



Ottawa Older Adult Consultation Findings Summary

Submitted to the City of Ottawa

Final Report • Project 2011-211 • February 2012



INANOS

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Key Findings	3
1.0 Context & Methodology	10
1.1 Background	10
1.2 The City of Ottawa Older Adult Plan	10
1.3 The Concept of Age-Friendliness	10
1.4 Overview of the Consultation Phase	11
1.5 Organization of the Report	14
2.0 Life in Ottawa as an Older Adult.....	15
2.1 Age Friendly Advantages	15
2.2 Barriers to an Age Friendly City.....	16
3.0 Outdoor Spaces & Buildings	18
3.1 Age Friendly Advantages	18
3.2 Barriers to Outdoor Spaces & Buildings	19
3.3 Suggestions for Improvement.....	20
4.0 Transportation & Mobility	23
4.1 Age Friendly Advantages	23
4.2 Barriers to Transportation and Mobility.....	24
4.3 Suggestions for Improvement.....	25
5.0 Housing	30
5.1 Age Friendly Advantages	30
5.2 Barriers to Housing.....	31
5.3 Suggestions for Improvement.....	33
6.0 Respect & Social Inclusion	36
6.1 Age Friendly Advantages	36
6.2 Barriers to Respect & Social Inclusion.....	37
6.3 Suggestions for Improvement.....	38
7.0 Social Participation.....	40
7.1 Age Friendly Advantages	40
7.2 Barriers to Social Participation	41
7.3 Suggestions for Improvement.....	42



8.0	Communication & Information	45
8.1	Age Friendly Advantages	45
8.2	Barriers to Communication & Information.....	46
8.3	Suggestions for Improvement.....	47
9.0	Civic Participation & Paid/Unpaid Employment	49
9.1	Age Friendly Advantages	49
9.2	Barriers to Civic Participation & Paid/Unpaid Employment Opportunities	50
9.3	Suggestions for Improvement.....	51
10.0	Community Support & Health Services	53
10.1	Age Friendly Advantages	53
10.2	Barriers to Community Support & Health Services.....	54
10.3	Suggestions for Improvement.....	55
11.0	Public Safety & Security	58
11.1	Age Friendly Advantages	58
11.2	Barriers to Public Safety and Security.....	59
11.3	Suggestions for Improvement.....	59
12.0	General Impressions.....	62
12.1	Most Positive & Negative Experiences with City Services.....	62
12.2	General Satisfaction with Each Theme.....	63
	APPENDIX A - METHODOLOGY.....	65
	APPENDIX B – QUESTIONNAIRE & MODERATOR’S GUIDE.....	68
	APPENDIX C – DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARIES.....	87
	APPENDIX D – STATISTICAL TABLES – CONSULTATION SURVEY.....	91
	APPENDIX E – CONSULTATION SUMMARIES	107



Executive Summary



Overall, participating Ottawa older adults reported that Ottawa was age-friendly in terms of its size, environment and available activities. However, poor health, diminishing income and isolation were revealed to be elements that tested the limits of Ottawa's age-friendliness. Older adults stressed the importance of accessible services and places to look after their health and well-being, and wanted easier ways to get information on what relevant programs and services were available. Furthermore, a number of participants stressed the need for more initiatives aimed at reducing social isolation.

The City of Ottawa commissioned Nanos Research to conduct consultations with older adults in Ottawa as part of the Older Adult Plan. Part of the consultations was conducted in partnership with Age Friendly Ottawa. The consultations took place between October 3rd and December 2nd, 2011 among approximately 630 older adults and stakeholders in Ottawa.

The tasks for this research project were divided as follows: Nanos Research moderated and provided note-taking at nine public consultations targeting the general older adult population. Age Friendly Ottawa moderated 15 consultation sessions targeting specific groups of older adults and for which Nanos Research provided note-taking. The moderator's guide was based on the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Global Age Friendly Cities protocol. The consultation was also comprised of online, telephone and paper surveys created in partnership between Nanos Research and the City of Ottawa. The survey questionnaire's themes were drawn from the WHO framework.

The following is an overview of the findings from the Seniors Summit, consultation sessions and from the online, telephone and paper surveys that were also available during the consultation period. Each of the following chapters summarizes all of the participants' feedback and suggestions - including what is beyond the mandate of the City of Ottawa - on the themes explored in the consultations. In depth demographic summaries, questionnaires, consultation survey statistical tables as well as consultation summaries can be found in appendices.

Please note that the older adults who participated in the consultations are not a representative sample of the older adult population in Ottawa since they were not randomly selected.

Key Findings

All Consultations

- **Life in Ottawa as an Older Adult** – For Seniors Summit and consultation survey participants (n=106), the most cited “perfect age-friendly” feature in Ottawa was “city-wide accessibility” (32.4% of all respondents), followed by “improved transportation services” (20.6%) and “social inclusion” (12.5%). Seniors Summit and consultation participants liked Ottawa's size,



environment and services such as public libraries, while many felt that transportation, social participation, streets and sidewalks, and access to housing should be improved.

- **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings** – Seniors Summit and consultation participants had mainly positive comments about Ottawa’s outdoor opportunities – especially green spaces. However, maintenance and condition of sidewalks, barriers to accessing public buildings and the perceived lack of age-friendly features in parks and along pathways were the top barriers to an age-friendlier city. Of note, winter was mentioned as a prominent isolating factor.
- **Transportation** – Seniors Summit and consultation participants’ views on public transportation were influenced by their health, location and level of income. Several older adults reported they had had good experiences with bus drivers and that they appreciated the ride-free days on OC Transpo. The top areas of concern were the cost of public transportation, as well as access to bus stops and to final destinations. Rural participants reported that they felt somewhat isolated due to the lack of bus routes in their areas. Likewise, parking was widely regarded as expensive, particularly at Ottawa’s hospitals.
- **Housing** – Most participants expressed the desire to live in their own home as long as possible as well as to remain in their communities, close to family and friends. Thus, there were positive comments with respect to services that allowed them to do so. However, when it came to the variety of options for moving out of the house, several concerns emerged in the consultations: lack of affordable, safe and well located rental units, small size of social housing units and lack of communication on services related to housing.
- **Respect and Social Inclusion** – Intergenerational respect took center stage in discussions related to respect during the consultations. Most participants had positive comments to make about how they are treated by younger people, and city buses were revealed to be one of the main social spaces where intergenerational interaction was occurring. Special groups (Francophones, immigrants, GLBTQ, rural residents) were especially sensitive to the notion of respect in terms of decision-makers responding to their own specificities and needs.
- **Social Participation** – Seniors Summit and consultation participants reported that Ottawa offered a good variety of activities for older adults. Libraries, community/seniors’ centres and churches were seen as favourite places to socialize for many. Commonly-mentioned barriers to participation were the cost of activities and lack of communication channels to advertise available opportunities. A number of participants mentioned they would like to see more opportunities for continuing education and fitness programs.
- **Communication and Information** – Word of mouth and places such as libraries, community/seniors’ centres and churches were identified as typical information-sharing places by a number of consultation participants. Accordingly, isolated older adults lacking support (especially immigrants) were generally viewed as the group most likely to be missing out on relevant information. Likewise, the Internet was perceived as being relied on too much by the City and not age-friendly by many. However, a noticeable proportion of participants said that more programs should be created to teach older adults how to use the Internet and computers.
- **Civic Participation and Paid/Unpaid Employment** – When it came to volunteering opportunities, consultation participants perceived Ottawa to be a city that offered a vast array of possibilities. One of the main barriers identified was that the volunteer work schedules and level



of effort were often too demanding because of the lack of volunteers. Personal cost incurred was also an important barrier with respect to volunteering. Reducing the difficult steps to get a volunteer position and creating opportunities for mentorships were two commonly-mentioned possible improvements in this area.

