

Speak Up, Speak Out

*Improving the Quality of Life of
Saskatchewan Seniors*



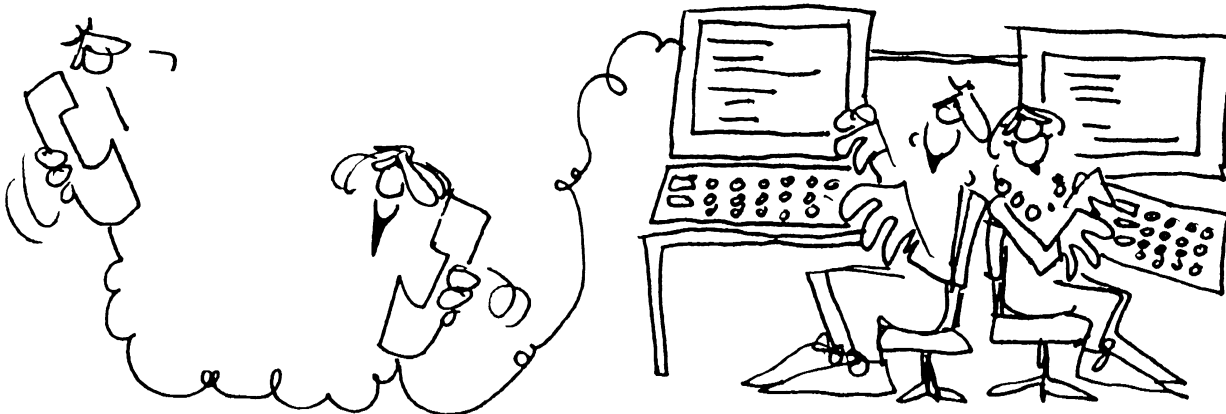
Project Chair: Beth Smith
Project Manager: Rev. Dr. Don King
Principal Researcher: Loraine Thompson
Research Assistant: Jayne Melville Whyte
Artist: Debb Black

Seniors' Education Centre
University of Regina

February 2000

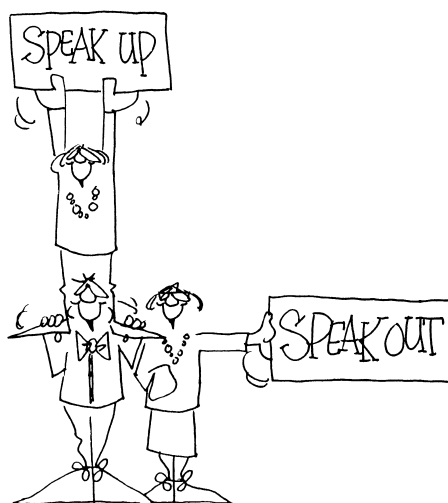
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Improving the Quality of Life of Saskatchewan Seniors **Members of Regina Project Coordinating Committee**

- Beth Smith (chair) – Retired educator; board member, Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina.
- Martha Wettstein (vice-chair) – Retired nursing administrator; Past President and current board member, Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina.
- Dr. Frank Bellamy – Retired school administrator; retired Director of Science and Mathematics, Curriculum Branch, Saskatchewan Education; President, Saskatchewan Seniors' Mechanism; member of several other seniors' organizations.
- Louella Cassell – Regina Housing Authority tenant.
- Blenda Ramsay – Active in the disability community.
- Dr. Colin M. Smith – Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, University of Saskatchewan; Treasurer, Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina; semi-retired.
- Jeanne G. Wassill – Retired obstetrical nurse at the, then, Grey Nuns Hospital; Director of Patient Care at Santa Maria Nursing Home for 13 years; Executive Director of Senior Citizens Service of Regina for one year; volunteer community activist for last six years; presently on board of Regina Seniors' Centre; volunteer with Wascana Home Care; member of Senior Power; also involved with yearly immunization clinics and giving injections of interferon to advanced MS victims.
- Rev. Dr. Don King (ex-officio), Director, Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina; ordained minister; former President of Luther College, University of Regina; manager of *Improving the Quality of Life of Saskatchewan Seniors*.
- Bruce Rice (ex-officio), Senior Policy Advisor, Social Development Division, City of Regina



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Seniors Education Centre, University Extension, University of Regina
GA 106 Gallery Building, College Avenue and Cornwall Street, Regina, SK, Canada S4S 0A2
Phone: (306) 585-5816 Fax: (306) 585-5736 E-mail: SENIORS@UREGINA.CA
Home Page: <http://www.uregina.ca/extnsion/seniors/index.html>
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February 2000

Introduction

Improving the Quality of Life of Saskatchewan Seniors was part of a Canada-wide project funded by Health Canada and administered by the Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto. The project operated in eight centres across Canada (Regina, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Quebec, Whitehorse, Halifax, Vancouver). In Saskatchewan, the project was managed by the Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina.

A nine-person coordinating committee provided direction for the Regina project. The members of the advisory committee are listed on page ii.

For this project, seniors were defined as people 55 years of age and older, the definition used by the Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina.

Three activities were undertaken as part of this project:

1. Factors that affect seniors' quality of life were identified through a series of interviews with seniors and service providers. In addition, interviews done with rural seniors by the Regina Health District, a seniors' survey done by the City of Regina and a caregiver study done by the Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina provided information about factors affecting seniors' quality of life.
2. An Action Plan was developed outlining changes to municipal, provincial and federal government policy that would enhance the quality of life of Saskatchewan seniors.
3. Materials were developed that describe activities that seniors themselves can undertake to improve their quality of life.

