in Seniors’ Health and presented on ageism in communication with, to and about older adults.
- Nov 20, 2018–The Seniors Advocate spoke at the National Seniors Day Conference in Sylvan Lake about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate and about ageism and its impact on seniors. (Sylvan Lake)
- Dec 19, 2018–The Seniors Advocate and a Seniors Advocate Representative helped prepare and deliver hot meals as part of an Edmonton Meals Christmas event and took the opportunity to speak with seniors receiving meals. (Edmonton)
- Jan 25, 2019–The Seniors Advocate gave a presentation about avoiding ageism in communicating with, to and about older adults at an Alberta Health’s Continuing Care Collaborative Committee meeting, a meeting with representatives from the Government of Alberta Ministry of Health, Alberta Health Services, community agencies and providers. (Edmonton)
- Jan 31, 2019– With the Seniors Advocates from British Columbia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador, the Alberta Seniors Advocate met with the Federal Minister of Seniors and discussed issues facing seniors, advocated for seniors needs, and outlined the roles of the advocate offices. (Ottawa)
- Feb 27, 2019–The Seniors Advocate spoke to members of Alberta Health Services’ Integrated Supportive and Facility Living Team in the Calgary Zone via Skype about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate and to receive feedback about their work with senior clients. (Edmonton)

- Feb 28, 2019–The Seniors Advocate met with the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Liaison Consultant, City of Edmonton, to learn about initiatives underway and to receive feedback about government funded services for seniors. (Edmonton)
- March 14, 2019–The Seniors Advocate gave a presentation at the Edmonton Chapter of the Alberta Association on Gerontology about isolation and loneliness in older age. (Edmonton)

B) Media Appearances

- Feb 7, 2019–The Seniors Advocate spoke to the Respect Newspaper (a bi-weekly newspaper for Cold Lake, Bonnyville and St. Paul area) about the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Seniors Advocate, identified trends and issues facing senior Albertans.

Appendix B

Agencies Referred to

During the reporting period, the Office provided information about and made referrals to 146 organizations, programs and services. In the interest of fairness, and to avoid any conflict of interest, referrals are only provided to government-funded/regulated programs and services (federal, municipal, and provincial), regulatory enforcement bodies and non-profit or grant-funded agencies.

Below are the agencies/programs/individuals:

211/Distress Line/Support Network
Advocate for Persons with Disabilities
Alberta Aids to daily Living (AADL)
Alberta Blue Cross
Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons
Alberta College of Social Workers
Alberta Council on Aging
Alberta Dental Association and College
Alberta Dental Service Corporation
Alberta Diabetes Foundation
Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council
Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission
Alberta Health (Continuing Care Branch, Standards Compliance and Licensing Branch)
Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan
Alberta Health Services (includes Community Care Access, Home Care, Geriatric Mental Health, Foothills Medical Centre and Patient Relations)
Alberta Human Services (includes Appeals Secretariat)
Alberta Human Rights Commission
Alberta Infrastructure
Alberta Labour Relations Board
Alberta Land Title Office
Alberta Ombudsman
Alberta Seniors Benefits (ASB)
Alberta Seniors Communities and Housing Association (ASCHA)
Alberta Seniors and Housing (includes Minister's Office, Housing Division, individual Housing Advisors and the Funding Opportunities web page)
Alberta Supports Contact Centre (ASCC)
Alberta Transportation (includes Driver Fitness & Monitoring)
Alberta Treasury Board and Finance

Alberta Utilities Commission
Alberta Works
Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)
Audiologist Association
Alzheimer Society of Alberta and NWT
Better Business Bureau (BBB)
Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens Association
Calgary Elder Abuse Resource Line
Calgary Elder Abuse Response Team
Calgary Heritage Housing
Calgary Legal Guidance
Calgary Seniors Resource Centre
Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS)
Canada Pension Plan (CPP)
Canada Post
Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)
Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP)
Canadian Bankers Association
Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)
Canmore Seniors Association
Capital Region Housing Corporation (CRHC)
Caregivers Alberta
Carya
Catholic Social Services
Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta (CPLEA)
Child and Family Services (CFS)
City of Edmonton (includes individual Councillors and Trash Assistance Program)
City of Medicine Hat
College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA)
College of Alberta Denturists
Community and Social Services Ministry
Community Initiatives Program
Community Links
Condo Law Alberta
Consumer Contact Centre (Service Alberta Ministry)
Consumer Investigations Unit
Covenant Health (includes Patient Relations)
Credit Counselling Canada
Credit Counselling Society
Deaf and Hear Alberta