- **Community Support and Health Services** – A noticeable proportion of consultation participants had a good impression of community health centres and clinics, as well as home support services provided by Community Care Access Centres (CCAC) and community agencies. However, there was a general impression that there was a lack of coordination between elder care and support service providers, which made it hard to seek help – especially for isolated older adults. Other barriers included the cost of services, lack of services and caregiver support.
- **Public Safety and Security** – Participants in the Seniors Summit and consultations found that, in general, Ottawa is a safe city to live in, but that there is a need for more prevention among older adults and an improved lighting system in outdoor spaces. When asked to report their top positive experience with public safety and security services, survey respondents (n=106) answered “emergency services are quick and responsive” (13.2%) followed by “police there when needed” (8.5%) and “good prevention” (6.6%). Top areas of improvement were “addressing crime/safety issues” (10.4%), “better crime/safety prevention and communication” (10.4%) and “better street lighting” (7.5%).
- **General Impressions** – With a mean score of 5.7 out of 10, consultation survey respondents’ satisfaction with City of Ottawa services was average. Of note, only sixteen percent of consultation survey respondents rated their satisfaction as an 8, 9 or 10 on the ten-point satisfaction scale, which indicates that there is room for improvements in services targeting older adults. Similarly, consultation participants gave a mean middling score of 5.5 out of 10 when asked to rate the overall age-friendliness of Ottawa with regards to the eight themes covered in the discussions. Based on the feedback from all consultation platforms, areas that comparatively need more improvements are housing, community support and health services, and transportation.

Key Themes from Targeted Consultations

- **Aboriginal Community** – Many participating members of the Aboriginal community shared similar concerns as with the mainstream consultations. Poor sidewalk conditions and a limited access to the public transportation system were thought to limit accessibility throughout the city. Another prominent theme that arose in discussions with members of the Aboriginal community was a lack of intergenerational respect and of communication between Aboriginal older adults and their service providers, particularly in terms of healthcare services. Access to affordable and safe housing was also revealed to be an issue of particular importance for participating older adults from this community.
- **Care Providers** – Non-hired caregivers who participated in the consultations mentioned the lack of accessibility throughout the city, especially in terms of public buildings’ doors, public transportation, and housing. A major area of concern for this consultation group was the difficulty that older adults faced when trying to access information regarding available elder care services.



- **Multicultural Community** – Older adults from multicultural backgrounds listed city-wide accessibility as a major area of concern. Noticeably, the difficulty to find affordable housing was a prominent issue in Ottawa that many found to affect their quality of life. Another important area of concern for this group was isolation; indeed, many participating older adults from multicultural communities wanted more avenues to have a social life within and outside of their communities and better communication strategies so that they get the information on practical and community-oriented topics.
- **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (GLBTQ)** – Members of the GLBTQ community were particularly concerned with social inclusion and isolation. Many felt that a combination of homophobic attitudes and social activities geared toward heterosexual, married people undermined their ability to be a part of the community at large, thus increasing the probability of GLBTQ older adults facing isolation. Having seniors' homes better adapted for the GLBTQ community was viewed as a potentially good way to improve inclusion and limit isolation in old age for members of this community.
- **Low-Income** – The consequences of living in the city with a lower income was a challenge to many participating older adults, particularly in terms of the costliness of medications, public transportation, and housing, which all affected their social participation. One of the most salient findings, therefore, was that this group had often limited social participation options and was consequently at greater risk of isolation.
- **Francophones** – A major area of concern for this consultation group was their desire to live their lives in French, whether when it came to accessing services or attending social and cultural events. French-speaking older adults living in West Ottawa found it particularly difficult to speak their first language and meet with other Francophones. Likewise, there was a general impression among participants from this group that there is a lack of equity between services available in French relative to English.
- **Services Providers and Business Community** - Service providers and members of the business community emphasized the threat of isolation on older adults in the city of Ottawa. Many felt concerned toward the lack of accessibility in terms of transportation and public buildings, which play an integral role in the degree of participation of older adults. Housing was seen as an important issue by many in terms of costliness and of the lack of features adapted to older adults' mobility and health challenges. In terms of the continuum of health and supportive services to older adults, many participants from this group asserted the need to have a concerted approach to service delivery and reduce barriers to accessing them.
- **Older Adults with Disabilities** – Accessibility throughout the city was a major concern for this consultation group. Many felt that because of their disability, they were limited in terms of housing and transportation options, and their ability to navigate throughout the city in public buildings and outdoor spaces.
- **Rural residents** – The main challenges raised in this group were mostly related to isolation. Many participating older rural residents mentioned that there was a lack of affordable venues to rent for social gathering, limited options in terms of seniors' homes, and limited access to public transportation. Noticeably, however, many participants stressed that they especially enjoyed the community feel of smaller towns while being close to the city.



Key Insights

- **Ottawa's Age-Friendliness** – Ottawa's most age-friendly attributes, as chosen by consultation participants, included green spaces, good public libraries and a wealth of activities (seniors' centres, museums, groups oriented toward older adults) available for older adults.
- **Limits of Ottawa's Age-Friendliness** – Faced with health and mobility issues and a sudden decrease in income, access to these and other services was a challenge for many participants, and led to concern over growing isolation.



Most Frequently Cited Ideas for Improvements Provided by Participants

The following is a list of the most frequently cited ideas for improvement cited by participants across all consultation sessions. Detailed lists of ideas can be found at the end of Chapters 3 to 11.

Outdoor spaces and buildings

- Regularly repair cracks and holes in sidewalks.
- Public buildings: Invest in and maintain doors that open automatically or by pushing a button.
- Install more public benches and washrooms along main roads and in parks.

Transportation and mobility

- Add more routes to cover rural areas and parts of the City with fewer transportation links to popular destinations. Ensure bus routes end directly in front of buildings such as shopping malls, hospitals, etc.
- Standardize cost of use of Para Transpo – do not change fares based on location.
- Eliminate or reduce cost of parking at hospitals and clinics. Increase designated parking spaces for spaces for older adults at public buildings.
- Invest in bigger, more visible street signs and traffic lights.
- Increase the allotted time for crossing intersections.

Respect and social inclusion

- Improve on perceived lack of older-adult activities for men relative to women at community centres.

Housing

- Construct more affordable, public/social housing for older adults – reduce waiting times for social housing.
- Plan for greater variety of older-adult housing: in more areas around Ottawa, better mix of rental and owned, with facilities designed or adapted to meet needs of residents with disabilities and limited mobility.
- Develop a plan for more effectively communicating information to older adults on home-retrofitting programs, assistance with moving to seniors' housing or long-term care homes.



Most Frequently Cited Ideas for Improvement Provided by Participants - Continued

Social participation

- Look at ways to make participating in activities and events more affordable for older adults.
- Ensure continued financial support for community centres and seniors' centres.

Communication and information

- Make use of all communication channels – telephone, radio, television, pamphlets, door-to-door and Internet – not all older adults have access to a computer.
- Develop Internet and computer skills classes for older adults across Ottawa.

Civic participation and paid/unpaid employment

- Develop mentorship programs for older adults to share experience from their working life.
- Reduce/simplify paperwork associated with applying to volunteer.

Community support and health services

- Alleviate the “silo” structure of elder care by making sure that older adults receive the continuum of care they need across community, City and provincially-funded and provided health services.

Public safety and security

- Make sure the streets, parks and parking lots are well-lit at night.
- Reinforce surveillance at intersections and enforce rules of the road.