Speak Up, Speak Out is part of the third component of the project. During the interviews, many seniors expressed concerns about the way that municipal, provincial and federal government policy affects them. For example, they expressed a fear that the Canada Pension Plan and the Old Age Security Program will be eliminated or cut back. They were concerned about the high cost of prescription drugs and wanted better public transportation. Government and politicians will be more likely to act on issues such as these if seniors express their concerns and make their opinions known.

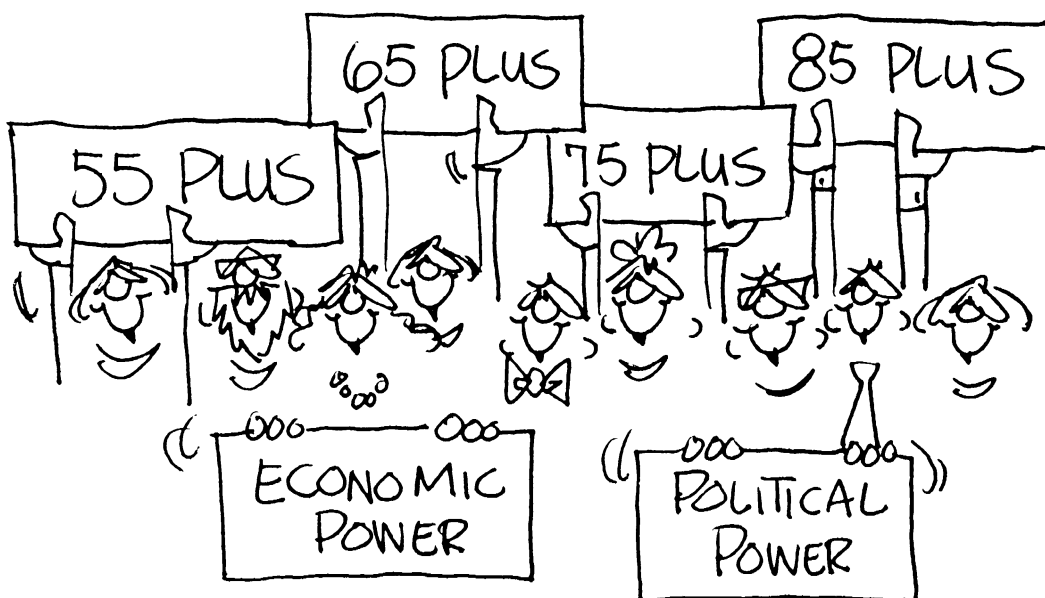
Speak Up, Speak Out provides ideas and suggestions for actions that seniors and others can take to influence government policy and public opinion. The ideas in this booklet can be applied to virtually any issue that affects seniors' well-being and quality of life. Most of the examples in this booklet feature the Old Age Security Program because many of the seniors interviewed as part of the Seniors' Quality of Life Project were worried that benefits paid under this program will be reduced or eliminated altogether. The examples in this booklet can be adapted for your own particular issue or situation.

Other seniors' organizations are encouraged to use the ideas in this booklet to address issues that concern them. This booklet may be copied for non-commercial, educational use.

The number of seniors is increasing as the baby boom generation ages. In 1996, according to the Census, people 65 and over made up 12.4 percent of the Canadian population, compared to 11.6 percent in 1991 and 8.1 percent in 1971. People 65 and over accounted for 14.5 percent of Saskatchewan's population in 1996, the highest proportion of any province. The large percentage of seniors in Saskatchewan is thought to reflect low death rates and high rates of out-migration of young people to other provinces.¹

Statistics Canada projects that people 65 and over will make up 13.3 percent of the Canadian population in 2006, and 16.5 percent of the Canadian population in 2016.²

Seniors' growing numbers give them increasing economic and political power. In addition, many seniors are retired and have time to devote to lobbying government and influencing public opinion, a factor that further increases seniors' capacity to influence public policy.



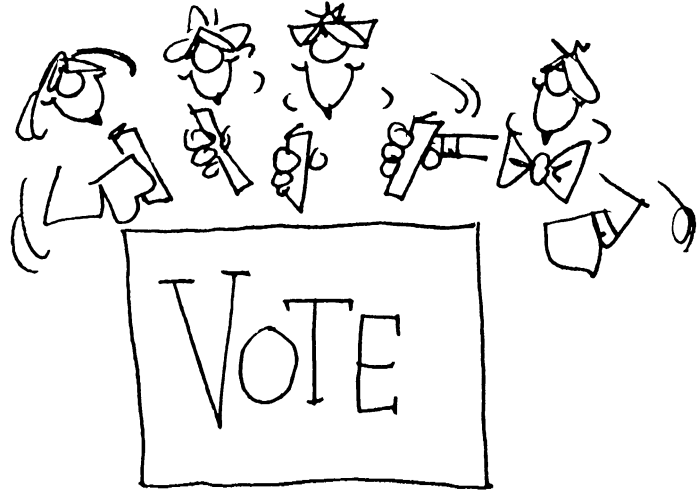
1. Figures for 1991 and 1971 from: Statistics Canada. *The Daily*, Tuesday, June 29, 1997. <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/970729/d970729.htm>

Figures for 1996 from: Statistics Canada. *Canadian statistics by age group, Canada, the provinces and territories*. <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/Population/demo31c.htm>

2. Statistics Canada. *Population Estimates for the Years 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016*. 2006-2011 – <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/Population/demo23b.htm>
2016 – <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/Population/demo23c.htm>.

Vote in Every Election

Voting is the most fundamental and basic way to influence government policy in our democratic society. You are entitled to vote in health board, municipal, provincial and federal elections.

