

Age-Friendly Communities in Newfoundland and Labrador: Clarenville

Objective

To demonstrate the need for age-friendly communities in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) and highlight the age-friendly community of Clarenville, NL.

Practice Points

1. According to the World Health Organization, an age-friendly community is a community where policies, services, and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to support and enable people of all ages to live in a secure environment, enjoy good health, and continue to participate fully in society.
2. The Age-Friendly NL communities program was launched in 2009, and supports communities in NL with planning, policies, and undertaking projects in order to become age-friendly [Age-Friendly NL Communities – Children, Seniors and Social Development (gov.nl.ca)].
3. Clarenville was one of 10 communities across eight provinces to pilot the age-friendly communities program when it came to Canada in 2007. The pilot resulted in the development of the Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide (https://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/alt-formats/pdf/publications/public/healthy-sante/age_friendly_rural/AFRRC_en.pdf).

Background

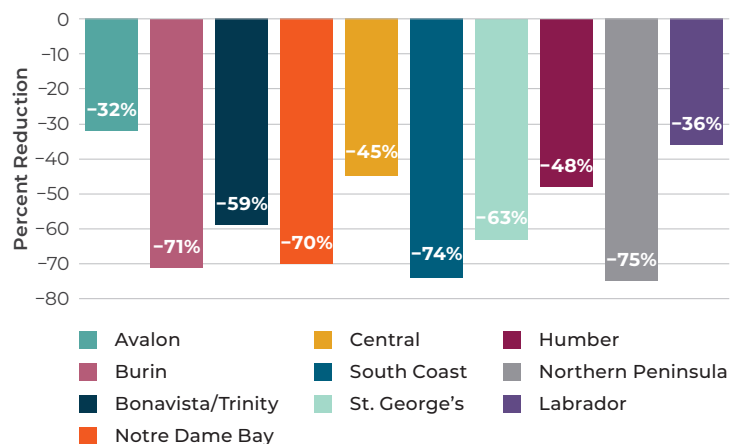


Figure 1. Percent Reduction in Children <15 Years of Age by Region in NL, 1990–2020

- There were large reductions in the number of children across all regions of the province.

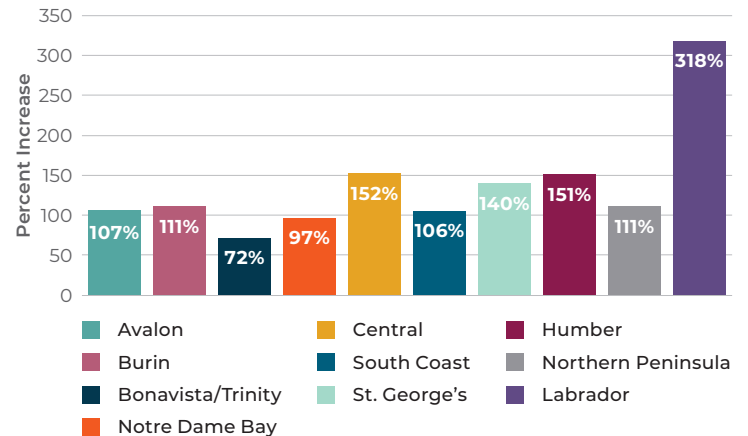


Figure 2. Percent Increase in the Number of Seniors by Region in NL, 1990–2020

- There were large increases in the number of people >65, particularly in Labrador which saw an increase of 318% in the last 20 years.
- By 2040, seniors are projected to represent 31% of the total population of NL.



Figure 3. The Eight Domains of Age-Friendly Communities (Adapted from the World Health Organization)

- The eight domains of an age-friendly community provide a framework for communities that are planning to become age-friendly.

Results (PIs: H. Kielley, J. Collins, L. Bonnell)

Transportation

Clareville Region Extended Seniors Transportation (CREST) started in 2013 and has provided transportation to ~16,163 riders >60 and those >25 who use a wheelchair. It has been running for eight years with 90 volunteers that have provided ~80,000 volunteer hours.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

A number of businesses in the Clareville area have been designated age-friendly based on criteria such as accessibility, comfort, visibility/sound, and customer service. Currently there are 10 local businesses piloting the age-friendly model.

In 2014, the town of Clareville opened an age-friendly park which is strategically placed in the community. It is wheelchair accessible, contains walking trails, park benches, green spaces, a gazebo, tobogganing hill, horseshoe pad, fire pit, and a flourishing 33-bed community garden.

Housing

Currently there are two senior housing projects underway. They consist of 100 units with plans to expand to ~300. King's Haven Adult Living Community provides affordable living for seniors with senior-friendly services built in to its fee.

Social Participation

Generating Awareness Through Healthy Eating and Recreation (GATHER) is a volunteer-based program that provides activities such exercise routines, gardening, and age-related education sessions.

The Clareville and area age-friendly 50+ club is another means for social participation. Formed in 2021, the number of members has grown to 75. Social events include card playing and arts and crafts.

The Bill Davis Chalet is a community centre that allows seniors to hold events free of charge. It is available free of charge to senior clubs. Strategically located, there is an outdoor park with a splash pad to allow for intergenerational connections.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Silver Surfers provides intergenerational activities between high school students and staff and students from the College of North Atlantic to help seniors with computer technology.

Civic Participation and Employment

Clareville's Aliant Pioneers is a volunteer-based group that provides a wide variety of community service in the Clareville area.

Communication and Information, Community Support and Health Services

Clareville's annual Seniors' Information Fair is devoted to seniors and seniors' services. It provides information on home services, therapy services, health services, finances and much more.

Conclusions

1. Since the inauguration in 2007 of the Age-Friendly Seniors Program in Clareville, the town and surrounding area have transformed to adapt to the changing needs of the residents. The success is highlighted in the population change and the migration of older residents. In 2016, there was a total of 6,291 people in the town of Clareville, 1,100 of which were >65 (175/1,000). In 2021, the total population grew to 6,704 (6.6% increase) with 1,505 residents >65 (225/1,000).
2. Age-friendly is a process, not a product. Communities must commit to ongoing assessment and improvement. The program is about community capacity building – helping communities have conversations about what aging in place means individually and collectively.
3. Some communities struggle with the capacity to maintain the program. Having a member of council designated as the age-friendly contact is very helpful. It is crucial that the age-friendly committee be representative of all sectors of the community and be made up of passionate individuals with a common purpose.