1.0 Context & Methodology

1.1 Background

The aging of the population will mean, for western societies, that more individuals that are active, healthy and experienced will contribute to society in a plethora of ways outside of the work sphere. At the same time, the aging of the population will be a social challenge for a country like Canada as the unusually large Baby Boomer cohort enters old age. The challenge will be especially important because of the implications aging will have on public and private provision of services to a growing group of elderly people.

The city of Ottawa will not be exempt from the growth of the older population that will affect Canadian cities over the next decades. For this reason, the City began working on an Older Adult Plan in 2010. According to recent demographic projections, Ottawa's older-adult population (65+) will grow by 128% from 2006 to 2031, while the total population will grow by 34%.¹ This gap alone shows that municipal decision-makers will have to take into consideration the varied needs and concerns of this larger group of citizens in the near future, while balancing the needs of others.

1.2 The City of Ottawa Older Adult Plan

Through City Council direction and endorsement from the City of Ottawa Seniors' Advisory Committee, the City of Ottawa is working on an Older Adult Plan that will assist Council, management, and staff in understanding needs and priorities related to older adults and making strategic decisions to address these needs. The Older Adult Plan will create recommendations that will guide city services, facilities, and programs to be more accessible and responsive to the specific needs of the older adult population now and in the future.

The Older Adult Plan project consists of three distinct phases: background research, public consultations, and development of the Plan itself. The purpose of the consultation phase is to engage with older adults in Ottawa to identify key issues and opportunities for service planning, changes or enhancements. Together with the findings from the research phase, the consultation findings will inform the development of the City of Ottawa Older Adult Plan.

1.3 The Concept of Age-Friendliness

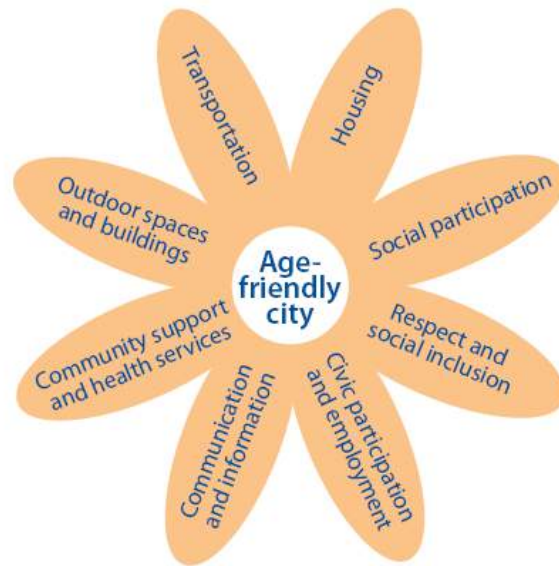
The World Health Organization (WHO) is well aware of the demographic shift and is a pioneer in advocating for better-adapted environments for growing cohorts of older adults. The WHO's release of their Policy Framework on Active Aging in 2001 and the creation of the Global Age-Friendly Cities Project led to the identification of the core barriers for age-friendly urban environments. This initiative, which was adopted by several cities around the world, aims to develop age-friendly indicators through engagement of and consultation with older adults themselves. The WHO's engagement framework is comprised of eight themes, which are as follows:

- outdoor spaces & buildings;
- transportation;
- housing;
- social participation;

¹ Hemson Consulting Ltd. (2010). *City of Ottawa Older Adult Plan: Demographic Characteristics Forecast 2006-2031*.



- civic participation & employment;
- communication & information;
- social respect & inclusion; and,
- community support & health services.



The WHO's engagement and consultation model seeks to bring older adults together to tell community leaders and policy makers what the age-friendly advantages of their city are (what works), what the barriers to an age-friendly city are (what does not work) and what should be the top priorities for each of the eight themes mentioned above. An age-friendly city, by definition, is one that adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.²

It is with this underlying framework as a guide that the City of Ottawa embarked on a large consultation process across Ottawa with the goal of informing its Older Adult Plan.

1.4 Overview of the Consultation Phase

The consultations were conducted using different approaches and methods so as to reach as many potential participants as possible. A more detailed summary of demographic data on consultation participants is included in the appendix.

Four steps were followed by the research team to collect data:

² World Health Organization (2007). *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide*.

1. Seniors Summit

On October 3rd, 2011, the Mayor of Ottawa invited local older adults to City Hall for a day of consultations on the age-friendliness of services throughout the City of Ottawa. Participants were invited to provide their input on six of the WHO themes: transportation, housing, social and recreational services, community support and health services, civic participation and volunteering, and public safety and security. This input was collected and summaries of the feedback were analyzed by Nanos Research and included in the report. Approximately 175 older adults provided input at the Seniors Summit.



2. Community Consultations

Nine consultation sessions were conducted by the City of Ottawa and Nanos Research among the general older adult population of Ottawa in different areas of the city. Rural, urban, Francophone and Anglophone older residents of Ottawa were represented across all these consultations. To follow is the participant breakdown for all consultation sessions:

Mainstream Groups	Location	# participants
Rural older adults	Carp	8
Rural older adults	Greely	8
Older residents - Orleans	Orleans	7
Older residents - city	Sunnyside Library	24
Older residents - East	Gloucester Seniors' Centre	20
Older resident - West	Tallwood Dr	13
Rural older adults	Navan	17
Older Francophone residents - West	Tallwood Dr	17
Older Francophone residents - East	Orleans	10
Total		124

In addition to these nine consultation sessions, 15 consultations were conducted among targeted groups in order to obtain a comprehensive portrait of Ottawa's older adult population (see table below). The City of Ottawa partnered with Age Friendly Ottawa to conduct these targeted consultations³.

For the targeted consultations, participants were invited to participate through community agencies and partners who reached out to them. About 159 individuals participated in the targeted consultations. To follow is the participant breakdown for these consultations:

³ In collaboration with the City of Ottawa and other community partners, Age Friendly Ottawa is working towards a vision of Ottawa as a city where the physical, social and service environments are responsive to the needs of older adults thereby maximizing healthy and active aging. The Council on Aging of Ottawa is the leadership organization for Age Friendly Ottawa.

Target Groups	Community Host	# participants
Aboriginal Elders	Wabano Native Friendship Centre	9
Natural Caregivers	Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre	8
Low-Income older adults	South East Ottawa Community Health Centre	12
Older-older adults (75+ years)	Unitarian House (2 groups)	18
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (GLBTQ) Community	Centretown Community Health Centre	9
Low-Income Francophone older adults	Ottawa Community Housing Corporation	12
Francophone Multicultural Community	Centre des services Guigues,	12
Francophone Service Providers	Centre Séraphin Marion	15
Special Needs (physical, psychiatric, intellectual disabilities)	Service Coordination	13
Service Providers	Algonquin College	8
Business Community	United Way	10
Ethnic and Cultural Communities	OCISO	10
Isolated older adults	Abbotsford House	12
Experts – Gerontology	Elizabeth Bruyère Hospital	5
Individual Interviews Older adults with limited mobility	4 home visits 2 telephone interviews with older adults from rural communities	6
TOTAL		159

3. Consultation Survey

At the same time as the public consultations were unfolding, a consultation survey, which concentrated on services funded and operated by the City of Ottawa, was made available to Ottawa residents online. The survey itself was based on the WHO model, but also included a section on public safety & security as well as a satisfaction question on City services. The survey was created differently so as to capture impressions on services specific to the City of Ottawa that could have been overlooked in the public consultations. Participants also had the option of filling out the survey over the phone or on paper.