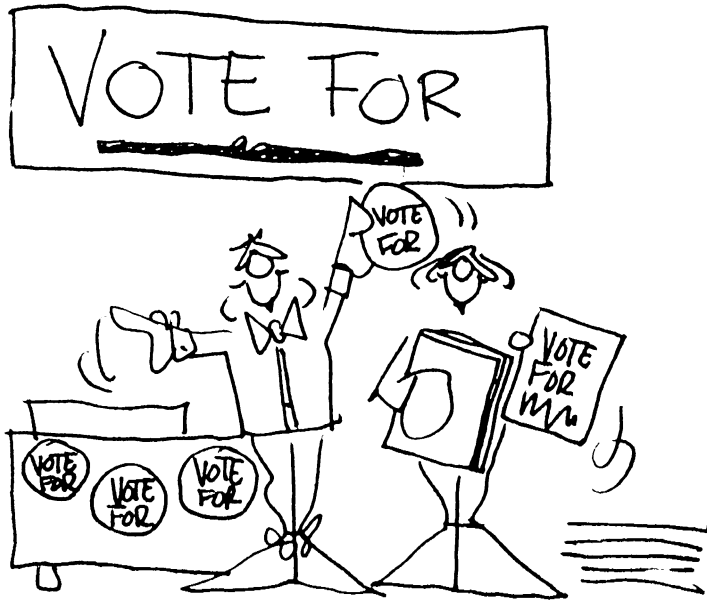


- Find out who the candidates are in your area in each election. You can do this by:
 - paying attention to political advertising on television, radio and newspapers;
 - observing the lawn signs and posters in your neighbourhood; and,
 - reading the flyers that candidates send in the mail.
- Make a list of questions to ask candidates about issues that concern you. Don't worry about whether the issues you are addressing are municipal, provincial or federal responsibilities. There is a lot of overlap between the responsibilities of all three levels of government and politicians at all levels influence each other. Possible questions for election candidates include:
 - What do you intend to do to ensure that the Old Age Security Program is continued?
 - What do you intend to do to provide more affordable housing for seniors?
 - What will you do to reduce seniors' drug costs?
 - What do you plan to do to improve seniors' access to public transportation?
- Read all the campaign literature you receive and pay attention to political advertising. Do the candidates address any of the questions that are of concern to you in their formal election platform?
- During elections, political candidates and their campaign workers usually go door-to-door. When the candidates or their representatives come to your door, ask your list of questions. Tell the candidates what you think of their answers. If they are willing to address the issues that concern you, tell them that you appreciate their interest or that you are pleased they are so responsive to seniors' issues. If they don't respond to your questions or if seniors' issues don't appear to be a priority with them, tell them that you won't be voting for them.

- If, a week before the election, you haven't had a visit from each candidate, phone the candidate's office and ask that the candidate or one of his or her campaign workers call on you.
- Attend public candidates' meetings. Usually, there is at least one public meeting that all candidates attend, present their election platform and answer questions from the public. Ask your questions and use the meeting to assess whether seniors' issues are important to the various candidates.
- On election day, **be sure to vote**. If transportation is a problem for you, phone one of the candidate's offices and ask for a ride. In provincial and federal elections, most candidates offer rides to voters. Remember, accepting a ride from a candidate does not obligate you to vote for that candidate. Vote for the candidate who most adequately addresses the issues that concern you. Your ballot is secret, no one knows how you voted.



Work for the Political Candidate of Your Choice



If a candidate in an election campaign has a good position on seniors' issues, consider working for that candidate. Political candidates always welcome campaign workers and many retired seniors have an abundance of time and energy to give. If you decide to work for a candidate, make sure you tell the candidate and her or his campaign manager that you are involved because the candidate's campaign platform addresses seniors' issues.

There are many reasons to work in a political campaign. Three examples are:

- To help elect candidates who are strong on seniors' issues.
- To influence public policy. If you are working on a campaign, talk lots about the issues that concern you and be sure that the candidate and others in the campaign are aware of the importance of seniors' issues.
- To contribute to your personal development. Working in an election campaign is a way to develop new skills such as speaking to others or organizational skills. It is also a good way to meet new people.

The tasks that must be done during any election campaign include:

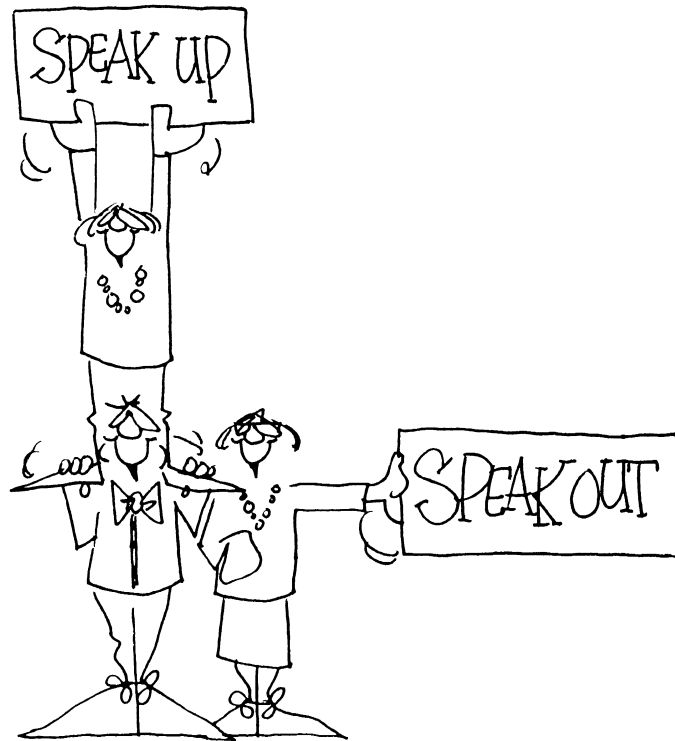
- distributing, putting up and taking down posters and lawn signs;
- clerical work such as stuffing and addressing envelopes and updating mailing lists on the computer;
- organizational work such as coordinating the work of other volunteers and making arrangements for meetings;
- telephoning voters on behalf of the candidate; and,
- going door-to-door on behalf of the candidate.

