
Traditional and Non-traditional Channels of Communication

Case of Seniors on Prince Edward Island

Final Report

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Introduction

As an effort to continually improve its communication with Canadian citizens, Communication Canada is interested in better understanding the preferred information channels and communications methods used by seniors. To that end, Communication Canada commissioned Corporate Research Associates Inc. (CRA) to conduct a qualitative research study with seniors residing on Prince Edward Island.

More specific objectives of the study included, to:

- Understand seniors' search behaviours and identify the steps they take to gather information;
- Identify seniors' preferred information channels, most notably as it relates to the Government of Canada;
- Measure preference in terms of accessing information by direct contact.

The following report provides an executive summary of the study results, a detailed analysis of interviews and focus groups findings, as well as conclusions and strategic implications based on those findings. Attached to the report is a copy of the introduction letter sent to seniors advocacy/service organizations (Appendix A), a copy of the invitation used to recruit interview participants (Appendix B), the final interview protocol (Appendix C), a copy of the final recruitment screener for focus group participants (Appendix D), a copy of the moderator's guide (Appendix E), and a copy of the 'Services for Seniors' guide (Appendix F).



Research Methodology

To meet the objectives mentioned above, a two-phase approach was undertaken. First, a total of ten in-depth interviews were conducted over the telephone with a cross-section of organizations and individuals involved with the senior population on Prince Edward Island. These included representatives from community organizations, government departments, or private sector businesses servicing seniors or representing their interests. In addition, a number of academics with in-depth knowledge of seniors' behaviours were interviewed. Each interview lasted on average 40 minutes. Interviews were conducted between February 24th and March 4th, 2003.

As a second step, a series of four focus groups were conducted with the senior population, including two groups in Charlottetown on March 10, 2003 and two groups in Summerside on March 11, 2003. In each location, one group consisted of seniors aged 55 to 69 years old, while the second group encompassed seniors aged 70 years and older. A total of 10 participants were recruited in each group, with a mix of people representing a variety of household income, education level, involvement with seniors' organizations, and experience accessing information on Government of Canada programs and services. Group discussions were conducted in English and each group lasted two hours. Participants received a \$50 incentive for their participation.

Context of Qualitative Research

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions are intended as moderator-directed, informal, non-threatening discussions with participants whose characteristics, habits and attitudes are considered relevant to the topic of discussion. The primary benefits of those qualitative tools are that they allow for in-depth probing with qualifying participants on behavioural habits, usage patterns, perceptions and attitudes related to the subject matter. The discussion allows for flexibility in exploring other areas that may be pertinent to the investigation. In-depth interviews and focus groups allow for more complete understanding of the segment in that the thoughts or feelings are expressed in the participants' "own language" and at their "own levels of passion."

The in-depth interviews and focus group techniques are used in marketing research as a means of developing insight and direction, rather than collecting quantitatively precise data or absolute measures. Due to the inherent biases in the techniques, the data should not be projected to any universe of individuals.



Executive Summary

Results of the **Traditional and Non-Traditional Channels of Communication – Case of Seniors on PEI Study** suggest that seniors prefer personal interactions when seeking information from the Government of Canada. Some seniors prefer the convenience, affordability, and fast service received by contacting departments using their toll-free telephone numbers, while others tend to find faster, more personable service by getting the information in-person at Government's offices.

Regardless of their preference, seniors generally express difficulties in identifying which department is best suited to meet their needs, and they generally turn to friends, family members, co-workers, known professionals, or the telephone book blue pages for guidance. Seniors generally trust friends, family, or known professionals, as these resources are familiar, credible, and available. Seniors also expressed frustration with automated telephone services, as it imposes time pressures, is impersonal, and it requires dexterity and memory on their part.

Traditional media were also identified by seniors as preferred sources of information, more specifically The Guardian and The Pioneer Journal, CBC radio and television, CFCY radio, and targeted publications such as Voices for Island Seniors, The Golden Years, and C.A.R.P. magazine. In addition, while community representatives perceived seniors' organizations as a source of information, seniors themselves believed they provide them mainly with entertainment value and a social network. Organizations most often mentioned include those most visible on PEI, namely the Seniors Federation, the Women's Institute, the Seniors College, the Federal Superannuates National Association, the Legion, and services clubs.

General information considered most relevant to seniors includes topics pertinent to their daily lives and to personal interests, and are most likely to relate to the Provincial Government than the Government of Canada. Seniors noted an interest in federal services or programs with respect to pensions, income tax, customs, employment, home care, passports, health, housing support, and veterans' benefits.

Perhaps not surprisingly, seniors displayed low awareness of specific federal programs or services available to them. While awareness of the 'Services for Seniors' guide was limited among participants, seniors see value in the guide being mailed to all Canadians, as soon as they reach 65 years old, or that it be available in public places frequented by seniors. It was also suggested that seniors generally tend to have a passive behaviour when gathering information, which implies there is a need for proactive communications efforts to inform seniors of Government of Canada services or programs pertinent to them.

Finally, seniors' information needs and networks seem to differ according to age, health situation, mobility, and the level of involvement in the community. Challenges that need to



be addressed when communicating with seniors include the lack of public transportation, seniors' limited ability to drive, and possible physical or mental challenges.



Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn from the detailed findings of both the one-on-one interviews and the focus groups.

- ***Sources preferred by seniors when looking for information, guidance or advice, include family members, friends, or known professionals, as well as traditional media.***

Results suggest that seniors looking for information tend to consult family members, friends, or a trusted professional most often to identify sources and ways of accessing the proper information. These resources are considered familiar, trusted, respected, available, and willing to take the time to help seniors they know. Community representatives noted that seniors might value professionals' experience, expertise, knowledge, reputation, and the relationship they have developed over time with them. While seniors indicated higher levels of trust for family members, friends, professionals, the Seniors Active Living Centre, and the clergy, they are least likely to trust strangers approaching them over the phone or at the door. Seniors also mentioned turning to governments if needing information with respect to programs or services.

In addition, seniors noted relying on traditional media, more specifically daily newspapers, such as The Guardian and The Pioneer Journal, radio stations such as CBC, CFCY, and C102, and a number of television stations. Specialized publications seniors rely on include The Golden Years, Voices for Island Seniors, the Canadian Association of Retired People (C.A.R.P.) magazine, and seniors organizations' newsletters.

Alternate sources of information less often mentioned by seniors 70 years and over include the telephone book, Access PEI sites, seniors' organizations, hospital staff, church groups, service clubs, and taxi drivers. Younger seniors, for their part, identified the Internet, libraries, consumer reports, co-workers, experts, businesses, flyers or mail inserts, bulletin boards, magazines, the police, and churches. Summerside participants were more likely than those in Charlottetown to name their local politicians and City Hall as preferred sources of information.

Both stakeholders and seniors alike noted that some factors impact how seniors go about accessing information, more specifically age, community involvement and level of mobility. Seniors younger than 80 years old, or those socially involved in their community might have a greater network of resources, while those 80 years and over, as well as those with limited mobility may rely on a limited number of people. Younger seniors expressed a preference for traditional media to gather information, while older seniors indicated relying mostly on word or mouth. Health problems, namely hearing and visual impairment, and degenerating diseases may also limit seniors' ability or their



comfort level with using the telephone, or with physically going to an office for information.

Furthermore, community representatives noted that the network of rural seniors, because of transportation challenges and availability of resources, is smaller than for urban seniors. On the other hand, they are more likely to turn to their MP and MLA. Urban seniors are perceived as wealthier and more educated, therefore more likely to use the Internet. These factors may present communications challenges when trying to reach the senior population.

- ***Seniors prefer receiving personal service from the Government of Canada, either over the telephone or by going to the appropriate department's offices.***

Perhaps not surprisingly knowing of seniors' preferred sources of information, friends, family, known professionals, or co-workers are first contacted for referral when seniors need information or services from the Government of Canada. Seniors also noted identifying appropriate departments using the blue pages of the telephone book, or turning to a current or former civil servant they may know. Regardless of how they identify whom to contact, seniors generally prefer receiving personal service from the Government of Canada. Some seniors expressed a preference for calling the department's toll-free telephone number to get information, as they perceive it requires less effort on their part, it may be faster than going to the office, it is less expensive and more convenient for them. Others systematically prefer going to the appropriate Government offices, if accessible to them, as they believe it enables them to receive faster and more personable service, than if calling the office.

