



NWT Seniors' Society: Advocacy Plan

Passed by Board Resolution, February 11, 2025

Key Priority Areas

Preamble

The NWT Seniors' Society believes every senior, their families and their caregivers have the right to access supports and services they need to live a healthy and comfortable life. It is important for the NWT Seniors' Society to work collaboratively with seniors, government officials and service providers to promote healthy aging. The need for advocacy has been identified by the Board of the NWT Seniors' Society with the goal of advancing the rights of seniors and analyzing the issues impacting seniors' overall wellbeing.

The goal of advocacy is to promote change – changes in attitudes, policies, actions or practice. Advocacy and awareness-raising with and for older adults promotes change with a variety of audiences – the public, service providers, NGOs, government, families and older people themselves. Successful advocacy can result in policy and/or practice change by people in a position to support that change.

The NWT Seniors' Society has chosen to focus their advocacy plan/work on three specific areas – housing, health and quality of life. This is in line with the areas identified in the NWT Seniors' Society Strategic Plan 2024 – 2027.

What is important to know about advocacy?

There are many aspects of advocacy, some of which include creating an actionable plan, research e.g., what people know about a certain issue of concern, data collection, and developing a clear message that is easily understood and acted upon by others.

A supportive group is needed to gain traction as an advocate. It is important to clearly understand what the hope is, what is to be achieved because of your advocacy efforts.¹

An Advocacy Plan is a living document, meaning it will change and be adapted as required when activities have been met, new information needs to be considered, audiences change, or key messages are revised. This Advocacy Plan will be a five-year plan, but that timeframe can change if, for example, the Board is satisfied an objective has been met or ongoing work to meet an objective is needed.

¹ CanAge Advocacy Action Toolkit. Spring 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.canage.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/AdvocacyToolkit-2022.pdf>.



Advocacy Statements

Advocacy Statement Development

The advocacy statements for Housing and Quality of Life came directly from the NWT Seniors' Society Strategic Plan 2024 - 2027. The advocacy statement for health garnered more discussion, since it was felt that physical, mental and social health could not be separated, as they are in the Strategic Plan.

The following are the 3 advocacy statements that have been discussed, revised, and adopted and in the case of health, created and adopted as part of the ongoing work of developing an NWT Seniors' Society Advocacy Plan.

Housing

Reference: Strategic Plan Objective 1 - Safe and appropriate housing for seniors

Advocacy Statement

1. Advocate for timely repairs and maintenance for seniors, with Housing NWT, independent landlords, and other organizations.

Health

Reference: Strategic Plan Objective 2 -Promote good health for NWT seniors

Advocacy Statement

2. Advocate to ensure seniors receive appropriate, accessible, high-quality, culturally safe and equitable health and social care.

Quality of Life

Strategic Plan Objective 3 - Promote quality of life for seniors in the NWT

Advocacy Statement

3. Advocate for seniors to have the basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, power and heat.



Advocacy Plan

HOUSING

Reference: Strategic Plan Objective 1 - Safe and appropriate housing for seniors

Our Objective (The change we want)	Advocate for timely repairs and maintenance for seniors, with Housing NWT, independent landlords, and other organizations.
Issue(s) (Overview of related issues affecting seniors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seniors' overall wellness is at risk due to a lack of shared approaches and consistent understanding across the continuum of housing service options (and health supports) available. Local Housing Authorities are not always responsive to the needs of people living in public housing. There is poor coordination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and supports. Regular and preventative maintenance. The process of how to navigate the system to get to the right person to complete the work required is unclear to many. Seniors are unable to get maintenance completed due to a lack of trades / skilled people available in the communities through the Local Housing Authority and for people to hire when living in personally owned housing.

How (Action Steps) What would make this change happen?	Key audience (Possible targets of change)	Resources and supports needed	Anticipated Outcomes/Results (How you know you have succeeded in reaching your advocacy objective.)
1. Review NWT Seniors' Society documents e.g., letters, meeting notes, emails that have identified housing concerns over the past five years to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NWT Seniors' Society Indigenous, municipal and territorial governments / staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to previous minutes, correspondence and emails specific to raising concerns about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key areas of concerns and housing priorities identified by the NWT Seniors' Society are compiled into one