Ask for a task that you enjoy doing or one that you will learn from.

Participate in Community Organizations

Voting in municipal, provincial and federal elections and working for political candidates are the most basic ways of influencing political decisions. You can also influence public policy by getting involved in committees and community organizations. For example:

- Volunteer to serve on any city or town committees that interest you or that address seniors' issues. Most city and town governments have several committees. For example, the City of Regina has more than a dozen different committees that deal with issues as diverse as community service, parks and recreation, and property control. Members of the public sit on some of these committees. City and town governments sometimes advertise for community volunteers to sit on committees.



- Get involved in your local community association. Most community associations are focussed on improving the quality of life in the community. They may advocate for changes in government policy or may try to strengthen the community by building social and support networks among members. Participating in community association activities is a good way to influence policy and to meet people and make friends.
- Get involved in seniors' groups. Seniors' groups vary in their focus. Some are purely social; others advocate for seniors' issues and try to influence public opinion and government policy. Joining forces with others who are concerned about the same issues you are is a good way to work for change.

Write Letters

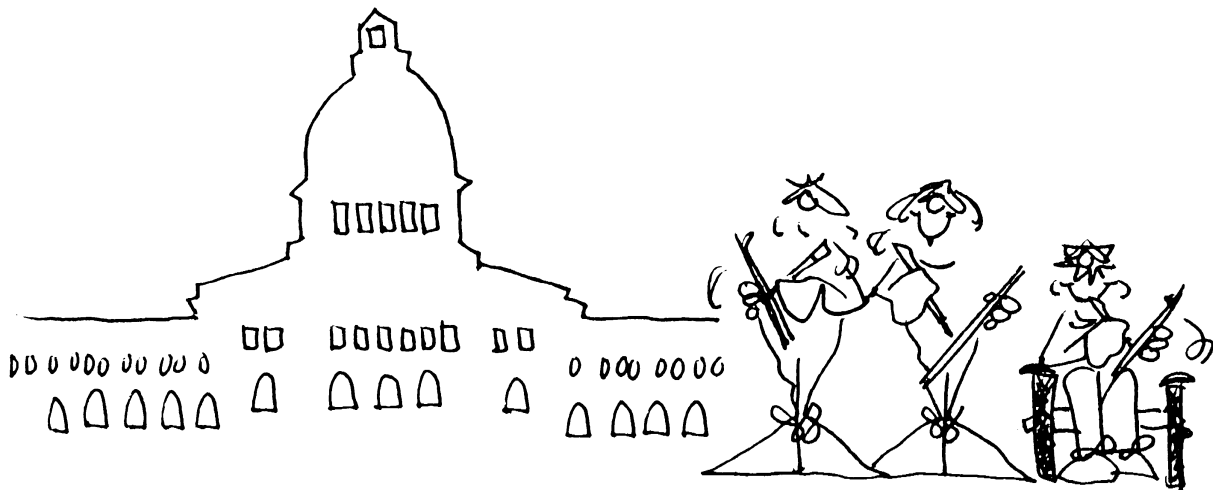
Two types of letters are important when you are advocating for change:

- letters to elected officials
- letters to the editor

Letters to Elected Officials

When you write to an elected official, follow these guidelines:

- Be as brief as possible. People lose interest in long letters and don't read them.
- Be polite. You may be angry, but an angry, rude letter reduces your credibility.
- Explain who you are.
- Explain what your concern is.
- Describe the action you want the elected official to take.
- Sometimes, it may be appropriate to remind the official that seniors are a large percentage of the population and have many votes.
- Ask for a response to your letter.
- Send copies of your letter to appropriate people. If you are writing to a cabinet minister, it is appropriate to send copies to the Prime Minister or Premier and to your local Member of Parliament or Member of the Legislative Assembly.
- Keep a file of all correspondence for future reference.
- Fax your letter or send it through the regular mail.



Sample Letter to Elected Official

The Honourable Mary Smith
Minister of _____
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am a senior and depend on the Old Age Security Program for about half my income. *(Explanation of who you are.)*

It is very important to me and to most other seniors that the Old Age Security Program be continued as the cornerstone of Canada's retirement income system. It is also important that the Old Age Security Program continue to be indexed to the cost of living, so that my purchasing power and quality of life is not reduced. *(Explanation of your concern.)*

I ask that you, as Minister of _____, make continuation of the Old Age Security Program and continued indexing of this pension a strong point in your government's program for the year 20____. I expect you to do this by advocating for the OAS Program in all your public and House of Commons speeches and by working within government to advocate for the Program. *(Description of what you want the elected official to do.)*

I would appreciate a response to this letter. *(Request for a response.)*

Yours truly

George Jones

cc: The Right Honourable _____, Prime Minister of Canada

Mr. Bill Lee, MP

(Because this letter is to a federal Cabinet Minister, the copies go to the Prime Minister and your MP.)

The letter above is an example only. Adapt it for your situation and your concern. Use your own words to express your concern.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are one way to influence public opinion and build support for your cause. When writing a letter to the editor, follow these guidelines:

- Be brief. Newspapers have a limited amount of space. If your letter is too long, the editor will cut it and you will have no control over the cuts that are made.
- Be sure that your letter is polite, well organized and that you use good grammar. Newspapers won't publish letters that are rude, rambling or grammatically incorrect.
- Type your letter, if possible.
- Explain who you are.
- Explain what the problem is and how it affects you and others.
- If possible, connect your problem to a recent news story or current event in order to give it broader relevance.
- Describe the action you want the public to take.
- If your letter is published, clip it and keep it on file for future reference.
- If your letter isn't published, look at it critically – Could you have organized it in a more logical manner? Could you have used better grammar? Could you have made it shorter? Write to the editor again. Often a letter isn't published simply because the editor receives lots of letters in a particular week and there isn't space.