Nanos Research conducted and managed the online consultation survey. To follow is a breakdown of the participants' basic characteristics for these consultation surveys:

Types of participant	# participants
Online - Francophones	15
Online - Anglophones	70
Telephone - Francophones	1
Telephone - Anglophones	6
Paper - Francophones	0
Paper - Anglophones	14
Total	106



4. Other Consultations

In addition to the consultations above, 50 older adults had the opportunity to provide input in Kanata on November 25th, 2011. This consultation session was conducted independently by the Kanata Seniors' Council and followed the same model as the research team (used the same questionnaire based on the WHO Age Friendly Cities protocol). Furthermore, the City conducted a series of two consultations among Council Advisory Committee members. The same methodology as all other consultations was applied. About 16 participants attended these sessions primarily conducted in English.

1.5 Organization of the Report

Factoring in all the different modes of this consultation process, approximately 630 older adults and other stakeholders provided input in one way or another on advantages and barriers to an age friendly Ottawa.

Each of the following chapters summarizes all of the participants' feedback and suggestions - including what is beyond the mandate of the City of Ottawa - on the themes explored in the consultations. The first section of each chapter displays the most commonly-cited age-friendly advantages across mainstream and targeted consultation sessions, as well as in the consultation survey. The second section displays the most commonly-cited barriers across all consultation platforms.

Readers should note that the views of participants from targeted groups such as Francophones, rural residents, people identifying as GLBTQ, people with disabilities, people from multicultural communities, Aboriginal people, caregivers and elder care/services professionals were included with the views of mainstream older people in the summaries of the most-commonly cited advantages or barriers. However, whenever the point of view of one of the targeted groups stood out from their mainstream counterparts, a special mention was included in the chapter.

Each chapter is concluded with two boxes: the blue "Key Insights" box provides the key points raised by all consultation participants, and the pink "Ideas for Improvement of Services" box highlights specific ideas that came out of the various consultation sessions.

In appendices are the questionnaires used in the public and survey consultations, tables exhibiting available demographic information provided by participants, tables reporting the survey consultation findings and the summaries of all consultation sessions.

This report is a summary of consultation participants' input gathered by the research team. Participating older adults and other stakeholders do not constitute a scientifically accurate representation of the older adult population in Ottawa. Participants attended the public consultations, were invited to targeted consultations, filled out surveys and provided input over the phone or by email on a voluntary basis.



2.0 Life in Ottawa as an Older Adult

What is it like to live in Ottawa as an older person? What are some positive aspects?
What are some negative aspects?

We asked the above questions to older adults who participated in the consultation phase at the very beginning of each session. The answers were thus very revealing because they represented top-of-mind issues and advantages related to age-friendliness in the City of Ottawa. In other words, participants had the opportunity to provide their most pressing issues or areas of satisfaction unprompted - without being prompted to choose from a specific list of categories. Findings revealed that opportunities to participate in social or outdoor activities were important advantages of Ottawa, while perceived lack of means to access transportation, sidewalks and buildings, as well as housing were definite barriers to an age friendly Ottawa. Accordingly, a comparatively larger proportion of survey respondents stressed that city-wide accessibility was the top feature of an ideal age friendly city.



2.1 Age Friendly Advantages

When asked at the public consultations what life was like in Ottawa as an older adult, participants mentioned the following elements at every consultation session:

- green spaces;
- size of the city and sense of community;
- cultural activities and opportunities; and,
- public libraries.

“I’ve noticed an improvement in terms of age-friendly accessible buildings, like at the Carlingwood Shopping Mall.”

Green spaces - There was a clear sense, across all consultation sessions, that Ottawa was a comparatively ideal environment for older adults with its green spaces within and around the city. Many participants shared their positive experiences with parks near their homes and others stressed the importance for older adults to live in an urban environment encompassing good proportions of services and green spaces. Importantly, easily accessible green spaces were linked to healthy lifestyles by several older adults.

Size and sense of community - Common things heard at the beginning of the consultations were “life in Ottawa is great” or “I can’t think of a better place to live”. For a good proportion of participating older adults, Ottawa’s size was deemed “ideal” or even “perfect” compared to Montreal and Toronto. This allowed, according to many, for a greater sense of community. A notable

exception came from participants from the multicultural communities who stressed on several occasions that it was not easy for them to interact with neighbours.

Cultural activities - Participants felt that the city had a lot to offer in terms of activities and that the opportunities were “endless” for older adults. One participant from Eastern Canada even said that upon retirement, he and his wife had initially planned to move back to their hometown. However, they were so pleased with the level of cultural activities in Ottawa that they decided to call the city their home for their post-retirement years. Of note, the quality of cultural activities and events were acknowledged by participating older adults across all groups.

Public libraries - Most notably, “public libraries” was the positive element mentioned the most – without being mentioned by the moderators - when participants were asked to talk about life in Ottawa as an older adult.

Accessibility top feature of the ideal age friendly city - In the survey, when asked to describe the perfect age friendly city, a comparatively larger proportion of responses (32.4%) referred to “city-wide accessibility”. Combined with the above findings, this result illustrates the importance to complement activities with age-friendly access features in order to foster as much participation as possible among older adults.

2.2 Barriers to an Age Friendly City

At the same time, there was an overall impression that the experience in Ottawa as an older adult was affected by (1) age-related changes (health, dependence, financial resources) and (2) changes in the city (amalgamation, population growth, traffic, etc.). The most frequently cited issues were:

- transportation within and around the city;
- barriers to social participation;
- conditions of streets and sidewalks; and,
- housing.

“I think there should be something done about retirement homes that charge a fortune per month for residents.”

Transportation – This theme generated a variety of comments at the outset of every consultation session. There was a consensus across the board on the need to make public transportation more financially accessible to older adults. This was especially raised in the low-income groups and among rural residents for whom distances are greater. For the latter group, there was also a general concern about how older adults could overcome isolation from their community once they stopped driving. In the survey, “improved transportation services” was the second most mentioned feature (20.6%) of the perfect age friendly city.

Barriers to social participation - Although consultation participants acknowledged the wide variety of activities offered in the city, the cost of participating in activities or attending cultural events (transportation, entrance fees, etc.) was regarded as an issue especially for single older adults living on fixed income. Likewise, rural residents generally felt that they had fewer opportunities in their own communities and a lack of appropriate and affordable venues to organize social events. Furthermore, many Francophone participants asked for more opportunities for social gathering and cultural events in their own language, not only in the East End, but also all over the city. In the survey, “social inclusion” and “affordability for older adults” were respectively the third and fourth most mentioned features of a perfect age friendly city.



Streets and sidewalks - In all consultations traffic and the state of sidewalks came up as significant barriers to an age friendly Ottawa. Many participants felt they could not exercise or do outdoor activities as much as they wanted to due to uneven and patchy sidewalks and pathways. There was also an issue in terms of personal safety for many participants: crossing the street at intersections was widely perceived as dangerous due to the difficult cohabitation of drivers, cyclists and pedestrians on the road and sidewalks. Another prominent issue that older adults faced when crossing intersections is the short period of time allotted to cross. Older adults with disabilities and reduced mobility were particularly worried about the latter point.

Housing - Another topic that caused a good amount of concern among participants at the very start of each consultation session was the affordability of housing when transitioning from an autonomous to a semi-autonomous lifestyle. Many consultation participants said that they lived at home, but were worried about what would happen when their needs were going to change. The perceived difficulty to find information on options available and the perceived complexity of getting support for the transition to a semi-autonomous lifestyle were frequently cited barriers.

Key Insights

- **Older adults value green spaces** – Ottawa’s many parks and green spaces were consistently recognized as making the city a more age-friendly place to live. This tied in with appreciation for Ottawa’s more manageable size and greater sense of community compared with bigger Canadian cities.
- **Connecting through libraries and cultural activities** – Public libraries are a focal point of leisure time for older adults in Ottawa. Participants appreciated the variety of activities on offer to older adults throughout the City.
- **Challenges remain in transportation, access, inclusion** – Lack of affordability and inaccessibility of public transit present issues for Ottawa’s older adults, particularly those on lower incomes or who live in rural areas. Traffic and the state of sidewalks also inhibit mobility for many older adults. Combined with the sometimes high cost of cultural activities, these were most frequently cited as potential barriers to social inclusion and participation.