- ***Seniors' organizations are primarily used for social activities and entertainment, and less as a direct source of information.***

While community stakeholders suggested that seniors' organizations or social clubs were a great source of information for that segment of the population, seniors themselves indicated these groups provide them mainly with a social network and entertainment value. Seniors do, however, capture information indirectly from these sources, while attending organized activities, such as presentations, fairs, exhibits, or by reading the organizations' newsletter. Seniors also consult other members for information, when needed.

Groups most often mentioned include the PEI Seniors Federation, the Women's Institute, the Federal Superannuates National Association, the Seniors Resource Centre, retired nurses, teachers, or civil servants, health related support groups, service clubs, church groups, the Legion, hobby groups, and the International Order of Daughters of the Empire (IODE). It was felt that younger seniors, those active in their community, and others with appropriate transportation means were more likely to be involved in such organizations.



- ***Seniors are most interested in topics that relate to their daily lives, and may be prone to look for information from the Provincial Government rather than from the Government of Canada.***

As might have been expected, seniors tend to show greater interest for topics that relate to their daily lives, such as health, housing options, financial planning, pension information, income tax, transportation, travel, obituaries, local stories, education, lifestyle issues, travel, environmental issues, succession planning, insurance matters, and social activities. Younger seniors also tended to identify topics related to their own interests, along with government services, product information, religion, care for the elderly, and laws or regulations.

As a result, seniors suggested they turn to the Provincial Government more often for information on programs and services, rather than to the Government of Canada. Seniors noted looking for federal information with respect to housing support, pensions, income tax, postal information, passports, veterans' benefits, health information, and home care. Younger seniors also noted looking for information on employment, customs or border crossing.

- ***Seniors generally lack awareness of Government of Canada programs and services pertinent to them.***

Seniors generally lacked awareness of specific programs or services offered to them by the Government of Canada, other than for the Canada Pension Plan, the Old Age Security, income tax support programs, and Veterans Affairs' Independence Program. In addition, awareness of the 'Services for Seniors' guide was low among both young and old seniors, albeit a few participants in the younger groups had a copy at home as a referral tool. These participants either requested the guide by phone, picked it up at a fair or through the Federal National Superannuates Association. Participants reacted positively when presented with the guide and believed the Government should mail a copy to all seniors once they turn 65 years old. Suggestions were also made to have copies available in public places frequented by seniors, such as doctors' offices, pharmacies, post offices, MLA's and MP's offices, the Active Living Centre, seniors' residences, libraries, and Government offices.

Finally, community representatives noted that seniors' lack of awareness of federal programs and services for them, as well as the perceived bureaucracy associated with dealing with any levels of governments may prevent seniors from seeking information from the Government of Canada.



- ***Personal communications initiatives, the use of targeted media outlets, partnerships with seniors' organizations, and the use of a spokesperson or testimonials are seen as more effective in communicating with seniors.***

Community representatives noted that successful communications initiatives with seniors included personal interactions, as it gives seniors the time to understand the information provided, and ask questions, if needed. They also noted the effectiveness of initiatives that use a well-known and respected spokesperson trusted by seniors, as well as testimonials, examples, or life stories. In addition, disseminating information through seniors' organizations was perceived as effectively increasing the credibility of the information and of the source alike. Finally, the use of targeted media outlets were praised, such as Voices for Island Seniors newspaper supplement published monthly in The Guardian by the PEI Seniors Federation, as well as CBC and CFCY radio, the Christmas Cookbook, and the front or back cover of the telephone book.



Strategic Implications

1. The Government of Canada should consider being more proactive in communicating the availability of services or programs for seniors.

Given seniors' limited awareness of Government of Canada services for seniors, as well as their perception that most services or programs relevant to them are delivered by their provincial government, there is merit for the Government of Canada to be more aggressive in promoting the availability of its services or programs to seniors. This is further required given that seniors typically show passive behaviours with respect to seeking information, and generally wait for the information to be provided to them.

Consideration should be given to the chosen channels, but also to the message itself. The use of a well-known spokesperson (preferably a senior), respected by the senior community, may increase the Government's credibility among seniors, and would go a long way in increasing favourable public opinion. An attempt should also be made to keep communications simple, easy to understand, easy to read, and relevant to seniors lives, by illustrating examples or featuring testimonials.

Finally, seniors' level of interest in the 'Services for Seniors' guide, and their likelihood of keeping the guide as a reference tool, suggest there is merit in mailing a copy of the guide to every Canadian, once they turn 65 years old. In addition, the guide should be available to seniors at doctors' offices, pharmacies, libraries, the Seniors Active Living Centre, Government offices, and post offices.

2. The use of both traditional and non-traditional media should be considered to reach the senior population.

In communicating to seniors, primary channels of communications, both traditional and non-traditional, should be considered, including family members, friends and co-workers, selected professionals, and targeted media. The most appropriate professionals may include physicians, pharmacists, Members of Parliament, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and clergymen. Working closely with these resources to distribute information on programs and services may increase seniors' awareness of what exist. Preferred traditional media to reach Summerside and Charlottetown seniors should include CBC radio and television, CFCY radio, The Guardian and The Pioneer Journal, The Golden Years, Voices for Island Seniors, and C.A.R.P. magazine.

Given the closeness of the seniors' community, there might also be merit in working more closely with a number of seniors' organizations, most notably the PEI Seniors Federation, the Women's Institute, the Legion, and the Federal National Superannuates Association, to inform seniors of Government services. This would best be achieved through in-person presentations or by using these organizations' newsletters. While these organizations are not readily recognized by seniors as primary sources of



information, they seem to play an important role in providing seniors with a secondary source of credible information.

3. To encourage seniors to communicate directly with the Government of Canada, efforts should be made to increase awareness of current communications channels.

Results indicate that seniors clearly prefer receiving personal service from the Government of Canada, either over the telephone or in-person. Having said that, seniors also express limited awareness of the Government's established communication channels, which allows them to deal directly with a representative. While seniors were generally aware of the existence of the different toll-free telephone numbers to reach the various federal departments, they were not aware of a single access point to help them identify the exact source for the information they are looking for, in the manner in which they would like to be served. In fact, participants were not aware of the personal service they would receive when contacting the Government's general toll-free number (1-800-O-CANADA), as well as the Service Canada Access Centre located in Charlottetown.

As a result, there is clearly merit for the Government of Canada to inform seniors of communications methods available to them to contact the Government of Canada, including the general toll-free telephone number and the Service Canada Access Centres. Most importantly, seniors must be made aware of the personal service they would receive through these channels, and the ability of Government representatives to provide answers on a wide range of specific topics relevant to them. In this manner, the Government will address some of seniors' expressed frustration having to deal with automated telephone services, and the difficulty they experience with identifying the proper departments to contact.

Finally, there is also merit in exploring other means of providing guidance and support to seniors, most notably to help them deal with the perceived bureaucracy when applying for services or programs.



Key Findings – In-Depth Interviews

The following section presents the key findings of the in-depth one-on-one interviews conducted over the telephone with community representatives that deal with the senior population on Prince Edward Island.

Sources of Information

Seniors' preferred sources of information include family, friends, and professionals, primarily because they are familiar, available, and trusted. Age and level of community involvement influence where seniors go for information.

Preferred Sources of Information

To better understand seniors' information network, participants were asked what sources seniors use when looking for information, guidance, or support. While participants identified a number of sources seniors turn to for such help, they generally agreed that ***family members, friends or trusted professionals*** were the preferred choice of people in this age group. Professionals named included family physicians, nurses, clergymen, pharmacists and police officers.

“The professional group would be the group that they trust in terms of receiving health care from them, and they have ease of contact with those individuals.”

While it was felt that seniors may initially turn to family members or friends for advice as they are easily accessible and trusted, it was noted that these people might also be more willing to take the time to help seniors to whom they are closer. Stakeholders generally believe that seniors look for someone they feel comfortable with. Professionals, for their part, are seen as being relatively accessible, respected and trusted by seniors, not only due to their experience, their knowledge, and their reputation, but also because of the individual relationship they may have developed with their patients or clients. One stakeholder also noted that the position of power health professionals, clergymen, or police officers held traditionally in smaller communities might influence seniors' level of trust and respect towards them.

“The position of health care providers in the society they (seniors) are accustomed to is pretty high and they look to them because they know a lot about health care, therefore they know about a lot of other things.”