Sample Letter to the Editor

Mr. Henry Doe
Editor, Sunnybrook Herald
Sunnybrook, SK

Dear Mr. Doe:

I would appreciate it very much if you would print the following letter in the letters to the editor column of the Sunnybrook Herald.

I am a senior citizen and depend on the Old Age Security Program for about half my income. I am more fortunate than many seniors because I also have an employment pension. The Old Age Security Program is the only source of income for many seniors. *(Explanation of who you are.)*

It is vital that the Old Age Security Program be continued and that it continue to be indexed to the cost of living. A reduction in the benefits paid through the Old Age Security Program would be disastrous for many seniors. Seniors who have no other source of income except the Old Age Security Program already have low incomes. A decline in their income would force them into poverty. Often seniors who live in poverty experience poor nutrition, poor housing, poor health and a reduced quality of life.

This issue affects not only seniors themselves, but also the community as a whole. With adequate pensions, seniors will be better able to support merchants and businesses in their community. They will be more independent and will need to rely less on friends and family. *(Explanation of the problem and how it affects you and others.)*

I ask for the support of everyone in the community of Sunnybrook. Write to the Honourable _____, Minister of _____, in Ottawa and to your local Member of Parliament emphasizing the importance of the Old Age Security Program. *(Description of the action you want the public to take.)*

Yours truly

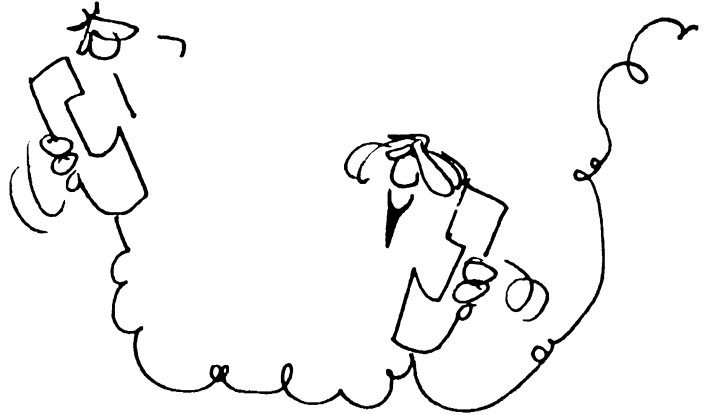
May White

The letter above is an example only. Adapt it for your situation and your concern. Use your own words to express your concern.

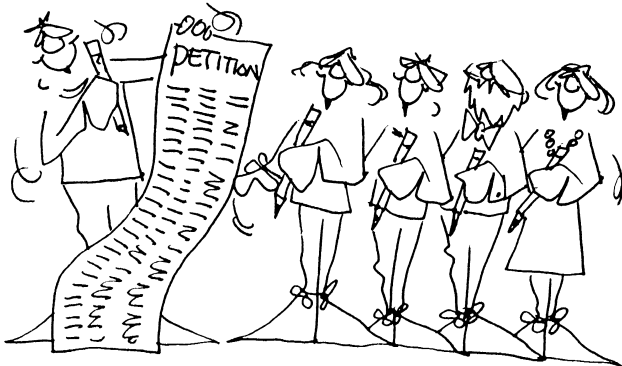
Use the Telephone

Phoning elected officials is another good way to make your views known. Follow these guidelines when phoning:

- Introduce yourself. (*This is Betty Williams from the town of Prairie View.*)
- Ask to speak to the elected official. (Usually a secretary or assistant will answer the phone. It is unlikely that the official will be in the office and available to take your call – so speak to the person who answers the phone.)
- Describe your concern briefly and what you want the elected official to do. (*I depend on the Old Age Security Program for most of my income and it is very important to me that this pension be maintained and that it continue to be indexed to the cost of living. Mr./Ms. _____ is my Member of Parliament. I want her/him to do everything s/he can to ensure that the Old Age Security Program is maintained.*)
- In some cases it may be appropriate to mention that seniors make up a large percentage of the population and have considerable voting power.
- Give the person you are talking to your phone number and ask that the elected official call you back. (*My phone number is 123-456-7891. I'd appreciate it very much if Mr./Ms. _____ would call me back regarding this issue.*)
- Thank the person you are talking to. (*Thank you very much for taking my call and for your time.*)
- Be polite and courteous.
- Keep your telephone call short and to the point.



Use Petitions



Petitions are another way to influence elected officials. Generally, petitions are less effective than phone calls, letters and personal visits, because it is easier to ignore paper than people. As well, there are sometimes problems with petitions, such as people signing more than once.

If you decide to use a petition, make every effort to present it to the appropriate elected official in person rather than just mailing it.

In rural areas where people live long distances apart, it may be difficult to collect names on a petition. It often isn't worth the amount of work involved. In cities, where there may be several seniors' high-rises within a few blocks, it may be easy to collect signatures.

As well as being a way of influencing elected officials, petitions help raise awareness about a issue. If you go door-to-door explaining the issue, telling people why it is important, and asking people for their support, you are educating them about the issue.