3.0 Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Outdoor spaces and buildings refer to the natural and built environment that is all around us.

Generally, consultation participants raved about the number of parks, cycling paths and green spaces in the city. On the other hand, the state of sidewalks, the perceived lack of accessibility in some public buildings and the snow were prominent barriers raised in all sessions. The survey findings reflected what was said in the public consultations, with “bike/walking paths” as top positive experience with outdoor spaces and buildings, and “sidewalks” as top negative experience.



3.1 Age Friendly Advantages

In all consultations, the following elements were associated with advantages:

- city parks;
- green spaces;
- bike paths and pathways; and,
- recreational facilities or public buildings well adapted for older adults.

“We have a lot of great parks compared to other places in Canada.”

City parks and green spaces - There was a consensus in the consultations on the fact that Ottawa has nice parks and provides a vast array of outdoor activity opportunities in the summer. Ottawa was associated with “fresh air”, “great green spaces” and being “beautiful to walk”. Of note, the possibility of having even better equipped parks (in terms of safety, exercising opportunities, intergenerational features, etc.) generated a significant amount of interest among a number of groups and was a significant part of discussions on outdoor spaces. In the survey, “cleanliness/maintenance of outdoor spaces” was the third top positive experience with outdoor spaces and buildings (10.4%).



Bike paths and pathways – Many consultation participants said they were avid cyclists and enjoyed the cycle paths all around the city. In addition, a noticeable number of participants said that they liked how the bike paths were becoming clearly separated from the roads downtown with the use of concrete dividers. In the survey, more than one in five respondents (22.6%) stated that bike/walking paths were their top positive experience with outdoor spaces and buildings.

Age friendly buildings - Positive comments related to accessibility especially focused on the Carlingwood, Hazeldean, and Bayshore Malls as good examples of buildings that had a superior level of age-friendly features (parking, benches inside, layout of the mall). In addition, many participants felt that there was a greater awareness of the need to adapt Ottawa’s public buildings to older adults and that changes were being made in many places. The new accessibility standards created within the Provincial Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was discussed in several sessions and was positively received by participants. In the survey, “accessibility” was the second top positive experience with outdoor spaces and buildings (14.2%).

3.2 Barriers to Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

The top barriers identified during the consultation phase included:

- condition of sidewalks and winter conditions;
- barriers to accessing public buildings;
- lack of outdoor benches, washrooms, lighting; and,
- intersection crossings and sidewalk sharing.

“I wish the City would put more benches for us to sit down where people wait for the bus, or even just on the side of the road.”

Sidewalks and winter conditions - In terms of age-friendly barriers to outdoor spaces and buildings, the condition of sidewalks was the top issue mentioned in the consultations. Many older adults stated that sidewalks were often uneven, filled with cracks and even dangerous for people with disabilities or for those using a walker. Winter was also prominent in this discussion: not only was it seen as making roads and sidewalks substantially less useable due to the perceived inadequate snow removal services in residential areas, but winter was also identified as being an important cause of isolation for older adults. Survey respondents had very similar input to consultation participants, with the condition of sidewalks (14.2%) being the top negative experience.

Barriers to accessing public buildings - Several older adults said that access to public buildings was improving, yet many important age-friendly features were still often lacking in many places. For example, accessible washrooms were viewed as lacking in several buildings (at the federally administered National Arts Centre or at the National Gallery of Canada for example). This issue was especially raised by older adults with disabilities or reduced mobility. Likewise, many participants (especially care-givers and isolated older adults) stressed the importance of having safer and lighter doors in public buildings, as well as better maintained ramps and cleared stairs at the entrance of buildings.

Lack of outdoor benches, washrooms, lighting - In all sessions, the importance of physical activity for older adults was pointed out. One common barrier related to this was a lack of features that make walking easy and safe for older adults. Thus, many consultation participants wanted more public benches, washrooms and better lighting equipment in parks and along pathways.



Intersection crossings and sidewalk sharing - Other barriers to outdoor walking were the perceived attitude of cyclists and drivers towards older adults when then they are walking on sidewalks and pathways or when crossing intersections. A number of participants talked about their fear of being hit by cyclists when walking on pedestrian paths in parks or along the roads. Street crossings or intersections were mentioned as a barrier everywhere. The main perceived issue among participants was the attitude of drivers and cyclists which were seen as not respecting older people's sometimes slower pace when crossing the street.

3.3 Suggestions for Improvement

For consultation participants, there were three major areas that summed up the discussions around outdoor spaces and buildings:

- improve safety and maintenance of sidewalks;
- increase accessibility of public buildings; and,
- make access to outdoor activities easier.

Improve safety and maintenance of sidewalks - For many older adults, safety meant a better enforcement of the law in terms of the conduct of certain individuals in parks at night and the behaviour of cyclists and drivers. For others, safety could be improved by making sidewalks and pathways more usable, installing more street lights, leaving more time for pedestrians to cross intersections and making signs across the city bigger and more visible. In the survey, one in five respondents suggested better maintenance of sidewalks/pathways/parks (20.8%) as top priority for the city.

Increase accessibility of public buildings - In addition, feeling safe meant, for many, being able to access any public building by the main entrance and having easy access to washrooms everywhere. The need to make doors age-friendlier came up on several occasions in the consultation. One participant, for example, said that she was seriously injured when attempting to push a heavy washroom door in a public building. Another participant said that she could not understand why in many restaurants the washrooms were located in the basement or on upper floors. Thus, participants recognized that making public buildings safer for older adults was about small details, but that this was essential to allow older citizens to take advantage of all the opportunities offered in Ottawa. Of note, "enhanced accessibility" was the second most suggested top priority for the city (15.1%) in the survey.

Make access to outdoor activities easier - Having a place to rest when outside of their homes was seen as equally important by older adults in the consultations. In other words, many participants stressed that it was important that older adults be able to walk around the city at their own pace while having access to services that respond to their basic needs outside of home. The most common suggestions for improvement in this area were having more benches, public washrooms and "picnic" areas to stop and have a break. In the survey, "more benches and public washrooms" was the third top priority for the city to take on (11.3%). In addition, some malls were seen as lacking seating areas and it was important for several participants that malls improve their age-friendly features. Indeed, many participants said that malls were attractive for older adults because they could walk there in an indoor environment with comparatively fewer barriers than outdoors.



Key Insights

- **Older adults value parks, pathways and bike paths...** – Older adults who participated in the consultations were for the most part avid park and pathway users, and increasingly bicycle path users.
- **...But barriers remain to getting out of the house** – Older adults reported that the main conditions for enjoying outdoor spaces in Ottawa were to feel safe and to have areas to rest. This included clean and even sidewalks, cleared and accessible pathways during the winter, public washrooms and public benches.
- **Access to public buildings often depends on small details** – Throughout the consultation sessions, a number of older adults raised the issues of heavy doors, inaccessible washrooms, and dangerous entrance areas. Of note, many participants said that knowing about reduced access to outdoor spaces and buildings prevented them from getting out of their home. Thus, not only is it important to implement accessibility measures but also to communicate those improvements to the older adult population.



Ideas for Improvement Provided by Participants

Indoors

- Public buildings: invest in and maintain doors that open automatically or by pushing a button.
- Ensure that all washrooms have at least one stall with handrails on the wall.
- Advocate for private buildings with minimal accessibility for older adults with disabilities, such as no ramps or small washroom stalls, to have this information displayed on the outside of the building.

