

Manitoba to have independent seniors advocate

By **Terry Davidson**

Law360 Canada (March 28, 2025, 4:38 PM EDT) -- Manitoba will soon have a dedicated seniors advocate.

On Nov. 1, the province's government will proclaim its Seniors Advocate Act, which will create "a new independent seniors advocate who will represent and advocate on behalf of seniors" in the province, states a March 28 news release.

Once appointed, the advocate will establish an office in the province's legislature and report to the legislative assembly; they will identify and evaluate "issues faced by seniors and elders" and make recommendations to government on services such as health care, housing, programs and supports.

"Seniors and elders helped build our province, and they deserve to have their voices heard and their rights respected," said Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care Minister Uzoma Asagwara in a statement. "We saw during the [COVID-19] pandemic what can happen when seniors aren't given the respect and care they need. Our government is committed to making sure seniors are safe, healthy and supported so that they can live a good life as they age."

According to a Statistics Canada report from 2021, the pandemic had a devastating impact on seniors in the country. The report found that between March 2020 and mid-May 2021, people aged 65 and older accounted for 64 per cent of "excess deaths" and 93 per cent of the deaths attributed to COVID-19.

"Although COVID-19 has affected all Canadians, seniors are particularly vulnerable to its health impacts, including a higher risk of hospitalization, health complications and death," it states. "Since they are more likely to live alone or in an institution, public health measures limiting social interactions also put seniors at greater risk of social isolation."

According to a Manitoba government report from 2023 titled "Demographic Profile of Older Manitobans," people aged 65 and older accounted for 17.1 per cent of the province's total population. Of those, almost 13 per cent were 85 or older.

According to RTOERO, an organization advocating for seniors, only three provinces — British Columbia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador — currently have seniors advocates.

If you have any information, story ideas or news tips for Law360 Canada, please contact Terry Davidson at t.davidson@lexisnexis.ca or 905-415-5899.