If you decide to use a petition, follow these guidelines:

- Contact the appropriate person to find out the correct form for the petition. For example, if you intend to present the petition to the mayor and city/town council, contact the city/town clerk. If you intend to present it to the Premier, contact the Legislative Assembly office. If your petition is not in the correct form it may not be legal and all your work will be wasted.
- Appoint one person to be responsible for each city block or for each seniors' high-rise.
- Ask the people who are collecting signatures to go door-to-door, to explain the issue and to ask for signatures.
- Look for other opportunities to get signatures. For example, take the petition to the local seniors' centre and talk to people there, or ask for a short time slot at a meeting of a seniors' group to explain the issue.
- Don't just leave the petition on the table in a seniors' centre or local business. You won't get many names and you miss an opportunity to educate people about the issue.
- After a few weeks, collect all the sheets of signatures and put them together in one package.
- Contact the office of the appropriate elected official and set up an appointment to present the petition.

Meet with Elected Officials

Nothing is as effective as face-to-face contact. Meetings with elected officials give you a chance to explain the issue and to build a human relationship with the officials. Follow these guidelines:



- Write to the official and ask for an appointment. Describe your group and what you want to discuss. You may get a letter or phone call from someone in the official's office setting up the appointment. If you don't receive a reply within three weeks, follow up with a phone call. Be polite but persistent. It may take more than one letter or phone call to get an appointment.
- The elected official may not be available to meet with you and may ask that you meet with a member of her or his staff or with a senior civil servant. Accept this appointment and keep on trying for an appointment with the elected official.
- Bring three or four people if possible. All may not speak, but the company of colleagues gives moral support.
- You will probably only have 15 minutes, so plan your presentation carefully.
- Develop a script for your presentation, decide who speaks when and rehearse your presentation beforehand. Before the meeting, try to anticipate questions that the elected official might ask and develop appropriate answers.
- During the presentation, introduce yourselves, describe your concern, and describe the action you want the elected official to take. Answer any questions the official may have.
- Be polite and courteous. Avoid angry rhetoric. Do not verbally attack the official. Be clear about what you want changed and describe what you want the official to do.
- It may be appropriate to mention during your presentation that seniors have considerable voting power.
- When the meeting is over, thank the official for his/her time and leave some written material describing the issue.
- The day after the meeting, write a formal thank you letter to the official expressing appreciation, recording any promises or commitments the official made during your conversation, and volunteering to provide more information if needed.

Contact the Appropriate People

Guidelines for getting the names, addresses and phone numbers of elected officials appear below. When you are trying to change government policy, it is always appropriate to contact elected officials. At the municipal level, contact the mayor and city/town councillors. At the provincial level, contact Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), the cabinet minister responsible for the issue you are concerned about, the Premier and Deputy Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition critic for the issue you are concerned about. At the federal level, contact Members of Parliament (MPs), the cabinet minister responsible for the issue you are concerned about, the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition critic for your issue.

Sometimes it is also appropriate to contact senior civil servants. Elected officials make major policy decisions, but senior civil servants work out the details of those decisions and plan how to implement them. Contacts with deputy ministers and executive directors of government departments can also be worthwhile.

Municipal Level (City, Town or Rural Municipality)

- Phone city/town hall and ask for a list of the names, addresses, phone and fax numbers of the mayor and city/town councillors. Ask that the list be sent by mail or fax so that you get the spellings of the names right.
- Sometimes the names, addresses and phone numbers of city councillors appear in the local phone book. For example, the Regina city phone book provides this information in the City of Regina (blue) section.
- If you have difficulty getting the mailing addresses of elected municipal officials, write to them c/o city hall/town hall or rural municipality office.
- Many cities and towns have a website that gives the names and phone and fax numbers of elected officials and senior civil servants. Phone city/town hall or the rural municipality office and ask for the website address.



Provincial Level

- The Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and their phone numbers are listed in the Government of Saskatchewan (blue) section of some Saskatchewan phone books.
- If the names and phone numbers of Members of the Legislative Assembly don't appear in your local phone book or if an election has taken place, call the Legislative Assembly Office (306-787-2376) and ask that a list be mailed or faxed to you.
- The names, constituency addresses and phone numbers of the Members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly are available on-line at: www.legassembly.sk.ca.
- Write to Saskatchewan MLAs at this address:
Saskatchewan Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, SK
S4S 0B3
- For names, phone numbers, fax numbers and addresses of senior civil servants, refer to the Government of Saskatchewan phone book. It is on-line at the Government of Saskatchewan website: www.gov.sk.ca.

Federal Level

- To get the names, addresses and phone numbers of federal cabinet ministers or Members of Parliament (MPs) and senior federal civil servants call 1-800-667-3355 or go to the Government of Canada website: www.canada.gc.ca.
- Write to federal MPs, including cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister at:
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

You do not need a stamp to mail a letter to any federal MP at the Ottawa address.