Outdoors

- Regularly repair cracks and holes in sidewalks.
- Keep parks clean, well-lit, and free of anti-social behaviour and crime.
- Enforce and educate about bike path safety.
- Regularly clear sidewalks, paths and walkways around older adult residences, bus routes and public buildings in winter.
- Install more public benches and washrooms along main roads and in parks.
- Install exercise equipment designed for older adults in parks.
- Install emergency help phones on streets.



4.0 Transportation & Mobility

Transportation allows us to travel where we want or need to in the community, whether by car, bus, taxi, bike or even on foot.

Discussions in this area tended to focus mostly on public transportation since it is a key element in keeping older adults independent and active. Experiences varied tremendously from participant to participant as each experience depended on location, income levels and health conditions. This is illustrated by the fact that nearly one in five survey respondents (18.9%) said that their top positive experience with transportation services was “OC Transpo routes/ frequencies work well” while another one in five survey participants (19.8%) said that their top negative experience with transportation services was “OC Transpo routes are difficult/inconvenient”.



4.1 Age Friendly Advantages

There was a comparatively larger amount of negative points or suggestions for improvement relative to unprompted positive comments in this area. Positive common threads found in all consultations in the area of transportation included:

- ride-free days on OC Transpo buses;
- positive experiences with OC Transpo and Para Transpo staff; and,
- the visible and audible countdown for pedestrians to cross the street.

“Public transportation really helps. Some days are free so it helps seniors who cannot afford public transportation all the time – it’s a good system.”

Ride-free days on OC Transpo buses - Older adults generally appreciated the ride-free days on OC Transpo and felt this was a thoughtful initiative on the part of the City of Ottawa. This was tied by many to a question of respect toward older adults – or the fact that they deserved to have barriers to moving about the city removed as older citizens living on fixed income. Of note, many participants mentioned scheduling their activities around the free bus days and others said they used the bus on the free days to get out of their home and tour certain parts of the city.

Positive experiences with OC Transpo and Para Transpo staff - Likewise, there were several accounts of positive experiences with OC and Para Transpo drivers going out of their way to assist older adults and provide any needed information. Many participants said they felt public transportation was safe, comfortable and efficient in general. In the survey, about one in three respondents (33.1%) focused on OC Transpo’s routes (18.9%) or bus accessibility (14.2%) as their top positive experience with transportation services.



Street crossing countdowns - Finally, some consultation participants felt that the countdown sign when crossing the street was a real improvement that made intersection crossing less stressful and safer for them. Many would like to see more of these visible and audible countdowns in the city.

4.2 Barriers to Transportation and Mobility

The top barriers discussed during the consultation phase include:

- cost of OC Transpo and Para Transpo;
- unreliability and unavailability of OC Transpo and Para Transpo;
- physical limitations in terms of access to and from bus stops;
- cost and lack of parking spaces;
- walking distance from parking to buildings;
- taxi drivers and uncleanliness; and,
- lack of enforcement of the rules of the road.

“OC Transpo is very expensive. It prohibits participation in many ways.”

Cost of OC Transpo - The perceived high cost of OC Transpo and Para Transpo was brought up at every consultation session. Many older adults – and especially those in the lower-income bracket - said that they could not afford to take the bus to participate in activities or to travel to the mall, for instance. There was a general impression that OC Transpo costs were dissuading a great many older adults from participating in social and cultural activities, as well as from engaging in volunteerism.

Cost of Para Transpo - Para Transpo was also talked about in terms of its fares but more specifically in terms of equity. Indeed, several participants were against the fact that fares are based on one’s location in the city. They said it was especially discriminating towards rural residents in need of this public transportation system.

Unreliability and unavailability of OC Transpo - Although experiences seemed to be diverse in terms of the reliability of OC Transpo services, it was clear from the rural consultation sessions that there was a perceived lack of public transportation service in Ottawa’s rural areas. Many participants from rural areas felt particularly isolated and expressed the need for an improvement on that front in their community. For about one in five survey respondents (19.8%), the OC Transpo routes were the top negative experience with transportation, followed by overcrowded buses (11.3%) and the lack of public transportation in rural areas (8.5%).

Unreliability and unavailability of Para Transpo - As for Para Transpo, it is its perceived lack of flexibility and changing schedule that bothered many participants. Several examples of older adults uncomfortably waiting for a long time to catch their ride were reported. Others reported that the routes were often too long and included too many stops out of the way. Several participants also mentioned that Para Transpo rules were too stringent in terms of allowing traveling companions to travel with Para Transpo users. Lack of flexibility was therefore a common thread regarding Para Transpo. A typical story heard from participants heavily dependent on Para Transpo was about the



pick-up times. For example, one participant said that he used Para Transpo to travel to medical appointments and whenever the doctor was late or the wait at the clinic was longer than expected, there was no way for him to catch a Para Transpo ride back home at a later time. As a result, he ended up paying more for a taxi ride to return home.

Physical limitations in terms of access to and from bus stops - In addition, many older adults stated that, too many times, transfers from one bus stop to another were too long and that bus stops were inconveniently located. For example, many participants did not like having to cross the street to transfer from one bus stop to another. Also, several participants stressed that bus stops were often far from destinations popular with older adults. An often cited example of that was walking from the bus stop to the mall.

Cost and lack of parking spaces - Another common thread across consultations was the cost of parking at hospitals and clinics. Many older adults complained about the high parking fares because they tend to have doctor's appointments more often than younger individuals. Thus, this was seen as a question of intergenerational equity. Also, many asserted that such high parking fares affected the extent to which family and friends could visit when older adults are hospitalized for more than one day.

Walking distance from parking to buildings - Several participants said that parking lots were often over-crowded and often forced older adults to walk for a long time before reaching the entrance of the building they want to get to. Other issues that related to parking lots were the lack of lighting and the difficulty to read the information displayed on ticket dispensers when paying for a parking space.

Taxi drivers and uncleanness - Another reported issue related to transportation was taxis in terms of their lack of cleanliness and drivers' attitudes towards older customers. Many participants found that taxis were often "dirty" or not "well-maintained". Others felt that that drivers lacked "politeness" and were not always helpful when asking for information or directions.

Lack of enforcement of the rules of the road - Likewise, several older adults felt that there was not enough enforcement of the rules on the streets in Ottawa (cars, cyclists and pedestrians). Many suggested that cyclists be more accountable by obtaining a license to have the privilege to ride their bike on the road, while others felt that the police should increase their surveillance at busy intersections.

4.3 Suggestions for Improvement

The following suggestions stood out throughout the consultation phase:

- improve access to OC Transpo;
- improve Para Transpo booking system
- increase age-friendly features on board and around shelters;
- complement transportation support with "door to door" services;
- train and sensitize public transportation and taxi drivers;



- reserve parking spaces for older adults; and,
- invest in bigger and more visible street signs.

Improve access to OC Transpo services – There was a general impression in the consultations that some bus routes had been cut in recent years. Many participants said that greater attention should be paid to keep routes that are used by many older adults and that pass by seniors’ centres, malls, parks and retirement homes. Lower fees for the monthly pass were mentioned by many as a way to enhance access to public transportation – especially for lower-income older adults. A noticeable proportion of the rural residents who participated in the consultations suggested that OC Transpo should run a regular minibus service in rural locations that connects to OC Transpo hubs. As a matter of fact, in the survey nearly three in ten (28.3%) respondents expressed the need to extend public transportation – particularly to rural areas. This was followed by an improved access to buses and shelters (15.1%) and affordable fares (10.4%).