Dental and Optical Assistance for Seniors
Easter Seals Alberta
Edmonton Community Legal Centre
Edmonton Food Bank
Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
Edmonton Police Service (EPS)
Edmonton Seniors Centre
Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council (ESCC)
Edmonton Transit Service (ETS)
Elder Advocates of Alberta Society
Elections Canada
Energy Efficiency Alberta
Enhanced Capacity Advancement Program
Environmental Public Health
Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) (includes Airdrie, High River, Leduc and Turner Valley
Calgary)
Family Mediation
Golden Circle Seniors (Red Deer)
Government of Alberta (if program does not appear elsewhere on this list)
Government of Canada (if program does not appear elsewhere on this list)
Greater Edmonton Foundation
Greenwood Neighbourhood Place Society
Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)
Health Link, 811
Hearing Aid Clinic
HomeShare UK
Housing Management Bodies
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
Inclusion Alberta
Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services
Insurance Bureau of Canada
Jewish Family Services
Kerby Centre
Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board
Law Society of Alberta
Lawyer Referral Service
Legal Aid Alberta
Lloydminster Interval Home
Meals on Wheels
Mediation & Restorative Justice Centre

Medically at Risk Driver Centre (MARD)
Mental Health Patient Advocate
Members of the Legislative Assembly-MLA
Money Mentors
MP Member of Parliament
Multiple Sclerosis Society
MyHealth Alberta
Nanaimo Seniors Connect Centre
Non-Smokers Rights Association
North Edmonton Seniors Association (NESA)
Office of the Alberta Health Advocate (OAHA)
Old Age Security(OAS)
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta
Office of the Seniors Advocate-British Columbia
Okotoks Family Resource Centre
Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (OPGT)
Pharmaceuticals & Supplementary Health Benefits Branch
Protection for Persons in Care (PPIC)
Alberta Premier's Office
Primary Care Networks (PCN)
Residential Access Modification Program (RAMP)
Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)
Red Deer Helping Elder Abuse Reduction (H.E.A.R)
Red Deer Housing Authority
REENA (Ontario)
Resident and Family Council (local)
Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service (RTDRS)
Safe Harbour Society
SAGE Safe House
SAGE Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton
Senior Citizen Opportunity Neighbourhood Association (SCONA)
Seniors First British Columbia
Seniors Home Adaptation and Repair Program (SHARP)
Seniors Outreach Support Services
Seniors Property Tax Deferral Program
Seniors Protection Partnership
Seniors United Now (SUN)
Service Alberta
Service Canada
Service Options for Seniors Society

Smoke-Free Housing Alberta
South East Edmonton Seniors Association (SEESA)
Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)
Southwest Edmonton Seniors Association (SWESA)
Special Needs Assistance for Seniors (SNA)
St. Mary's Hospital
Strathcona Place 55+ Centre
Student Legal Services
The Family Centre
The Way In/403-Seniors
University of Alberta Hospital
University of Calgary
Utilities Consumer Advocate
Veterans Affairs Canada
Voice of Albertans with Disabilities
Westend Seniors Activity Centre
Westend Seniors Outreach



Contact Information

By Mail: Alberta Office of the Seniors Advocate
4th Floor, 9940 106 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 2N2

By Phone: 780-644-0682 (in Edmonton)
1-844-644-0682 (Toll Free)
Language Interpretation Available
1-844-392-9025 TDD/TTY (Toll Free)

By Fax: 780-644-9685

By Email: seniors.advocate@gov.ab.ca

By Web: seniorsadvocate.alberta.ca
(Click the “Contact Us” tab)

By Facebook: www.facebook.com/AlbertaSeniorsAdvocate