How (Action Steps) What would make this change happen?	Key audience (Possible targets of change)	Resources and supports needed	Anticipated Outcomes/Results (How you know you have succeeded in reaching your advocacy objective.)
<p>collate, identify and prioritize the key areas of concern. This will help ensure that when programs or services are discussed or advocated for, the key issues specific to housing are being brought forward and addressed in support of those who are affected.</p>		<p>housing issues in the NWT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “Seniors Planning Study: A Territorial Seniors Housing Assessment” document • NWT Seniors’ Society board and/or members • NWT Seniors’ Society Information Line 	<p>document for use in ongoing discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress in addressing and/or advocating about these issues is tracked to ensure progress is being made.
<p>2. Review the identified key areas of housing concerns to determine priorities and how they will be addressed through advocacy work by the NWT Seniors’ Society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWT Seniors’ Society Board • Indigenous, municipal and territorial leaders • Community supports • Partnerships with other organizations with similar concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWT Seniors’ Society ED, board and members • Collated and prioritized reports, correspondence and emails specific to housing concerns • Partnerships with other organizations with similar concerns • Tliche Government to learn how they run housing • GNWT documents, such as the Housing NWT Action Plan 2022 – 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NWT Seniors’ Society advocates for the rights of senior homeowners and tenants. • Seniors report they are living in safe housing that is kept maintained and in good repair. • There is increased understanding across government departments (at all levels) about the critical role housing has in the life of a senior, including joint decision making focused on the best outcomes for NWT seniors.



How (Action Steps) What would make this change happen?	Key audience (Possible targets of change)	Resources and supports needed	Anticipated Outcomes/Results (How you know you have succeeded in reaching your advocacy objective.)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWT Seniors' Society Information Line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is initial and ongoing success in addressing the key areas of housing concerns seniors in the NWT are experiencing.
3. Create and promote awareness about the hierarchy of Local Housing Authorities and who to contact to get assistance with housing needs and repairs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWT Seniors and their families or support people • Community members • NWT Housing • Local Housing Authorities • Income support staff • Schools • Aurora College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Housing Authorities staff • Local Housing Authorities information about programs, services and processes available, including access to policies and processes • Data / information about housing needs • Information and promotion of offering and accessing the housing maintenance program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors receive consistent access to support from the Local Housing Authority. • Through public awareness, 'red tape' and barriers to access housing repairs and support are removed.



HEALTH

Reference: Strategic Plan Objective 2 -Promote good health for NWT seniors

Our Objective (The change we want)	Advocate to ensure seniors receive appropriate, accessible, high-quality, culturally safe and equitable health and social care.
Issue(s) (Overview of related issues affecting seniors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The needs of NWT seniors are not being appropriately addressed due to a lack of integrated service delivery, inadequate staffing and funding, and inconsistencies in health care options availability. ○ Seniors need safe and caring support when accessing the medical system e.g., unable to have an escort when on medical travel or the need to equalize per diem supports. There is a disconnect between compassion and services. ○ There is a lack of coordination and communication between health care providers and services. The system must work harder to offer better access to seamless treatment and care, which is currently disconnected and, in some cases, lacking. ○ A focus on healthy aging that can prevent and minimize frailty and poor physical and mental health in old age is missing within the system. ○ Seniors need additional support as changes occur as they age, which is not available, not always recognized or supported by the system. ○ Government departments, such a Health and Social Services, Housing and Education, Culture and Employment need to work more closely together when it comes to providing support for seniors and their needs. ○ There is a lack of a territorial emergency medical alert system.

How (Action Steps) What would make this change happen?	Key audience (Possible targets of change)	Resources and supports needed	Anticipated Outcomes/Results (How you know you have succeeded in reaching your advocacy objective.)
1. Research and create information about the health and social needs of seniors living in the NWT that will be used for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous, municipal and territorial governments • Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Wellness Plans • Community Profiles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A completed profile that identifies a clear understanding about the



How (Action Steps) What would make this change happen?	Key audience (Possible targets of change)	Resources and supports needed	Anticipated Outcomes/Results (How you know you have succeeded in reaching your advocacy objective.)
advocacy, promotion, and awareness, communication and planning purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-profit organization partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWT Health Status Profile • NWT Bureau of Statistics • NWT Seniors' Society Board and members • Department of Health and Social Services key staff (support) • NWT Seniors' Society Information Line 	<p>health and social needs of seniors living in the NWT is created and available for ongoing advocacy work.</p>
2. Identify and promote the need(s) for Adult Day Programs for seniors and families. This program would allow seniors to remain in their own home longer because of the support they receive at the Adult Day Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous, municipal and territorial governments • Public • Non-profit organization partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWT Seniors' Society Information Line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors remain in their own home longer because of advocating for access to an Adult Day Program. • Families report they feel supported and are better able to care for their elder because of the break received when their family member attends the Adult Day Program.
3. Create an advocacy campaign to increase awareness and support for people with mobility issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public • Indigenous, municipal and territorial governments • Businesses • Non-profit organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships with other non-profit organizations • Information from government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A campaign that is easily recognized as promoting quality of care and quality of life for people with mobility issues is launched.