Use the Media

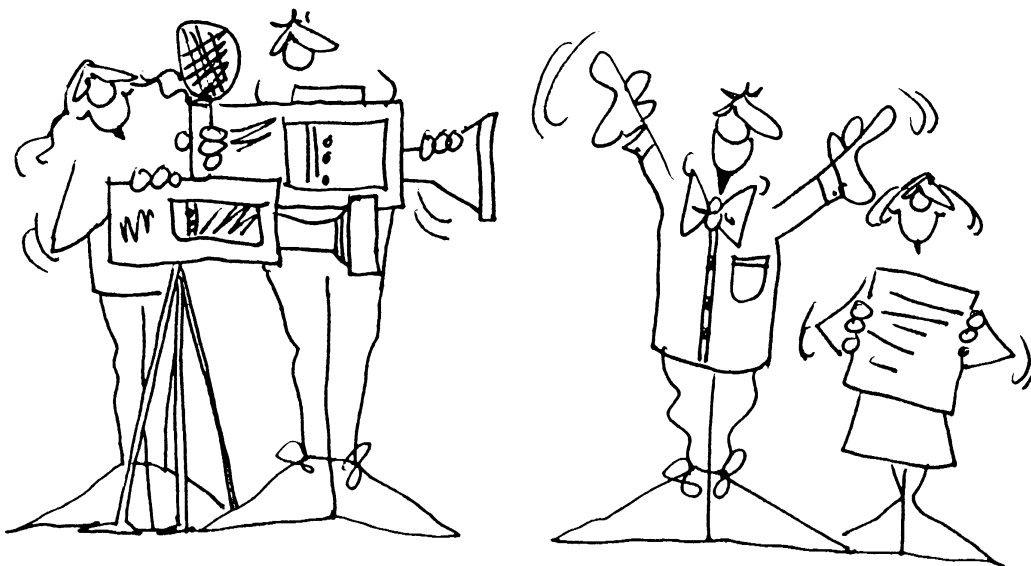
Getting information about your cause in newspapers, radio and television and on the Internet makes people aware of important issues, influences public opinion and influences political decision-makers. If you know someone who has experience with the media, ask them to work with you. People who have worked for newspapers, radio or television, or in the public relations area can offer a wealth of advice and support.

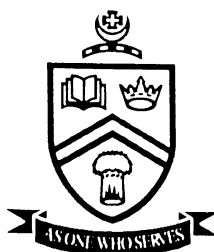
Newspapers, Television and Radio

When you are working with newspapers, television and radio, you will need a news release that provides basic information about your cause and the issues you are addressing. You can also use news releases to notify the media of an upcoming event such as a meeting or demonstration, and to respond to a speech or action by a political figure.

When writing a news release:

- Make it short, maximum of two pages, one page is best.
- Print it on your group's letterhead.
- Put the date the release was issued on the top.
- Be sure to address all five "W's" of a news story (Who, What, When, Where, Why).
- Include a couple of quotes – they give the story a human touch.
- Provide a bit of information about your group.
- Include contact information – give the name, mailing address, phone and fax number, and e-mail address of a contact person.





UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

N E W S R E L E A S E

REGINA [Where] – Improving the quality of life of seniors is not only the title, but is also the goal of a Canada-wide research project being done in eight centres across the country. The University of Regina Seniors' Education Centre is managing the project in Saskatchewan. [Who]

The research project, funded by Health Canada, is examining factors that promote health and happiness among people 55 years of age and older and is scheduled for completion early in 2000. [When]

Information for the project is being collected through interviews with people aged 55 and over in the Regina area. Participants are asked about factors that enhance older adults' quality of life and factors that detract from it. The two researchers are interviewing older adults from a variety of socioeconomic circumstances and age ranges. [What]

A nine-person advisory committee composed of seniors and representatives of groups working with seniors is providing direction for the project. [What]

Advisory committee chair Beth Smith of Regina, a retired teacher, said that it is very important to interview seniors of all ages. "There's as great an age span between 55 years old and 90 as there is between 25 years old and 55," Smith said.

The project will focus on as many of the factors that contribute to quality of life as possible, Smith said, "Quality of life results from a complex interplay of social, economic, personal and health-related factors. Through individual interviews information is being gathered that will be useful in identifying these factors and exploring their interrelationships." [Why] [Quotes]

Some of the seniors being interviewed in Regina have been suggested by the nine-member project advisory committee, others are referred by those being interviewed. [What]

The Seniors' Education Centre at the University of Regina provides learning opportunities for and with seniors (55 and over) within a University context and conducts applied research on issues of concern to seniors. [Information about organizing group]

For more information or to volunteer to participate in an interview contact:

Lorraine Thompson
Phone and fax: (306) 757-3206
E-mail: ltisl@sk.sympatico.ca [Contact information]

For further information on the Canada-wide project there is a website to visit. The address is: <http://www.utoronto.ca/seniors>

When working with newspapers, radio and television, follow these guidelines:

- Develop a list of media contacts. Usually, the city or provincial editor on a newspaper or an assignment editor at a radio and television station is a better contact than a reporter. The editors decide what will be covered and assign specific stories to individual reporters.
- Send your news release to the attention of a specific person. News releases are traditionally sent by mail, but today fax and e-mail are quicker and sometimes cheaper.
- If your news release isn't used within a week or so, follow up with a phone call to your contact person. Be willing to provide more information and to participate in an interview.
- In small communities, where people know each other, it may be appropriate to phone or visit your media contact first, explain your concerns and leave a news release.
- The news release serves as a "foot in the door" and provides basic information about your cause. Your primary objective should always be to get an interview. Even a 30-second clip from an interview on radio or television reaches many people.
- Maintain courteous relationships with your media contacts. Thank them when they use your material and be available to provide more information.
- Develop contacts at your local community cable television station. Cable TV stations are always looking for guests for local programming and might welcome your offer to do an interview.

