

March 2011

UPFRONT: Aging in Place: A Call to Action

Ron Swan



Along with our aging population, the concept of aging in place has grown in popularity in recent years. Aging

in place means that seniors are enabled to stay living independently in their own homes, or in their local communities. This may involve home renovations, in home care and equipment solutions, and other community supports.

I founded Home Safe Living in 2004 with my son Troy and my daughter Trisha. Our mission is to help seniors and persons with disabilities live safely and independently in their homes and communities. Our company has grown significantly over the years and our teams work together to provide independent living solutions for Nova Scotians.

I soon recognized that partnerships with business, government, and community organizations would be the best way to accomplish aging in place goals, so I contacted Valerie White, CEO of the Nova Scotia Department of Seniors. I asked Valerie if she would come to see our business and talk about how we could work together to help seniors in Nova Scotia. Valerie met me in our showroom over six years ago and we have continued to work together since.

In late 2008, I became familiar with Community Links, and our company became one of the sponsors of its Mini-People's School in Shelburne County, where housing issues for seniors and housing solutions for aging in place were some of the issues discussed.

Late last year I learned of Louis Tenenbaum, an Aging in Place expert from the US coming to Nova Scotia to speak to the Home Builders Association. With the support of the Department of Seniors, I arranged for Mr. Tenenbaum to speak to the public in January of this year. Our audience at the Royal Bank Theatre and others connected via the Telehealth network across the province discussed aging in place. Louis presented a compelling argument for aging in place from the standpoint of quality of life to simple economics, backed by statistics and facts supported by our own Strategy for Positive Aging. An aging in place program would support our Strategy and allow us to reach the broader senior community.

We need to take ownership for our own future, looking to government as a supporter and enabler rather than our saviour. Let's create a core group that is representative of seniors' issues to take a closer look at aging in place. Armed with a well defined opportunity and a strategy for its implementation, we can bring recommendations to Government for policy changes and enabling legislation

that will see Nova Scotia being a leader for positive aging.

Ron Swan is president of Home Safe Living Inc. and past Chair of the Canadian Paraplegic Association of Nova Scotia.

GROUP OF IX UPDATE

The Group of IX, the Seniors Advisory Council of Nova Scotia, has as its mandate “to serve as and advocate for senior Nova Scotians and to provide advice the Nova Scotian government on seniors issues. Community Links serves on this body as the Nova Scotia Division representative of Canadian Pensioners Concerned. The Group meets monthly from September to June with staff of the Department of Seniors.

In January the Executive of the Group changed. Bill Van Gorder, who represents CARP on the Group of IX, replaced Bernie LaRussic as Chair. Phyllis Cote of the Nova Scotia Retired Teachers Association became Vice-Chair

In recent months the Group has met with Marina Keeping and Greg Musika of Pharmaceutical Services – Department of Health to get an update on Seniors Pharmacare. The Group of IX asks questions and provides input into this program on behalf of seniors. Mary Hill, Wait Time Improvement Officer – Department of Health provided an update on the My Surgery Website. Use of the site is not as great as it could be and seniors with access to the internet who want information on how long it might take to get their surgical procedures are encouraged to log on to <http://mysurgery.nshealth.ca>.

The Group of IX is currently setting some priorities for its work over the coming year. If you wish to make suggestions on this or wish for more information on the Group of IX contact Community Links at 902-422-0914 or admin@nscommunitylinks.ca



Home Sweet Home

A recent study by the Atlantic Seniors Housing Research Alliance (ASHRA) found that

- 83% of rural seniors live in single family homes, compared to 60% of urban seniors
- 87% of Atlantic Canadian seniors have no plans to move from their current home.
- Over half of seniors homes need some form of repair
- Most seniors prefer seniors –only housing.
- More than half of seniors are not aware of available public programs to help modify or repair their homes

Property Tax Rebate: Seniors who are receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) or The Allowance may be eligible to receive a 50% rebate on their property taxes. Applications can be picked up at your nearest Access Nova Scotia site, online, or by calling 1-800-670-4357.

To find out if you qualify for the GIS or The Allowance, call Service Canada at 1-800 277-9914.



Remembering Joe Van Buskirk

Joe Van Buskirk, 66, a member of the Pictou County Preventing Falls Together Coalition, died Monday, February 21, 2011. He had been living with cancer since 2004. Joe was an active member of First United Baptist Church, New Glasgow, and the Pictou County coalition members held its monthly meetings at the church. Joe usually had the tea and coffee going, the heat on and everything arranged for a friendly meeting by the time others arrived. He contributed during the meeting and in the community around the issue of falls prevention. A couple of years ago, he walked the streets of Stellarton and recorded all the slip, trip and fall hazards. He prepared a report for the town which he delivered to the Mayor and council. Joe could always be counted on and never let failing health get in the way of helping others.