It was noted that seniors also consult traditional media for information, through editorials, articles, reports, and advertising. Most often mentioned media used by seniors include daily newspapers, such as The Guardian in Charlottetown and The Journal Pioneer in Summerside, The Golden Times, the CBC television (more specifically the program named



Compass), CBC radio (for the morning show and death notices), and CFCY radio (for their general programming). A few people also noted the importance of seniors' clubs or organizations as part of this public's social network, therefore playing somewhat of a role in disseminating information to seniors. Other sources less often mentioned include the Access PEI offices, Members of the Legislative Assembly, Members of Parliament, and the Internet (most notably used for health matters). Most stakeholders indicated that younger seniors may be using new technologies to get information, but overall most seniors were unaware of how to use the Internet.

“Seniors are being forced into technology, but are not shown how to use it.”

“There is a seniors supplement in The Guardian regularly that I know the seniors read.”

Stakeholders noted there might be differences between seniors residing in a rural setting and those living in an urban environment, with respect to methods of finding information. In fact, the isolation and the transportation challenges faced by rural seniors were seen as limiting seniors' choice of sources. On the other hand, it was noted that there are fewer health resources in rural areas, therefore making it easier for those seniors to decide which health professional to turn to. In addition, as personal relationships tend to play a greater role in people's lives in rural settings, participants felt that senior citizens living in remote areas of the Island may be closer to their Member of Parliament or their Member of the Legislative Assembly and might feel more compelled to turn to those people for advice. Urban seniors, for their part, are seen as having easier access to a greater number of sources. They are also perceived as generally more wealthy and with a higher level of education, therefore being more receptive to new technologies and able to afford a computer and access to the Internet.

“Rural seniors tend to be more isolated and certainly would have more challenges with transportation and connecting with a large community.”

Participants also noted that ways of accessing information may vary greatly depending on age, with younger seniors (those 55 to 80 years old) being more likely to be physically and mentally able to seek information from a number of different sources and being proactive with respect to seeking information when needed. Elders (those 80 years old or older), for their part, are seen as being more frequently dependent on others (either family members, if they have any, or professionals) for information, due to a more rapidly declining health. Finally, seniors' level of involvement in the workforce throughout their lives was perceived as influencing the way they would access information today, and their proactive nature when seeking information.

“There is a lot of difference between 55 and 95 (years old). Those 55 to 70 tend to be much more independent and would still be working. Once you get 70 to 80, they would be starting to look around in terms of housing needs. And over 80 years old, you are



getting into the more dependent seniors. Health issues and dementia for those over 80 is much more common.”

While it was felt that family members, friends, and family physicians might be sources seniors are most likely to **trust**, participants indicated that sales representatives calling seniors or coming to their residence, selected government representatives, and transactional websites might be sources seniors are least likely to trust. Having said that, it was felt that a testimonial communications approach was particularly effective in making both the information and the source credible in the eyes of seniors.

“Their knowledge and their expertise, the position in society that those professionals hold in general. If you look at nursing, for example, it’s the most trusted profession of all, generally in the population, so that would be the same for seniors.”

Seniors’ Groups

Alternative sources of information for seniors include, among others, seniors’ organizations or clubs, most notably for those seniors that remain active in their community. Not only is it perceived that seniors turn to these sources for **social activities and entertainment** (making up in large their social network), but these organizations are seen as playing a key role with respect to **providing information** to seniors on a variety of topics. Participants indicated that while seniors generally don’t expressly turn to the club’s executive or administrators for information, they gather information through a network of friends they have developed in the clubs they are involved in, but also through club sponsored activities they may attend, such as presentations, fairs, exhibits, and so forth.

“They (organizations) are a very good information source, not just in the local community, but also for world and international issues.”

A few of the topics mentioned as touched on at club activities or through literature include health issues, more specifically general health matter, nutrition, and exercises, as well as dental care, group insurances, preferred rates at targeted retail outlets, travel information, and a number of other public interest topics. It was felt that life stories were particularly appealing to seniors, especially in the case of presentations, lectures, seminars, and other forms of group presentations. While few of these organizations have well-known structured communication tools, it was well noted that the Prince Edward Island Seniors Federation regularly publishes a newspaper supplement distributed in The Guardian, specifically targeted at this segment of the population.

A number of seniors’ groups were mentioned as playing an important role in older Islanders’ lives. These include specific advocacy groups, such as the Women’s Institute, the PEI Seniors Federation, the Seniors Resource Centre in Charlottetown, and the Federal Superannuates National Association (in Charlottetown and in Summerside). Other groups were identified, including those representing the interests of retired workers, such as retired



teachers, nurses, or civil servants, health related organizations (the Cancer Society, the Alzheimer Society, the Heart & Stroke Foundation, and so on), service clubs, such as the Rotary Club, the Lions Club, hobby groups (bridge, gardening, quilting, crafts), seniors groups affiliated with a political party, or groups affiliated with a church. It was noted that generally, groups or clubs of this nature tend to attract younger seniors, namely those ages 55 to 80 years old. Few groups or clubs, other than the African Violet Society, were named as preferred by elders, namely those ages 80 years or older.

Seniors' Special Needs

When asked what special needs seniors might have that would influence where they turn for information, participants generally agreed that seniors' *level of involvement* in their community would impact their ability to seek information. Suggestions were made to the effect that seniors that have always been active and involved may have a greater network to rely on for information, including people, places, and search capabilities, while those who may have had less community involvement would tend to rely much more on a limited number of sources.

A few people also noted the role *age* plays on seniors' information gathering process. It was felt that information needs and networks would be different for seniors younger than 80 years old than for those 80 years or older. While younger seniors may have broader interests, and a better social and support network, there was a sense that the older seniors' interests focus on basic living needs. Seniors' mental or physical challenges may also limit their ability to seek information.

Other factors that may influence the way seniors' access information, regardless of their age, include the availability of information or resources, the lack of public or organized transportation, and their level of income.

“For frail seniors, television becomes less important because of the nature of the media itself, it's quick fire, and rapid and moves along at a good pace. For people that are frail, that have hearing or visual or early cognitive impairment, they are more likely to turn to friends, which they can pace better.”

Type of Information

Health issues, death notices, financial planning, and housing issues are perceived as most relevant to seniors of all ages, in addition to a wide variety of topics based on interest for younger seniors and basic living needs for elders.

Participants were asked to briefly comment on the type of information seniors might be looking for. It was noted that most seniors, regardless of their age, would be interested in health issues, death notices, local stories, financial planning, and housing issues. On the other hand, stakeholders believed younger seniors would likely be more interested than



elder ones in education, lifestyle issues, travel, environmental issues, succession planning, life insurance matters, and a variety of other topics according to personal interests. Elder seniors, for their part, would likely be more interested in information regarding housing or care options and funeral planning.

“Services in the community that could be helpful to them, health, housing information, transportation, lifestyle, opportunities that are available to raise their quality of life.”

Participants generally perceived few differences in the type of information sought after depending on whether a senior resides in a rural setting or in an urban environment. There was a sense that urban seniors, in nature, are more interested in politics and financial activities as they have easier access to information on those topics.

Communications Initiatives

Personal communications, and testimonials are seen as most successful with seniors, while limitations of mobility and the difficulty to establish trust and credibility present the greatest challenges.

Successful Initiatives

While understanding seniors’ information needs and search behaviours is important to define their information network, it is also important to look at successes and failures of past communications initiatives targeted at this segment of the population. To do so, participants were asked to describe successful initiatives they may have undertaken themselves, or they have seen or heard done by other businesses or organizations.

While a number of suggestions were made, participants generally indicated that ***personal approaches*** were most successful as they gave seniors an opportunity to take the time needed to understand the information sought, as well as ask questions, if necessary. This type of initiative may take the form of one-on-one meetings or telephone conversations, presentations to a small group of seniors, or kiosks at events targeting seniors (the African Violet Society events, as an example).

“Giving the message to seniors directly. If you want to get a message to seniors, you go to seniors and deliver the message personally.”

Another popular mention entails reaching seniors through ***well-respected seniors’ community groups, associations, clubs, or professionals they trust***. This approach not only allows the sponsor to get the attention of seniors, but also brings added credibility to the sponsor and the information provided. Churches, family physicians, the Catholic Women’s League, and the PEI Seniors Federation were among groups named as potential partners. The use of these groups’ lists of members, as well as newsletters was seen as a preferred communications method. One participant mentioned that a local group he



belongs to (the Federal Superannuates National Association), has published a reference guide on health services for seniors, which was last distributed through seniors clubs, doctor's offices, hospital waiting rooms, at seniors' residences, as well as at specific Access PEI offices.