Internet

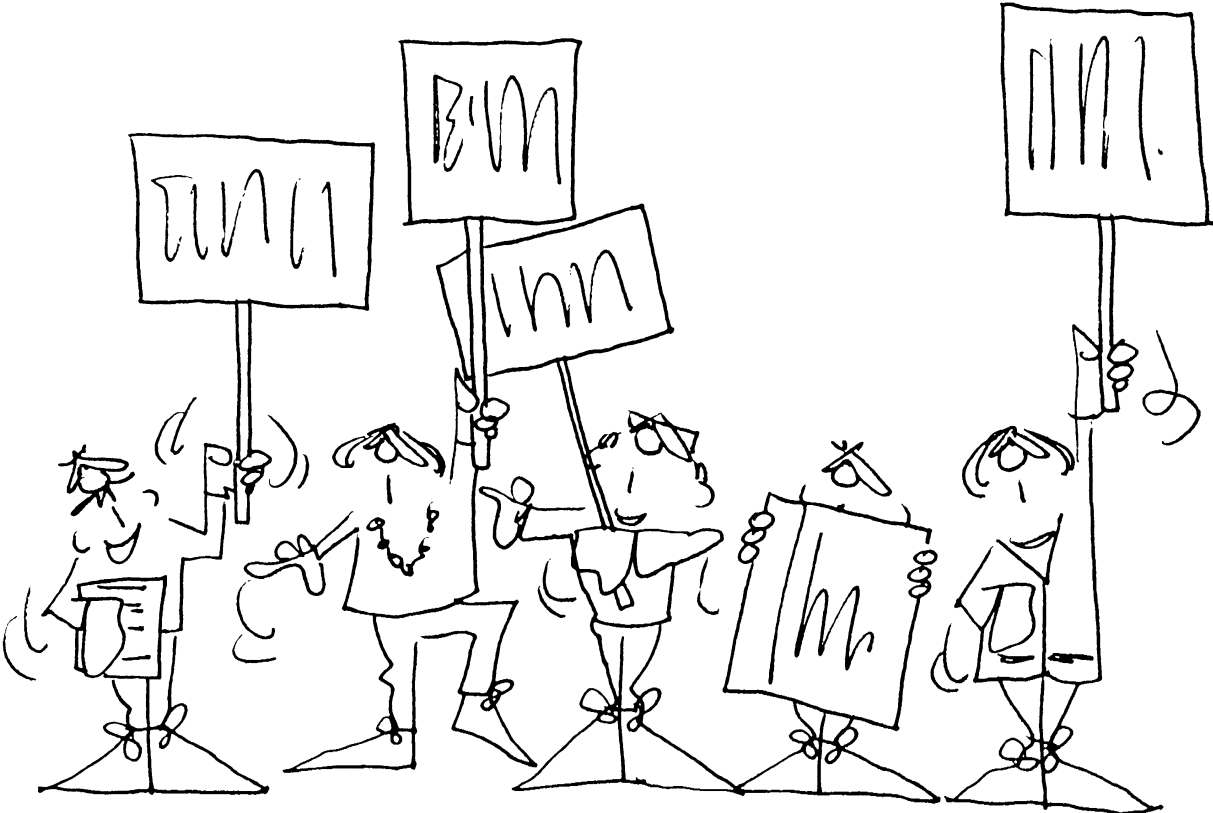
The Internet is a new media that has the potential to reach many people. Here are some ideas for using the Internet:

- Set up a website that provides basic information about your cause and the issues you are addressing. In every community, there are a few high school students who are computer whizzes and will set up websites cheaply. Put your website address on all your letters, news releases and other material.
- Use chat rooms and discussion groups to raise public awareness about your concerns.
- Use e-mail to distribute information to people who are concerned about seniors' issues. Use it also to send letters and expressions of concern to elected officials and senior civil servants.

Demonstrations

During a demonstration people typically march in front of the Legislative Building in Regina or other government office buildings carrying signs in support of their cause.

The primary value of a demonstration is the media attention it gives you. Likely few people will see the actual demonstration and elected officials and senior civil servants may not be in their offices. However, if a photo of your demonstration appears in the newspaper or a clip on evening television news, you will have reached many people. Therefore, if you decide to organize a demonstration, be sure the media knows about it. Send out news releases about a week before and follow up with phone calls. On the day of the demonstration, make another series of phone calls to your contacts at newspapers, television and radio stations.



Advocate for What You Believe In

Sometimes an issue will arise that is so important to seniors and their quality of life that you feel compelled to organize to make the situation better. Here are some suggestions for organizing.

Set Up Communication Networks

- Set up phone trees. Each person on the tree is responsible for phoning three or four other people to pass along information.
- Create electronic networks. New models of fax machines allow you to record hundreds of numbers and to send a letter to everyone on your list by pushing one button. Similarly, it is possible to store e-mail addresses and to reach many people with one transmission. Use these electronic systems to send information and requests for action to supporters.
- In seniors' housing complexes, appoint one person as building captain and ask them to distribute information to everyone in the building. (In large buildings, it may be appropriate to have floor captains.)
- Use established networks such as seniors' educational and recreational groups, churches, service clubs, community organizations and your family to distribute information.

Write Letters

- Numbers count – politicians are more likely to act on an issue if they receive many letters.
- Prepare a sample letter that supporters can copy or adapt.
- Ask each person in your communication network to write a letter themselves and to get one friend or relative to write a letter.
- Write directly to the person you want to influence (cabinet minister, mayor, Premier) but send copies to other appropriate people (your MLA, Leader of the Opposition).

Phone

- Numbers count – ask every person in your network to make at least two phone calls.
- Develop a sample phone script and distribute it to supporters so that supporters' phone calls are polite, short and to the point.

My Plans for Action

Concerns

What three issues are of the most concern to me as a senior?

Issue #1: _____

Issue #2: _____

Issue #3: _____

Actions

What can I do to change things?

Possible Actions	Already Doing	Will Do Soon
Vote in every election		
Work for political candidates		
Volunteer to be on city/town committees		
Participate in community associations		
Participate in seniors' groups		
Make presentations to service clubs and community groups on the issue		
Write letters to elected officials		
Write letters to the editor		
Phone elected officials		
Organize a petition		
Meet with elected officials		
Write short articles for seniors' publications or community newsletters		
Develop an Internet website		
Raise my concern in on-line chat rooms and discussion groups		
Organize a demonstration		
Set up a communication network using phone trees, electronic mailing, arrangements for spreading information by word-of-mouth		