Volunteer service was always a priority to Joe as a way of serving his faith and his community. This included various choirs, the Pictou County Helpline, Camp Pagweak, The Baptist Foundation, Crandall University (formerly ABU) and the Nova Scotia Clean Water Task Force. The members of the Pictou County PFT Coalition will be among those who miss him and they extend their condolences to his wife Delta and family.



A Safe Home By Andrew Russell

Here are some helpful tips for everyone, to make your home more accessible and safe for

all to enjoy. Remember; even if you don't have any mobility challenges it doesn't mean your guests won't.

- Have bright lighting throughout your living space and around your property. Putting night lights in your receptacles are a great way to help navigate through your home when it is dark. Also putting a reflector strip on the threshold of all exit doors is a bonus.
- Clear all hallways and entryways from any foreign objects. Organized spaces and walk ways help prevent falls.
www.organizeanything.com
- Furniture layout plans – Have 45 inches between furniture pieces and 72 inches at all entryways. This will allow you room to accommodate a walker comfortably enough to turn and have a seat.
- Handrails are a great inexpensive assistive device that typically goes in hallways and up & down stairways.
- With 80% of all seniors' injuries happening in the bathroom, this is the most dangerous room in the home. Make sure you have an adequate amount of grab bars. There are typically two in the shower and one by the toilet.
- When putting the groceries away, put the lighter and least used items in the upper cabinets while keeping the heavier items in the bottom cabinets.
- Make sure when there are floor mats present that they are low profile and anti slip. 3M makes a great anti slip mat.

- Having anti slip grip paper on all ramps, stairs and walkways will help minimize the risk of having a fall.
- Have a bench or chair in or near all entrance ways. This will assist people when taking off their footwear and coats safely and with ease.

Andrew Russell is VP Sales and Marketing for Home Mobility Special Renovations Inc. He can be reached at 1-877-907-4677 or visit the website at www.home-mobility.ca



To Move or Not to Move Barbara Carthew

Moving out of one's home is a big decision in the life of a senior. As much as you love your home, coping with stairs, cleaning, repairs, and outside work can be a worry and a frustration. And then there is the cost of heating! You may also feel isolated if you can no longer get out and about as you used to. So perhaps it is time.

There are many options to consider: moving in with a family member or to an apartment, assisted living complex or senior's home. Your decision will be affected by what you can afford: what costs will the sale of your home cover? Are you eligible for subsidized senior housing? It's best to talk over the financial aspects with trusted advisors.

A move can mean increased freedom, mobility and access to a social life. A new chapter in your life? You bet – and maybe better health as well.

On the other hand, there is the comfort of being in your own home, the memories, the community, and all that is familiar to you. If that pull is yet so strong, perhaps you could close off a part of the house, treat yourself to a safer bathroom, hire someone for the outside work and consider requesting a Home Care Worker. Spending time with friends and family, attending an Adult Day Program, and volunteering with a local cause can keep you active and involved.

Life is what we make it. Consider the options that most suit your needs then go forward with a brave resolve!

Barbara Carthew is Past President of Community Links

Home Helps and Options

Whether you have decided to stay in your own home or change your living arrangements, there are a number of options and programs to be aware of. Here are some:



Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence (HASI)

This program involves forgivable loans of up to \$3500 for lower income seniors to help with the costs of minor adaptations like bathroom grab bars, lever handles on doors, walk in showers, etc.

Senior Citizens Assistance Program

This program offers a grant of up to \$5,000 for low income seniors who need repairs to the home that are threatening their health or safety

The above are only two of the provincial programs to help seniors age in place. To find out more about these programs contact your local Housing Services Office, call 1-800-774-5130 to get the number of the nearest office, or visit the website www.gov.ns.ca/coms/

Subsidized Home Care

The Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness-Continuing Care provides home care services for those who need it. About 80% of Nova Scotians receiving home care do not pay a fee, and this determination is income based. To inquire about home care, call 1-800-225-7225.

Private Home Care A number of private companies around the province offer strategies to help seniors stay in the home. There are many types of home care and support available, from 24 hour live-in support to a few hours of light housekeeping. Contacting the Nova Scotia Home Care Association is a good place to start Phone (902) 460-8074
Email: info@homecareNS.org
Website: www.homecareNS.org or look in the yellow pages under, "Home Care"

Other In-Home Assistance

Organizations like the VON, RCMP Senior Safety and other non-profit groups offer services to help seniors stay in their homes by providing support, transportation and personal contact. For information about services in your area, contact your local branch of the VON, your municipal government, or local library.