“Connecting with groups that are not just affiliated with seniors, whether it is the CWL, the IODE, those kind of organizations.”

Finally, a number of traditional media appeared to be successful communications tools according to participants. These include The Guardian newspaper and its monthly seniors supplement, the Christmas Cookbook published by the same newspaper, the front or back cover of the telephone book (more specifically the one featuring large prints), the Voices for Island Seniors publication, and radio stations, namely CFCY and CBC, for advertisements and news releases, respectively.

While participants provided a number of comments with respect to media and ways to reach seniors, they also noted the importance of the approach in any communications initiatives. It was felt that communications must speak to issues relevant to seniors, presented in such ways as to making analogies or giving concrete examples. Moreover, a few participants indicated that the message's credibility could be enhanced by the use of a well-known and well-respected senior as a spokesperson.

“If you are able to make an alliance with a senior that is well respected by the senior community.”

Challenges in Communicating with Seniors

Along with identifying what they consider as successful communications initiatives, participants spoke of the different challenges associated with reaching this segment of the population. While in-person communication methods were seen as effective when targeting seniors, it was suggested that **limited mobility** and the difficulty in accessing transportation might prevent such initiative as group presentations from reaching a diversity of seniors, especially those exhibiting limited mobility, and seniors who do not drive or who do not have access to transportation. Furthermore, one participant suggested that seniors sometimes may feel intimidated in a group setting and therefore would not ask questions as readily as during a one-on-one encounter.

“Transportation. If they have good transportation to one source, as opposed to not so good to another, their choice would be for the first one.”

Other challenges identified by stakeholders include establishing trust and credibility among the senior population, and the lack of interest on the part of seniors with respect to specific topics. Finally, technology and the Internet may present a challenge for older seniors, as



they may not have been exposed to such technology, although it was felt this trend might change with next generations.

Information on Government of Canada's Programs and Services

The telephone and Government offices are seen as preferred ways to get information about services, while awareness and bureaucracy were suggested as key access barriers.

Sources of Information

Perhaps not surprisingly, when asked where seniors generally turn to for information about the Government of Canada and its programs or services, participants named a number of different sources offering a *personal service*. These include residents' Member of Legislative Assembly's offices, Veterans Affairs, Revenue Canada offices, their personal network of friends, family members, Access PEI service centres, general word of mouth, and seniors' family physician. Speaking with someone directly, either over the telephone or in-person, is perceived as being seniors' preferred way to get information from the Government of Canada.

"They go to professionals, family, or other seniors to find out where to call."

"Speaking with someone directly from the Government of Canada."

A few participants suggested seniors might prefer getting the information in person instead of over the telephone, as they may have limited dexterity, or dislike dealing with automated telephone systems. Having said that, those who do call for information may find the appropriate telephone numbers in the blue pages of the phone book, by calling the Government's toll free telephone number or the Island Information Service local office.

Few participants mentioned advertising featured in traditional media, such as newspaper, television, and radio, as ways for seniors to get information on the Government of Canada. It was felt that the success of such initiatives depended greatly on the use of media outlet preferred by seniors. Finally, computers, and the Internet, accessed at home or through the PEI Seniors Federation, as well as literature distributed through offices, public places, and at presentations, were suggested as methods used by a few seniors to access Government information.

It was generally agreed that seniors tend to be passive with regards to accessing information on the Government of Canada, and they generally wait to be provided with such information rather than actively seeking it out. One professional suggested that this behaviour was more widespread among older seniors who may be overwhelmed with the amount of general information available to them, while younger seniors have more



experience being provided with a great amount of information on a daily basis. Furthermore, it was suggested by a few representatives that the perceived bureaucracy might deter some seniors from actively seeking information or advice directly from the Government of Canada.

“As a group, I think they (seniors) tend to wait for the information to be provided. They tend to not be extremely aggressive, unless they are involved with seniors organizations.”

“My guess is that is a cohort phenomena and that we are getting to the end of it. I am sure that in the next ten years, we’ll see a much more assertive senior population that knows how to push for information, access and service.”

Type of Information

In general, participants indicated that Government information pertaining to seniors’ basic living needs was most relevant to this segment of the population. This includes **health** information, **housing** support (home care and home improvement), **financial** information (Canadian Pension Plan, Old Age Security, GST, RRSP for younger seniors), **Veterans Affairs**, **passports**, **income tax** information and guidance, **transportation**, and how the **budget** will affect them. There was a sense that seniors’ information needs tend to be more focused on provincial issues, rather than federal ones.

“Financial information, Canada Pension, Old Age Security, GST, health services for example through Veterans Affairs, housing support for renovating or maintaining seniors in their homes.”

“A lot of services for seniors tend to be provincial in nature because it is health care, social service, education, those kinds of things.”

Participants were generally unaware of specific information published by the Government of Canada targeted at seniors. A few of them named the Canadian Pension Plan and the Old Age Security, general health prevention brochures found in doctors’ offices, or the ‘Involving You’ brochure from Health Canada.

Generally, stakeholders expect to find Government of Canada information for seniors at Access PEI, as it is centralized, well known, all over the Island, and easily accessible. They also expect information to be mailed to seniors, inserted in newspapers, or available in libraries.

Limitations to Accessing Government of Canada Information

Awareness was identified most often as the greatest limitation to seniors accessing information from the Government of Canada. The lack of knowledge of what programs are



available is perceived to be the main reason why seniors would not seek information from the Government of Canada. This might be combined with a lack of interest on the part of seniors, the unavailability of the information looked for, and the difficulty in identifying which department to contact for specific information. There was a sense that, while some seniors might be willing to find out more about federal programs and services, they experience difficulties identifying the appropriate contact person or department within the Government.

“I still see people who have not applied for benefits that they are eligible for. The process for applying for the supplementary benefits is prohibitive to the person that is most vulnerable, that would need access to it.”

The Government’s perceived **bureaucracy** was also suggested as a deterrent, more specifically with respect to the use of automated telephone systems, the length of time to get a response to requests, and the inability to get all of the information needed from one unique source. It was felt that some seniors would stop their search for information in the process of doing it, as a result of their frustration with bureaucracy. Furthermore, one participant noted that seniors do not like time pressures and may react negatively to situations requiring quick turnaround on their part.

“If you have to fill out all kinds of forms, jump through all kinds of hoops and give all kind of personal information, they just may say, this isn’t going to get me anywhere, so I will not bother with this.”

Finally, physical and mental challenges (such as hearing and seeing impairment, and eye/hand coordination), the loss of mobility, the inability of some seniors to drive at night or during the winter, and seniors’ dislike for line ups may also limit seniors from accessing information from the Government of Canada.

“Information that requires the use of pin numbers, other people standing in line, that is extremely inhibiting for seniors; in part because of time pressure. The same thing holds true for telephone voice mail type situations where they are being asked to make decisions and process those quickly, and their anxiety rises, and they hang up instead.”

It was suggested by one representative that the Government of Canada provide seniors with support and services adapted to their needs to address these limitations. Services would be provided in person, by civil servants, either over the telephone or at an office, depending on seniors’ needs.

“Some kind of decentralized, sort of one stop shop, where a person could direct seniors or make the phone calls for them. Locate that information office in a seniors’ activity centre, with someone that has a wealth of know how about how you go about getting information from veterans benefits to transportation, to health, to accounting or tax information. A clearing house with a human being to talk to.”



Suggestions

When asked for additional suggestions on how the Government of Canada could effectively reach the senior population on Prince Edward Island, a number of comments were offered, as summarized below:

- Mail Government information along with the pension cheques;
- Provide all the information in writing rather than inviting seniors to contact a department or a general inquiry office by phone or through the Internet;
- Keep the process simple and use plain language;
- Distribute information through seniors' organizations or clubs;
- Work closely with the provincial health department (Social services and Continue Care Services) in providing health information;
- Work closely with health professionals, especially family physicians and pharmacists to provide all kinds of information;
- Distribute literature at senior citizens' residences, apartments, or provincially subsidized residences;
- Insert literature in local newspapers;
- Simplify the names of services or programs to ensure easy identification through the blue pages of the telephone book;
- Create a "one-stop shop" where seniors could speak with someone for information but also for support when completing applications or making requests for services. This office could be accessed both by telephone and in-person. Suggested locations include seniors' activity centres across the province (such as the Seniors Active Living Centre), malls, and Access PEI offices. Advertising this service should be done through mail inserts, newspaper advertisements, pamphlets, or in doctors' offices.