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		departments, such as the DHSS, ECE, MACA	
4. Advocate and promote better working relationships between the NWT Seniors' Society and the Department of Health and Social Services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHSS, NTHSSA, Hay River HSSA and the Tlicho Community Services Agency key staff • NWT Seniors' Society Board and members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed list of key issues and areas of concerns to focus discussions with government staff • NWT Seniors' Society Board and members • Executive Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A positive, supportive relationship is created with HSS staff that focuses on a person-directed approach, and shows increased awareness of senior's choices, that leads to positive, appropriate resolutions. • Government approaches show they are built on the understanding that regardless of senior's life choices, they would have access to the same service options and health care supports.
5. Explore the possibility and/or feasibility of advocating for enhancing medical alert availability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWT Seniors and family members or care providers • Indigenous, municipal and territorial governments • Non-profit organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on the benefits of a medical alert program versus the 911 option • Information about the costs and requirements to provide a medical alert program • Identified businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A report that describes whether it is an option to advocate for the implementation of a medical alert system of care in the NWT is created.



QUALITY OF LIFE

Reference: Strategic Plan Objective 3 - Promote quality of life for seniors in the NWT

Our Objective (The change we want)	Advocate for seniors to have the basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, power and heat.
Issues (Overview of related issues affecting seniors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communities are not coming together or helping each other as identified in the Dene Laws. ○ There is a lack of well-maintained (with heat, water and power), affordable housing for seniors. ○ All seniors don't have adequate resources to cover basic needs e.g., shelter. ○ Seniors can be isolated within the community; they don't know who to ask for help. ○ Senior's do not want the stigma of having to ask for help, they are trying to maintain their dignity and pride in their personal abilities and self-sufficiency.

How (Action Steps) What would make this change happen?	Key audience (Possible targets of change)	Resources and supports needed	Anticipated Outcomes/Results (How you know you have succeeded in reaching your advocacy objective)
1. The NWT Seniors' Society will advocate for people in need by identifying key issues and needs of seniors living in the NWT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWT Seniors • Families and community members • Governments (Indigenous, municipal and territorial) including staff • Other community partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research to identify the key issues and needs of seniors • Data • Public consultations • Surveys • Local Housing Authority staff support • Partnerships with other helping organizations • NWT Seniors' Society Information Line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A document that highlights the main areas of concern for seniors living in the NWT is used as a key planning tool to create advocacy activities leading to a better life for seniors living in the NWT. • Key community support systems that are available and/or needed to be created are identified and



How (Action Steps) What would make this change happen?	Key audience (Possible targets of change)	Resources and supports needed	Anticipated Outcomes/Results (How you know you have succeeded in reaching your advocacy objective)
			promoted that encourages the governments to act to address these needs.
2. Create a public education awareness advocacy campaign identifying that seniors are worthy of help and feel supported in living independent, healthy, active, safe and socially connected lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments (Indigenous, municipal and territorial) • Community members (all ages) • Northern Stores and other key community businesses • The media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Social Services support • Local Housing Authority staff • Income support • NWT Seniors' Society Information Line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors report they feel valued, respected and are supported to live independently (ageing in place). • A public awareness advocacy campaign that promotes seniors are a respected and valued member of society is visible and recognized throughout the NWT. • Seniors ask for assistance without fear or guilt.
3. To advocate for a better quality of life, lists of benefits offered to seniors will be created and made available in each region / community a. Note: This is supplementary to the 2024 Seniors' Information Handbook; this is specific to supports and discounts seniors can access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors and their families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWT Seniors' Society members • Information from businesses • NWT Seniors' Society Information Line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors report they received a list of discounts and benefits they are entitled to access when they turn 60 and that they benefited from being able to access any supports provided to seniors.
4. Advocate for more support for seniors in their communities, such as through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors • Community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWT Seniors Society members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors can access nutritious food through a food bank, in an inclusive,



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access to foodbanks or food rescue operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous, municipal and territorial governments • Northern grocery stores • Community businesses and organizations • Seniors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the needs of seniors related to income and food necessity • Local partnerships, including businesses and non-profit organizations • Support from government organizations • Research into setting up foodbanks and how food rescue operations might help support the foodbank • NWT Seniors' Society Information Line 	<p>non-stigmatizing environment that strengthens connections between the senior and community members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an increase of food security for seniors throughout the NWT.
5. Advocate for seniors to receive assistance with doing their income tax.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research about what is needed to set up a clinic and the importance of offering this service, such as "Hosting a Tax Clinic" (https://bridge.benefitswayfinder.org/resource/hosting-a-tax-clinic) • Partners in the communities • NWT Seniors' Society members • Development of a territorial media campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an increased connection with and support for seniors, helping to build greater awareness. • Improved access for seniors to supports, such as access to free tax clinics. • There is an increase in the number of free tax clinics offered throughout the NWT.



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NWT Seniors' Society Information Line	