Improve Para Transpo booking system – Many participants stressed the need to alleviate some of the rigidity of the Para Transpo booking system by allowing users to change the pick-up times if their schedule changes and to book more than 24 hours in advance whenever possible. Greater flexibility of this service was a key concept raised in most consultations.

Increase age-friendly features on board and around shelters – Although consultation participants acknowledged some of the positive age-friendly features on board of Ottawa buses, many stressed the need to display clearer route maps inside. In addition, some participants said that shelters needed to be cleaner and that the snow had to be removed around bus stops to reduce the barriers to hop on the bus.

Complement transportation support with “door to door” services – Consultations participants felt that transportation support was very helpful, yet seldom comprised a “before and after” service. In other words, some participants said that frail older adults should always be accompanied by someone to make sure they go from point A to point B safely. One program that was described as offering more flexibility and that was mentioned by some participants was the “taxi coupon program” for registered Para Transpo users, which provides as a discounted taxi service as an alternative to Para Transpo. In some instances, private residences for older adults also supplement transportation services by giving their residents taxi chits. Many participants were not aware of these programs and were interested in getting more information on them.

Train and sensitize drivers to older adult issues – Several participants suggested that public transportation and taxi drivers be trained and sensitized to the issues older adults encounter in public transportation. A commonly-cited example was the speed with which OC Transpo bus drivers take off once the doors close, which does not allow sufficient time for some older adults to find a seat or to safely hold on to a pole on board. The other frequently-identified issue was the degree to which drivers interacted with their older passengers. The human contact and capacity to have a conversation or provide some information when needed was seen as a gap by many in regards to driver-passenger interaction.

Reserve parking spaces for older adults – One way to support some of the frailer older adults from having to walk for a long time to reach a building from the parking lot was to have parking spaces reserved for older adults in addition to parking for people with disabilities at public buildings. Malls were specifically targeted for such an initiative.



Invest in bigger street signs – Many older adults pleaded for bigger and more visible street signs within and around the city. The main issues revolved around the position of street signs (often on the side of the road, hidden behind trees) and their font size.

Key Insights

- **OC Transpo** – Consultation participants said they enjoy riding the bus, as long as some barriers are removed. The most significant barriers mentioned were transportation costs, walking distances to bus stops and walking distances from bus stops to destination points.
- **Para Transpo** – Several participants talked about the usefulness of this service, but many reported that the service was sometimes unreliable and had limited flexibility. Moreover, the booking system was often perceived as being inflexible and gaps were observed in terms of a door-to-door service for more frail older adults.
- **Streets and parking lots** – For drivers present at the consultations, top issues commonly mentioned were the small size of street signs and street names, as well as parking spaces and costs.



Ideas for Improvement Provided by Participants

OC Transpo

- Introduce reduced-fare bus tickets and travel passes for older adults. Keep fares constant – no sudden increases.
- Optimize bus routes to cover rural areas and parts of the city with fewer transportation links to popular destinations.
- Ensure bus routes end directly in front of buildings such as shopping malls, hospitals, etc.
- Provide shuttle service to bus stops for older adults living far from public transportation hubs.
- Allow for true consultations with older adults when planning route changes; institute a mechanism for people to lobby before decisions are made.
- Clear snow around bus shelters.
- Harmonize free fare for seniors' day with the days with free museum entrance.
- Older adults in the low-income bracket suggested lowering the age requirement for reduced fare from 65 to 60 years old.

Para Transpo

- Improve waiting times.
- Increase flexibility of booking system by allowing users to book Para Transpo services more than 24 hours in advance.
- Standardize cost of use – do not change fares based on location.



Ideas for Improvement Provided by Participants Continued

General

- Train public transportation workers and taxi drivers on transportation issues that affect older adults.
- Increase advertising of taxi coupon and volunteer driver programs.
- Advocate for the implementation of a taxi rate for older adults.
- Advocate for the elimination or the reduction of the cost of parking at hospitals and clinics.
- Increase number of parking spaces for older adults at City of Ottawa buildings.
- Invest in bigger, more visible street signs and traffic lights.
- Install traffic lights of different shapes for persons who are colour-blind.
- Increase time allotted to pedestrian crossing at major intersections.
- Parking for public services should be free.



5.0 Housing

Having a place to call home is a fundamental necessity and there is a variety of options open to older persons like houses, condominiums, apartments, shared accommodations, and nursing homes.

Compared to other areas, housing seemed to generate the greatest amount of barriers relative to advantages, in part due to the fact that older adults wish to remain in their own home as they age and are concerned with the lack of feasible options when they do have to move. Across most public consultations, when prompted for age-friendly advantages, many participants tended to provide negative comments. Likewise, when asked to provide their top positive experience with housing-related services provided by the City of Ottawa, a number of survey respondents (13.2%) provided a barrier instead.



5.1 Age Friendly Advantages

Throughout the consultation phase, the following were mentioned as advantages:

- there are good models of seniors' homes in Ottawa;
- home support services; and,
- living in own home.

"I love my life here at Unitarian House."

Good models of seniors' homes in Ottawa - Participants mentioned several seniors' homes as examples of good models for seniors' housing in Ottawa. The Unitarian House came up several times due to its perceived fair cost, level of services and overall small community feel. Interestingly, in all consultations participants talked about age-friendly community projects and social housing under construction that sought to address the needs of older people in a better way than what is offered at the moment. This generated a lot of interest and discussions among participants.

Home support services - In general, participants stated that any external help to facilitate aging at home was appreciated – especially from community services (Guigues Community centre was mentioned several times, for instance). Some participants also noted that the Veterans'

Independence Program was a good model for the City of Ottawa to follow in terms of home support initiatives.

Living in own home - Additionally, many older adults expressed having no issues with housing—so long as they were able to live in their own homes. Living at home was equated by many with being independent, and living in dignity. In the survey, a comparatively larger percentage of participants had no experiences with housing-related services provided by the City of Ottawa (14.2%)

5.2 Barriers to Housing

The housing-related barriers presented in all consultations included:

- difficult access to affordable housing options;
- hard to maintain own home;
- long waiting lists for long-term care services;
- concerns over regulation of private seniors' homes in Ontario;
- issues of size, configuration and maintenance of social housing units;
- communication issues; and
- issues specific to certain groups.

“People who are in charge of building houses are not aware of seniors’ needs and concerns.”

Difficult access to affordable housing options - In the consultations, participants noted high costs in the private sector and limited resources in the public/social housing sectors as prominent barriers to age-friendly housing. It was also mentioned that some communities did not have any housing options for older adults. The consultations also highlighted that, when looking for options, older adults were often forced to purchase residences, which were widely thought to be unaffordable. Yet, a significant number of older adults stated that they would prefer to have affordable, decent, and safe rental alternatives. In the survey, the lack of safe and affordable housing was the top housing-related issue (10.4% of all respondents).

Hard to maintain own home - Additionally, the consultation participants stressed that it was expensive for older adults to maintain their homes as they continued to age, and especially when they resided alone. Accordingly, many participants called for tax breaks, or some form of financial support. A noticeable number of participants were not aware of the tax deferral program provided by the City of Ottawa. In the survey, the perceived lack of supportive and community housing services for vulnerable older adults was the second most mentioned issue (6.6% of all respondents).

Long waiting lists for long-term care services - Long waiting lists for long-term care and the stringent qualifying criteria associated with it were seen as important issues by a majority of consultation participants. Negative consequences of this as identified by participants were a greater stress on emergency services in hospitals as well as on informal caregivers at home.



Concerns over regulation in private seniors' homes - Some participants noted that there was a need to standardize private seniors' homes and that care was not up to standard in several private facilities. In addition, many stressed the need to prevent possible elder abuse or neglect in such an unregulated environment. This is why a noticeable number of older adults said they wanted more social housing designed for older adults in Ottawa.