Key Findings – Focus Groups

The following section presents the key findings of the focus groups conducted with seniors and held in Charlottetown and Summerside.

The Process of Looking for Information

While seniors' information needs vary by age, preferred sources are similar across this population, and include friends, family, traditional media, and governments.

Most Relevant Topics

To better understand what information seniors might look for, participants were asked to name topics they felt were most relevant to people their age. Elders, namely participants 70 years or older, generally identified topics relating to basic living needs, such as health, housing, pensions, income tax, transportation, as well as travel and social activities. Other topics less often mentioned by this group of seniors included world events, education, politic, legal information for succession planning, justice, clean water, phone scams, insurance, retirement homes, and the cost of fuel.

“How much you are allowed for drugs, and that type of things.”

“Politics, I think that's quite relevant here on the Island.”

In both Summerside and Charlottetown, younger seniors, namely those under 70 years of age, tended to identify a wider range of topics, including those previously identified by elders, in addition to finances, government services, recreation, passport, weather, home care, product information, history, sports, entertainment, religion, clubs or organizations, computer or the Internet, care for the elderly, friendship, and laws or regulations.

Sources of Information

When asked how people their age go about accessing information, participants generally named a number of different sources. Both younger and older seniors most often relied on traditional **media**, namely newspapers, television, and radio stations, along with **word of mouth**, **friends**, **family** members, and **governments**, for information. While younger seniors tended to prefer getting general information via traditional media, older seniors indicated they most often rely on word of mouth.

“Having been off Island for so long, and having been back for almost ten years, I completely rely on my mother who has been here for 87 years, and if she doesn't know who to contact for something, nobody does!”



“If you have a problem or a question, the logical thing to do is first to talk to somebody. They know the answer, or they will say: ‘why don’t you go talk to so and so’. I think that is a natural sequence.”

“The seniors every month put out a paper. They have a calendar for each month highlighting the activities that are coming up.”

Other sources mentioned by elders include the phone book (yellow and blue pages), Access PEI sites, seniors’ organizations, government offices, hospital staff, church groups, PEI Seniors Federation, University of Prince Edward Island Seniors College, service clubs, and taxi drivers. Younger seniors, for their part, made reference to computers and the Internet, libraries, consumer reports, co-workers, service organizations, experts in different fields, businesses, banks or credit unions, flyers or mail inserts, bulletin boards, seniors’ publications, professionals, the Farmers Market in Charlottetown, magazines, the police, and churches. Participants in all groups noted the library might be a good choice to access reference books or magazines on a variety of general interest topics. It is interesting to note that Summerside participants, unlike Charlottetown ones, mentioned politicians (Members of the Legislative Assembly or Members of Parliament), City Hall, family physicians, and pharmacists as sources of information for people their age.

“Politicians. That’s PEI anyway.”

Traditional media used by seniors according to Summerside participants include CBC radio and television, C102 and CFCY radio, the Golden Years magazine, Voices for Seniors newspaper, the Canadian Association of Retired People (C.A.R.P.) magazine, and dailies such as The Guardian and The Journal Pioneer, most notably the sections on seniors, and finally, general associations’ publications or newsletters. Charlottetown seniors, for their part, rely on The Guardian newspaper, most notably the Saturday edition, a number of radio stations including CBC and CFCY for news and weather, as well as CBC television and a number of specialty television channels, such as Biography, the History channel, and the Weather Network.

“(I read) some associations’ print out and the Golden Years.”

Overall, seniors indicated they were most likely to trust the advice of family, friends, known professionals, the Active Living Centre, and the clergy, while they are least likely to trust the news. Having said that, one participant noted that although the opinion of friends or family was trusted, it was not always all-inclusive and directional.

“I trust family a lot, but you usually end up with something where you have to make your own decision.”



Seniors' Organizations

When asked to name clubs or organizations appealing specifically to seniors, participants in the Charlottetown younger senior group identified the Women's Institute, specific women's groups affiliated to churches (the Catholic Women's League and United Women's League), the Lions, the Rotary Club, and the Kinsmen, the Council for the Disabled, the Legion, the Alzheimer Society, Tourism Associations, the Island Trail Association, and Toastmasters International. Elders, for their part, referred to a number of service clubs, such as the Lions, Kiwanis, and Knights of Columbus, as well as the Salvation Army, the Legion, the Women's Institute, the Catholic Women's League, and the International Order of Daughters of the Empire (IODE). One participant also noted that a new complex would be opening soon for seniors at the University of Prince Edward Island.

In Summerside, younger seniors mentioned the Legion, the Federal Superannuates National Association, Meals on Wheels, hobby groups, as well as Alcoholic Anonymous and other support groups. Elders, for their part, named the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Legion, the Knights of Columbus, the Kinsmen, the Lions, the Federal Superannuates National Association, the local Chamber of Commerce, Parkview Seniors, the Wisemen, various dance clubs, a number of card players clubs, church groups, and curling teams.

Information from the Government of Canada

While seniors noted they are more likely to need information from the province, they indicated that federal information they may need relates to health, pensions, income tax, veterans' benefits, postal information, and passports.

Types of Information Looked For

When asked to identify the types of information, programs or services seniors their age would look for from the Government of Canada, participants, regardless of their age, referred to medical and **health** information, **pensions** (Old Age Security, medical pensions, and Canada Pension Plan), **income tax, veterans' benefits, postal** information, and **passports**. Moreover, seniors age 70 years old or older identified social services, home care and support for seniors living at home, and anything relating to Veterans Affairs (medical information, travel expenses, and the Veterans Independence Program). Younger seniors, for their part, were more apt to identify employment, conversion of an RRSP, general benefits available to seniors, home improvement subsidies, seniors housing options, and customs or border crossing information, in addition to the topics named above.

“(Seniors would look for) what drugs are available; more specific information about them; consumer information about health.”

“You might want to know about, perhaps insulation, and the cost effectiveness of putting it in, or heating assistance programs, especially for older homes.”



A few seniors in both Summerside and Charlottetown noted that people their age tended to be more apt to require information or services from the Provincial Government, and few suggestions were made as to the types of information desired from the Government of Canada. Finally, Charlottetown participants believed there is little difference with respect to the type of Government information seniors would look for, whether they live in an urban area or a rural setting.

“There are a lot more things that would be relevant to the Provincial Government, like health care, education, and housing support.”

Government of Canada Programs and Services

Other than for the Canada Pension Plan, the Old Age Security, income tax support programs, and the Veterans Independence Program, seniors in Charlottetown or in Summerside were unable to identify by name specific programs or services offered to them by the Government of Canada. There was a general sense in all groups that seniors have little awareness of services available to them, and that they usually became cognisant of Government initiatives only after inquiring about them.

“If you are not using a specific government department, then you generally are not aware of what they are offering. I don’t think a lot of us know what specific departments there are, other than the ones that we use.”

“It’s almost like you find out when there is a need for you personally. You have to investigate for yourself.”

While few seniors participating to the groups were aware of specific Government of Canada programs or services specifically relevant to seniors, a few suggested they would usually become aware of what exists through seniors’ organizations, such as the Seniors Active Living Centre or through word of mouth. Participants, however, questioned the effectiveness of these channels, as not all seniors belonged to a club or an organization.

“It is good for a number of seniors that are active in the Seniors Living Centre, but there are other seniors that are not in groups. How do they find out about it?”

“Personally, I feel like I am bombarded with pamphlets and it takes a lot of time to read them. If it were a booklet including all of the pertinent information, I would tend to look at that and keep it. “

One member of the Federal Superannuates National Association mentioned that the association successfully published a few years ago, a booklet containing information for seniors on Government of Canada services or programs.



Accessing Information on Government of Canada

In-person or over the phone approaches were preferred methods of communicating with the Government of Canada, although seniors expressed frustration with automated telephone systems, bureaucracy, and the difficulty in identifying the proper contact.

Sources of Information

When seeking more information on Government of Canada programs or services, most participants, regardless of their age, indicated they would first ask advice from members of their immediate social circle (family members, friends, co-workers, or former co-workers) who may have experienced a situation similar to theirs, or who would likely know someone working for the Government of Canada. Perhaps not surprisingly, participants in Charlottetown were more likely than those in Summerside to know current and former civil servants.