Subsidized Apartment Living

For seniors who wish to move out of their own home, but are able to live

independently, Community Services offers the Seniors Rental Housing Program. Residents are charged rent based upon income. This program is managed by the seven Regional Housing Authorities in the province. Contact the one closest to you.

| | |
|-------------|----------------|
| Cape Breton | 1-800-565-3135 |
| New Glasgow | 1-800-933-2101 |
| Amherst | 1-800-934-2445 |
| Truro | 1-877-846-0440 |
| New Minas | 1-800-441-0447 |
| Bridgewater | 1-888-845-7208 |
| Yarmouth | 1-800-306-3331 |
| HRM | 1.800-565-8859 |

Seniors' Housing and Levels of Care

Many private seniors housing complexes around the province offer a variety of living options from apartment living to full nursing care. The department of Seniors *Programs for Positive Aging* lists many of these types of facilities around the province. You can pick up a copy of the *Programs for Positive Aging* by visiting your local library or by contacting the Department of Seniors at 1-800-670-0065

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/seniors/>



From Frosty's Facebook page

Where do Snowmen put their web pages?

On the winternet

How do snowmen read their emails?

With an icy stare!

What do snowmen call their offspring?

Chill-dren

The Good News and the Bad:

☺ **Changes to CPP** ☹

Those in the 55 to 69 age group will be interested in finding out more about the changes to the Canada Pension Plan. Some of the highlights are:

- Starting in 2012, there will be no requirement to stop working for a period in order to start receiving CPP
- Also starting in 2012, those in the 60-65 age group who continue working after they start receiving CPP will continue to contribute, and will receive a Post Retirement Benefit (PRB). For those in the 65-70 age group, post retirement contributions are voluntary.
- The increase in CPP benefits for those delaying application until after age 65 is being gradually increased from 2011 to 2013. This means that by 2013, if contributors start receiving their CPP pension at the age of 70, their pension amounts will be 42% more than if taken at age 65.
- **On the down side**, the penalty in CPP for retiring early is being increased between 2012 and 2016, so that by 2016 a person retiring at age 60 will have a 36% reduction in their benefit. (Currently, the reduction is 30%) For more information, go to:

<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/oas-cpp/changes.shtml>



Retirement: It's nice to get out of the rat race, but you have to learn to get along with less cheese. ~Gene Perret

Cape Breton Council of Seniors and Pensioners supports Affordable Housing and Aging in Place

Bernie LaRusic, a member of the Cape Breton Council of Seniors and Pensioners, says he is happy with the provincial government's recent announcement of \$2 million to build affordable housing in Cape Breton. It will be a mixture of family units and seniors units for those in low-income brackets.

However, often snow removal, grass mowing, minor repairs and maintenance can all become obstacles when you are trying to maintain your own home, says LaRusic. People aren't available to do the work and money is always an issue. That's why the Council continues to advocate to government on behalf of seniors and pensioners, convincing them to make investments in housing and programs that will keep seniors independent, living and actively taking part in their communities. LaRusic admits it takes a long time and often things get bogged down in bureaucracy, but it is important for organizations like the Council to continue working on behalf of seniors.

In addition to his work with seniors' groups, LaRusic is also a member of the Cape Breton Region Municipality Preventing Falls Together Coalition.



Notes and Notices



This spring, Community Links takes to the road with some entertaining and thought provoking skits around the issue of seniors and gambling. This project is a follow up the study done on *Seniors and Gambling: A Hidden Problem*. The current project is sponsored by the Nova Scotia Gaming Foundation and the Department of Seniors.

If your seniors group would like to host this exciting dramatic presentation, please contact Community Links at 902-422-0914 or email admin@nscommunitylinks.ca

A **Mini-Peoples School** is planned for May in the Lake Loon-Cherry Brook area. This event will be intergenerational, bringing together seniors and youth from the community to share information and talk about issues that affect both groups. Look for more information coming soon.

Mobility: Now You're Going Places

Preventing Falls Together and its partners invite you to attend one of these popular workshops. Learn how canes, walkers, bathroom grab bars and other assistive devices can give you the independence you want.

Universite' St Anne, March 8th 10-1
Port Maitland Fire Hall March 15th 10 – 1

More workshops are planned for the following areas:

Advocate
Canso
East Preston
Parrsboro
Rawdon
Sackville

Look for dates and times in our e-bulletin or contact a Preventing Falls Together Staff person. (Contacts on next page)



tyzeTM
PERSONAL NETWORKS

Community Links, in partnership with Caregivers Nova Scotia, has recently received support from The Belonging Fund to explore the use of Tyze networks to allow family caregivers, friends and family to become more connected to the care giving situation. These secure networks coordinate involvement and provide a practical service to help families, friends, neighbours and professionals develop a private, connected network of care around a specific person and a specific situation. For example, a network could centre on a senior who has suffered a stroke so that his caregivers and a larger circle of friends can be invited to support his desire for greater independence.

To find out more about Tyze or set up a Tyze network, contact CaregiversNS at 902-421-7390 (1-877-488-7390 toll free) or email director@caregiversns.org

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