“I would first ask friends if they had any knowledge and experience with the same kind of problems I was dealing with, then I would get their advice as far as the next step: who to call or what department to call. Then I would look in the blue pages and contact that department.”

“It comes down to, because of the size of the province, you know people, and a lot of instances, it would be, call so and so because they are working there.”

Subsequently, some participants, most notably younger seniors, would consult the telephone book’s blue pages to identify the appropriate department to contact, or they would simply ask friends or family members for referrals. A few people in both Summerside and Charlottetown noted the difficulty in identifying the appropriate department or person to contact when they need information or support from the Government of Canada. The federal section of the telephone book’s blue pages was described as confusing, making it difficult for seniors to locate the appropriate department.

“It’s (determining where to go) by trial and error. I would try the department that seemed to be the one that I would need, and if it would not be the one, they would tell me where to go.”

“The starting point for a lot of people here is, who do I know, and how can I access information that way. Systems frustrate seniors.”

While seniors generally shared similar behaviours with respect to finding out who to contact, they expressed mixed opinions with respect to the manner in which they would contact the Government of Canada for information or support. Some of them would call the selected department’s toll free telephone number, while others would simply visit the



department's office, if accessible. Those who prefer using the telephone indicated that this method was usually requiring less effort on their part, may be faster from time to time, less expensive, and more convenient. Having said that, most also expressed frustration with the manner in which the Government sometimes handled their call.

Seniors who prefer going directly to a Government office perceive they receive faster, better, and more personal service than if they call for information. Their choice is also driven by their frustration with automated telephone systems, the unavailability of personnel over the telephone, and having to explain their situation to more than one person, if their call is transferred among civil servants.

“(I would) go directly to most of the offices. In Charlottetown, there are quite a few offices. There is the income tax, there is Veterans Affairs, there is pension and social assistance, and the post office.”

“If you call, they may tell you their line is busy and ask that you call later. If you go there, they can't turn you around and (they) can't forget about you.”

“I would walk into the tax centre up here and ask them to find the right people, because they have a list of anybody you may want to call. It's right here in Summerside and it is easy to get in.”

It is interesting to note that older seniors tend to rely much more on family members, friends, their Member of Parliament's office, the telephone book blue pages, or Government offices to gather information on services and programs. In addition to those sources, younger seniors are also likely to turn to the Internet for added information, although a few of them consider the Government of Canada's website to be cumbersome and making navigation difficult. Other sources used by younger seniors include Access PEI, the post office, and brochures or pamphlets distributed across various sites in the community.

When asked how they would like to learn about existing Government of Canada services or programs for them, most seniors in Charlottetown suggested receiving the information in the mail, either in the form of a booklet, or as an insert with the notification they receive when they turn 65 years old.

Difficulties in Accessing Government Information

Having to deal with an *automated telephone service* was clearly described by seniors as the main difficulty in accessing general information from the Government of Canada, regardless of their preferred way of communicating with the Government. Older seniors also noted that seniors' physical challenges, such as hearing or seeing impairment, as well as limited mobility due to disabling diseases rendered the process of using a telephone difficult.



“I don’t like using the telephone, because of the fact that they go on too much about: ‘if you are doing this, dial this, if you are doing that, press this’, and by the time you are through, you just can’t find the information.”

“Sometimes your hand gets stiff and you are not given very much time to press this information in, even if you can see it (numbers), which sometimes is also a problem.”

Participants’ frustration also comes from the **difficulty in identifying the appropriate department** or contact person that can provide them with the right information or service, most notably because of the lack of clarity of the telephone book’s blue pages. Being transferred from one person to the other, and having to explain their situation all over again was another source of frustration.

“It is very difficult to find out which department to talk to about the services. Even in the phone book, they make it difficult.”

While participants in both locations generally recognized that telephone numbers listed in the blue pages for all of the federal departments were toll free, seniors were not aware of a toll free number for general inquiries to the Government of Canada. Reactions to such an initiative were mixed, and while some supported the idea, others perceived such initiative as contributing to the overall perceived bureaucracy.

“It is another kind of bureaucratic level for the Government. We already have all these toll free numbers for all of the departments.”

“If they had one thing for all departments. For all government offices, you would dial this number. And they would have more than one person answering. And then you can ask for whatever department you want. If they had one central office you could just call in or go visit. Some place close.”

“One number or location could not have all the information that one would want. So there is no question that this would have to be a referral centre.”

Similarly, participants indicated that there was no such thing as an office on Prince Edward Island for general inquiries on Government of Canada programs or services. A few people in Charlottetown made reference to the former Dominion Building that housed the offices of the different federal departments present on the Island. While participants were generally receptive to an idea of an office for general inquiries, they also indicated that it would not be convenient for seniors with limited mobility, or those residing in rural or remote areas. One participant in Charlottetown noted that the Provincial Government seemed to be moving in that direction with their Access PEI sites. It was suggested by a few participants that such initiative would best be done in partnership with other levels of government.



“Have one area where they can give you a phone number, a pamphlet. A general information office for all government departments. They can even have it one-third Government of Canada and one-third provincial government.”

Finally, participants indicated that one important limitation to accessing information from the Government of Canada was the difficulty for seniors to receive personal service. This opinion was most prevalent among older seniors. There is, however, a sense that this is a general trend in the different service-driven industries, and not just with the Government.

“Our age group, we have always been used to having service face-to-face, and the Government of Canada, without question, over the last 15 years, has moved as far away from face-to-face service as they possibly can.”

“One of the most frustrating things in trying to get information, particularly for seniors, is voice mail. The banks, the pharmacy, everywhere is now with voice mail.”

Services for Seniors Guide

While awareness of the ‘Services for Seniors’ guide was low, participants believe the Government should mail a copy to every senior, once they turn 65 years old.

Awareness and Usage

When probed, few participants were aware of the Services for Seniors guide, or any other publications from the Government of Canada specifically made for the senior population. Having said that, there were a few participants among younger seniors in Charlottetown and in Summerside that recalled ordering or picking up a booklet containing information on Government programs for seniors. They had either received the booklet after requesting it over the telephone, or picked it up at a trade show, or through the Federal Superannuates National Association. It is interesting to note that all three participants who had the guide kept it as a referral tool.

“There is a brochure I have home, I am not sure where it came from. I believe it was in the mail, but it had all the different Government services and programs.”

When presented with a copy of the guide, seniors in all groups seemed interested with the concept and the format of the booklet. They suggested that such a tool could be kept and consulted from time to time, when needed. Participants generally expected this guide to be currently available at the HRDC offices, post offices, doctors’ offices, drugstores, the Seniors Active Living Centre, or simply by calling to request a copy be sent in the mail. One participant, however, noted that the Government should advertise such a guide, allowing seniors to be aware of its existence.

“But the problem is, if you don’t know, you would not be calling to get it.”



It is interesting to note that a few people in Charlottetown noted the different ways to reach the Government as stated on the front inside cover of the guide. A few people in the younger senior group questioned whether or not Prince Edward Island had a Service Canada Access Centre.

“I would be willing to bet we don’t have one (Service Canada Access Centre).”

Preferred Ways to Access the Guide

Of all the different ways they could become aware of the ‘Services for Seniors’ guide, or other Government publications, participants indicated that they would prefer receiving one copy in the mail, once they officially become a senior. In fact, there was a sense that the Government should mail a copy of the guide, on its own, or as an insert with the age notification sent to people when they turn 65 years old, or with seniors’ T4 forms.

“Health and Welfare know when people turn 65, so there is no reason why they could not forward one (booklet) as soon as the person reaches that age and keep them up-to-date on amendments or new publications that are available.”

Another popular mention, in both Charlottetown and Summerside would be to display the guide in public places often visited by seniors, including Government offices, drugstores, doctors’ offices, post offices, and seniors’ residences or complexes. Finally, a few people indicated they would prefer learning about the guide through an advertisement, at the library, or via the Government’s Website.



Appendix A: Introduction Letter

February 4, 2003

Address Block

Dear *insert stakeholder name*:

The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that it best meets the needs of all citizens, including those specific to the senior population. As part of that commitment, we are seeking the input of key community representatives servicing seniors or representing their interests.

To that end, we have commissioned Corporate Research Associates Inc. (CRA), a professional research firm, to conduct one-on-one telephone interviews with a cross-section of community representatives to discuss how best to communicate with the senior population on Prince Edward Island.

Your name has been included on the list we have provided to CRA. Over the next few days, CRA may contact you to seek your participation in our research study. Each interview will be approximately 30 – 40 minutes in length and will be conducted over the telephone by a representative from CRA.

We hope that, if invited, you will be able to find the time to share your comments and suggestions. If you have any questions about this project, or would like to have your name removed from the contact list, please call Ms. Claude Perreault of CRA at 902-493-3254 or send an email at cperreault@cra.ca.

Sincerely,

Doug Shackell
Regional Director
Communication Canada – Prince Edward Island

Appendix B: Invitation (Interviews)

FINAL Invite

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Organization: _____

Title: _____

Language (French or English): _____

Type: _____

Date / Time of Interview: _____

Invite

May I please speak with _____ (*name on the list*)

Hello, my name is ___ and I am with Corporate Research Associates, a public opinion and market research firm. We are calling on behalf of Communication Canada, as a follow up to the letter that was mailed, faxed or emailed to you on **February 4th or 5th** from Doug Shackell, Regional Director with Communication Canada on PEI. Do you recall having received that letter requesting your thoughts and opinions on servicing seniors?

(If recall)

As you know, we are inviting representatives from key organizations servicing seniors on PEI as well as community opinion leaders, to participate in one-on-one interviews. The objective of this study is for the Government of Canada to identify best ways to communicate with the senior population regarding its programs and services.

The interviews will take place over the next two weeks and will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes. A representative from Corporate Research Associates will conduct the interview by telephone. Would you be available to participate? ***If yes, arrange time and fill out top of invitation. Ask preferred language for interview. If no, thank and terminate.***

(If don't recall)

Communication Canada has engaged Corporate Research Associates to conduct a study to gather opinions and viewpoints of key organizations servicing seniors on PEI as well as community opinion leaders. The objective of this study is for the Government of Canada to identify best methods to communicate with and to service seniors. In this regard, your thoughts and opinions are seen as important.

The interviews will take place over the next two weeks and will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes. A representative from Corporate Research Associates will conduct the interview by telephone. Would you be available to participate? ***If yes, arrange time and fill out top of invitation. Ask preferred language for interview. If no, thank and terminate.***

FINAL Invite**Recruiters:**

- Confirm exact day/time of the telephone interview
- Confirm exact phone number for interviews
- Use calendar provided to track all interview dates & times
- Allow 1 hour between telephone interviews
- Repeat and confirm date and time of interview
- Confirm preferred language for interview (French or English).
- Check quotas

Quotas:

Type	Total
Advocacy groups	6
Academics / Professionals	4
Total Number of Interviews	10

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

FINAL Interview Protocol

February 19, 2003 – 359-7004Q

Introduction & Warm-up

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Interview date/time: _____

Type: _____ Language of interview: _____

Name of organization: _____

I would like to begin by thanking you for taking the time to help us with our market research study. Our discussion should take 30 to 40 minutes. The objective of this study is to better understand communication with the senior population on PEI. To that end, we would like to get your views and opinions.

I'd like to audio tape our discussion today, so I don't have to take notes while we are having our discussion. I will be the only person who will listen to the tape, and it will only be used to help me write my report on the findings from this study. Your comments today will be combined with the comments from other people that I interview, as part of a detailed report.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Information Sources

To begin, and based on your experience with seniors, I would like to discuss the information needs or habits of seniors.

- Where do seniors turn to for information, advice, or guidance?
 - Where else? Why do you think they rely on those sources?
- What would you consider to be seniors' preferred sources of information? Why?
- What, if anything, makes these sources credible or believable to seniors?
- What special needs do seniors have that might influence where they turn to for information?
- Who are seniors **most** likely to trust when looking for information? Why?
- And who are they **least** likely to trust? Why?
- What media, if any, do seniors rely on for information? Why those?
- Based on your experience, how relevant, if at all, is the Internet for seniors?
- What type of groups or organizations, if any, are seniors typically involved with in their community?
- What role, if any, do these organizations play as an information source for seniors?

Thinking now about experience you may have had in communicating with seniors on PEI...

- What works best when communicating with seniors? Why?
- And what does not work? Why?
- What challenges, if any, have you had to overcome in communicating to seniors?
 - How did you overcome those challenges?

Information

And with regards to the information itself...

- What type of information do seniors look for most often?
- How, if at all, might seniors' information needs or habits vary across the province?
 - Probe for differences between rural and urban settings.
- And how, if at all, do their information needs and habits vary between age groups among the senior population? Probe for 55 – 64 years old vs. 65-80 vs. 80+
- What makes information relevant to seniors?
- And what makes information credible to seniors?

Government's Services and Programs

I am interested in your opinion regarding how seniors access information on Government of Canada's programs and services ...

- What kind of information from the Government of Canada do seniors look for?
 - Would you expect that to vary throughout the province? If so, how?
- Where do seniors generally go for information about Government of Canada services or programs?
- What do you think they consider to be the best sources of information for Government of Canada services or programs?
- Based on your experience, do seniors solicit information directly from the Government of Canada, or do they tend to wait until the information is provided to them? Why is that?
- What, if anything, might limit seniors' access to information about the Government of Canada's programs and services?
- And how, if at all, could the Government of Canada address these limitations?

To finish up...

- Do you have any other suggestions for the Government of Canada on how to best reach seniors on PEI?
- Any other comments?

Wrap-up and Closing

That concludes my questions. On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to thank you for your participation.

Appendix D: Recruitment Screener

March 2003 **FINAL Screener** **Communication Canada**

Name: _____

Group 1 2 3 4

Tel. (H): _____

Tel. (W): _____

Charlottetown, PE

Date: Monday, March 10, 2003
Time: Group 1 – 2:00pm
Group 2 – 5:00pm

Location: Prism Research
94 Watts Avenue
Charlottetown
Located in the West Royalty Industrial
Park

Summerside, PE

Date: Tuesday, March 11, 2003
Time: Group 3 – 2:00pm
Group 4 – 5:00pm

Location: The Loyalist Country Inn
195 Harbour Drive
Summerside

Intro

Good afternoon/evening. My name is _____ and I work with Corporate Research Associates Inc., a public opinion and market research firm located in Halifax. We are conducting a study concerning general information (***If requesting more information on topic: the discussion will entail the type of information you look for and where you find that information***). May I please speak with someone in your household who is 55 years of age or over? (**REPEAT INTRODUCTION IF NECESSARY**) May I ask you a few questions? Thank you.

If “no”, thank and terminate.

May I ask you a few quick questions please? Thank you.

If no, thank and terminate. If person is not available, ask for name, age and call back time.

By Observation:

Male1 **Recruit 5**
Female2 **Recruit 5**

First of all:

A. Are you or anyone in your household currently employed in any of the following types of industries...?

Marketing/market research 1
Public relations 2 **if yes to any**

Advertising..... 3 **thank and terminate**
Media (TV, Radio, Newspaper) 4
Government..... 5

To begin:

1. In which of the following age ranges do you fall? Are you...?

- Less than 55.....1 **Thank & Terminate**
- 55-592 **Recruit 4 for group 2, 4**
- 60-643 **Recruit 3 for group 2, 4**
- 65-694 **Recruit 3 for group 2, 4**
- 70-745 **Recruit 4 for group 1, 3**
- 74-796 **Recruit 4 for group 1, 3**
- 80+7 **Recruit 2 for group 1, 3**

2. Which of the following describes your current employment status? Are you ...?

- Full time (30 hours per week or more).....1
- Part time (less then 30 hours per week).....2
- Unemployed3 **REQUIRE A MIX**
- Retired.....4
- Student5
- Homemaker.....6
- Other (specify)_____.....7

If employed, ask...
What is your current occupation? _____

**TERMINATE IF SENSITIVE OCCUPATIONS IN QA
-- REQUIRE MIX OF OCCUPATIONS --**

3. Which of the following best describes your total household income before taxes in 2002. Was it...?

- Up to \$15,0001
- \$15,000-\$24,9992
- \$25,000-\$34,9993
- \$35,000-\$44,9994 **REQUIRE A MIX**
- \$45,000-\$59,9995
- 60,000+6
- VOLUNTEERED**
- Refused.....7

4. Which of the following best describe your current dwelling? Would it be...?

- A house1
- An apartment.....2
- A seniors' residence.....3..... **REQUIRE A MIX**
- A seniors' retirement complex4
- Other (Specify:_____).....5

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Elementary1
- Some High School2
- Completed High School3
- Some College.....4
- Completed College.....5 **REQUIRE A MIX**
- Some University6
- Completed University7
- Refused.....8
- None/did not attend school.....9

6. Which of the following groups or clubs, if any, have you been involved with in the past six months? **READ RESPONSES**

- PEI's Senior Citizens Federation1
- PEI's Women's Institute Federation.....2
- Seniors' College of PEI5
- Seniors Active Living Centre6
- The Royal Canadian Legion.....7
- A social club (Specify: ____)...3
- A hobby club (Specify: ____)4
- Other (Specify:.....).....6
- None/is not involved with any groups7

FOR EACH GROUP, RECRUIT A MIX ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT IN CLUBS OR GROUPS ABOVE (NUMBER OF GROUPS INVOLVED WITH)

Recruit a mix of those who are involved at the following level:

- None / not involved with any groups
- 1-2 groups or clubs
- 3-5 groups or clubs
- 6+ groups or clubs

7. In the past six months, have you **personally** contacted the Government of Canada for information about, or to access Government programs and services?

- Yes.....1 **Recruit 5**
- No.....2 **Recruit 5**

If YES, ask to specify the types of information/programs/services or the Government department contacted:



8. Have you ever participated in a research study or one on one interview that was arranged in advance for which you received a sum of money?

- Yes.....1 **Continue**
- No.....2 **Go to Q12**

9. When was the research study you participated in? _____

10. What was (were) the topic(s)? _____

11. How many studies have you participated in? _____

If they have been to one in the past 6 months, been to one on government issues, been to 3 or more ever, thank and terminate.

12. How comfortable would you be in discussing your thoughts and opinions about your information support network in a group setting? Would you say you are:

Completely comfortable	1	
Generally comfortable	2	
Generally uncomfortable	3	Thank & Terminate
Completely uncomfortable	4	Thank & Terminate
Don't know/Not sure	5	Thank & Terminate

Invitation

We would like to invite you to participate in a focus group discussion we are conducting on _____ at _____. As you may know, a focus group is a research tool, which uses an informal meeting to gather information on a particular subject matter, in this case information.

The discussion will be approximately 2 hours, refreshments will be served (**for Group 2 and 4, please mention that sandwiches, sweets and refreshments will be served**) and you will receive **\$50** as a "thank you" for your time. Would you be interested in participating?

If "no", thank and terminate.

Sometimes in focus groups, participants are asked to write down their thoughts, or read a brochure. Would you be able to participate in these activities?

If "no", thank and terminate.

As part of our quality control measures, we ask everyone who is participating in the focus group to bring along a piece of I.D., picture if possible. You may be asked to show your I.D. by the hostess at the facility.

As the success of the groups is dependant on everyone showing, we ask that you call _____ at _____ in the event you are unable to attend. This will give someone else the opportunity to participate in your absence. Please do not send someone in your place.

Attention Recruiters

- Recruit 10 participants for each group
- Accept only those who have made a firm commitment
- ***Ensure proper spelling of participants' name***
- Ask for home and work number

Appendix E: Moderator's Guide

FINAL MODERATOR'S GUIDE

1. Introduction

10 minutes

- Welcome (Introduce self and function of a moderator – to get your opinions, all opinions are important; look for a variety of opinions)
- Introduce focus group process; (no right / wrong answers; ground rules – want to hear from all, talk one at a time, disagreement is natural; not looking for consensus)
- Explain room set-up: taping, mirrored glass/ viewers
- Any questions?
- Purpose of today's discussion: to discuss how you go about accessing information in general.
- Participant introduction, ask them to introduce themselves including; name, how long they have been living on PEI, and what they like to do in your free time.

2. Information Gathering Process

45 Minutes

To begin, I am interested in better understanding the type of information people your age might be interested in.

- What topics are most relevant to people your age? Any others?

I am also interested in knowing who people your age turn to or where they go for information, guidance, or support on topics including the ones you just identified, but not necessarily limited to those. To do so, I will ask you to work in teams. **Moderator split group in 3 teams by age – Distribute paper/marker to each team.** Working with your partners, please jot down on the large sheet of paper, where people your age go for information, guidance or support on general topics or for very specific needs. Who do they turn to? Where do they go? What do they do? I will give you five minutes to complete this exercise before we talk about it together. Any questions?

Give 5 minutes to complete the exercise

Next, I would like you to identify on the list you just created, the top three sources of information or guidance you **personally** turn to most often. I am not looking for a team consensus, but rather your individual opinion. I will give you a moment to do so. Any questions?

***Give a moment to complete exercise
Ask each team to present their list***

Probe, as presented:

- Who do people your age generally turn to or where do they go for information, guidance, or support? Why there?
- Which of the sources do you personally prefer when looking for information? Why?
- What process, if any, do you go through when looking for information in general?
- Where do you go first? Why?

- How do you decide where to go first?
- What would be the next steps, if any?

Probe, as a group:

- Who or what are you **most** likely to trust when looking for information? Why?
- And who or what are you **least** likely to trust? Why?
- What media, if any, do you rely on for information? Why those?
- What types of programs, if any, do you watch on television or listen to on radio?
- How, if at all, do you use the Internet when looking for information? **Probe for:** Internet access at home.
- What type of groups or organizations, if any, are you involved with in your community?
- How, if at all, are you involved with these organizations?
- What role, if any, do these organizations play as a source of information for people your age?
- What kind of information, if any, do you get from those organizations?

3. Accessing Information from the Government of Canada

45 Minutes

I am also interested in better understanding how people your age access information from the Government of Canada.

Thinking of the type of information one would look for...

- What kind of information would someone your age look for from the Government of Canada?
- How, if at all, is that different across the Island? **Probe for:** rural vs. urban

Let's suppose you were looking for information on Government of Canada programs or services. I would like to talk for a moment about how you would go about accessing such information. On your individual exercise sheet, please list where you would go or whom you would turn to for that information. That could include people, places, tools, and so on. I will give you a few minutes to complete this exercise. Any questions?

Probe, as a group:

- If you were looking for information about Government of Canada programs or services, how would you go about accessing that information?
- Where would you turn first? Why there?
- How would you decide where to go first? **(If not mentioned):** Who would you turn to for that information? Why there?
- What would be the next steps, if any?
- How, if at all, might this be different for people your age across the Island? **Probe for:** rural vs. urban.
- How, if at all, does the Government make this information available to people your age?
- **(If not mentioned):** Does the Government provide citizens with a toll free phone number to access information about its services? If so, what is it? Have you ever used it? Please

comment on this tool. (**In Charlottetown only**) What about the Service Canada Access site in Charlottetown?

- (**If not mentioned**): What kind of print material is currently available to people over 55 years of age regarding Government of Canada programs or services? Where, if anywhere, are these available?
- For those of you who have recently tried to access information on Government of Canada programs and services, what difficulties, if any, have you encountered when looking for that information?
- How, if at all, did you address those difficulties?

And thinking more specifically about the Government of Canada's offerings...

- What are specific services or programs, if any, offered by the Government of Canada for people your age? **Probe for:** housing programs, income supplement programs, pensions.
- (**If applicable**): How did you become aware of those services or programs?
- (**If applicable**): How, if at all, did you obtain information on these programs?

4. Services For Seniors Guide

15 Minutes

I now would like your opinion on a brochure published by the Government of Canada titled "Services for Seniors – Guide to Government of Canada Services for Seniors and their Families".

Moderator show brochure to participants

- Have you ever seen this guide? **Ask for a show of hands.**
- (**If applicable**): Have you read this guide?
- (**If applicable**): How, if at all, have you used this guide? Have you kept it as a point of reference, or did you look at it just once? Why?
- How would you expect to find out about this guide? Where would you expect to find this guide? Why there? Where else?
- Who do you expect would be interested in this guide? Why?
- What would you expect to find in this guide? Why?

Closing

5 minutes

That concludes our discussion. On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to thank each of you for sharing your views with the group today. We have certainly learned a lot through our discussion. As a more tangible show of our appreciation, please see our hostess on your way out and she will have something for you.

Thanks you for your participation.

Appendix F:
Services for Seniors Guide
(NOT AVAILABLE ELECTRONICALLY)