Size, configuration, and maintenance of social housing units – The size, configuration, and maintenance of social housing units were perceived to be ill-adapted to the needs of older adults. For example, many participants reported that their unit was too small or felt like “a box”, that the kitchen was too small, or that the washroom was not adapted to their needs. Many participants did not know where to start in order to have their unit retrofitted and some of them even received negative (or no) answers from building management when they asked for it. Of note, in the survey, “run-down social housing” was mentioned by about seven percent of survey respondents (6.6%) as top negative experience with housing.

Communication issues - Consultation participants stated that the process for acquiring information about housing options and for getting help at home was often daunting. A noticeable number of older adults mentioned not knowing where to go to have their homes, or simply their bathrooms, retrofitted. It was not uncommon to have either caregivers, service providers or medical professionals who participated in the consultations saying that they themselves did not know the easiest channels to have the information regarding housing and support services. One of the problems identified in this area was the perceived lack of coordination between the different stakeholders (levels of government, contractors, and community services) who deal with housing.

Issues specific to older adults identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning (GLBTQ) – Participants who belonged to the GLBTQ community noted that there was a need for seniors' homes for gays and lesbians, which would serve as a milieu where they can socialize freely and safely. Participants noted that it was often uncomfortable to reside with “straight” older adults and cited the lack of a safe space for gay older adults in Ottawa as a prominent issue for them. Participants also stated that there was a need to train and educate staff and residents in retirement homes and long-term care facilities about gays and lesbians.

Issues specific to older adults from multicultural communities – Older adults from multicultural communities highlighted the importance, when relocating to retirement homes or long-term care facilities, of having access to the food that they like or are required to have due to their religious beliefs. These older adults also noted that education was essential as older adults who are also new immigrant did not always speak either official language, resulting in very limited ways to acquire help with bills, subsidy programs or any other housing-related issue.

Issues specific to older adults in the low-income bracket - For low-income older adults and Aboriginal older adults, social housing was seen as essential; yet, they strongly asserted the importance they placed in living in a decent place; it was a matter of dignity for many of them.

Issues specific to older adults from rural areas - In regards to older adults residing in Ottawa's rural areas, the consultations illustrated that it was very difficult for rural older adults to leave their communities and relocate to assisted living facilities or seniors' homes in other locations. Most rural older adults present at the consultations stressed that they wished to remain in their respective communities with their friends and families. These participants did note, however, that residing alone in rural areas often meant being isolated due to comparatively greater distances than city neighbourhoods. Most rural older adults concluded that the solution was to build more retirement



homes in Ottawa's rural areas to keep older adults in the environment they know and they like, and to prevent unsafe isolation of the frailer older adults.

Issues specific to older adults with disabilities - For older adults with disabilities, the main issue was accessibility. These older adults stated in the consultations that, generally, houses were not built for persons with disabilities; as a result, many older adults ended up living in hospitals for a long time, when they could in fact reside in their homes with some adjustments to improve safety and accessibility. Caregivers of older adults with disabilities asked for a greater level of support by being provided with more frequent home care visits, more initiatives to support retrofitting, more day centres and easier access to adapted-living facilities.

5.3 Suggestions for Improvement

The following suggestions to improve housing stood out across all consultation sessions:

- build more safe and seniors-only residences;
- introduce more programs to age at home;
- factor in the needs of an older population in residential design;
- improve communication/information-sharing system;
- increase transparency in long-term care access; and,
- foster intergenerational and informal support.

Build more affordable, safe and seniors-only residences - Survey respondents saw the need for affordable housing as the most pressing concern in regards to issues of housing, with more than one in four survey respondents (26.4%) ranking it as the City of Ottawa's number one priority. This priority was closely followed by the need for safer and more seniors-only buildings (12.3%). These findings mirror the suggestions for improvement that were made during the public consultations.

Introduce more programs to age at home – Many consultations participants felt that there was a need to better communicate existing “age-in-place” programs and to introduce programs to assess and retrofit private residences. Additionally, a number of participants wanted the City of Ottawa and other levels of government to introduce programs to relieve older residents from paying property taxes so that they can afford to remain in their homes as long as possible. Allowing older adults to age in their home and/or within their community was widely seen as a “win-win” situation both for the government and older adults because of the perceived positive benefits on older adults' health.

Factor in the needs of an older population in residential design – A number of participants stressed that policy-makers should take into consideration the needs of older adults when they approve large construction projects—in other words, architects and developers should be encouraged to consider the needs of an aging population in every aspect of urban and building design. For example, many older adults said that any large scale housing project should entail the construction of affordable seniors' residences. Likewise, others suggested that some of the land rights costs or construction permit costs should be removed when a developer build affordable seniors' residences in areas where it is needed. More generally, several participants felt that houses were not adapted for older adults mainly because of the multiple floors most of them have.



As a result, many participants called for a return to bungalows and smaller private homes in light of the increasing aging population.

Improve communication/information-sharing system – One suggestion that emanated from both older adults and service providers was the need to establish a means to provide information to older adults on which housing services are available to them—in particular for those older adults who are isolated, lonely, or part of a cultural community. The transition from autonomous to semi-autonomous living was widely perceived as being difficult because of the perceived lack of information on the matter.

Increase transparency in long-term care access – In the consultations, several participants wondered why they could not have a place at a long-term care facility while others could. They wanted clearer guidelines and requirements that regulate who qualifies for specific services (such as long-term care or social housing), and who does not. In other words, many participants in consultations felt that the system needed greater transparency, so that everyone is aware of their housing options and of what to expect in terms of these options.

Foster intergenerational and informal support - For many older adults, the best way to age at home was to have informal support from friends, family and neighbours. Thus, many participants wondered whether City of Ottawa initiatives could be undertaken to foster intergenerational and informal support such as incentives for building more intergenerational homes, mentorship opportunities, building of retirement homes in family-oriented neighbourhoods, and awareness campaigns to assist older neighbours.

Key Insights

- **Transition from living at home to seniors' housing is often difficult** – Many accounts of this transition showed that it could be difficult for older adults to select and move into an appropriate house due to health issues, lower income, location (urban/rural gaps) and needs (GLBTQ, multicultural communities).
- **Maintaining a home** – Several barriers to maintaining a home were identified by consultation participants; most notably, an uneven availability of home support and subsidies to maintain the property.
- **Living in a place adapted to old-age needs** – Among participants, there was a perceived lack of affordable and safe rental units for older adults, as well as retrofitted spaces.



Ideas for Improvement Provided by Participants

- City of Ottawa should advocate for the regulation of private-sector seniors' housing in terms of rental costs and quality of care.
- City of Ottawa should advocate for the construction of more affordable, public/social housing for older adults and thus reduce waiting times for social housing.
- Implement subsidies/tax credit to enable older adults on fixed income to keep living at home for longer.
- Plan for greater variety of older-adult housing: in more areas around Ottawa, better mix of rental and owned, with facilities designed or adapted to meet needs of residents with disabilities and limited mobility.
- Develop a plan for more effectively communicating information to older adults on home-retrofitting programs, assistance with moving to seniors' housing or long-term care homes.
- Regulate and enforce maintenance of social housing for older adults, particularly for lower-income and Aboriginal people.
- Educate people working in the older adult housing sector on challenges to integration faced by people from the Aboriginal community, the multicultural groups and the GLBTQ community.
- Advocate for tax rebates and incentives to encourage developers to build with the needs of the elderly in mind.
- Equip seniors' homes with fire alarms for the hearing impaired and taller toilets.
- Advocate for the employment of older adults in their residences.



6.0 Respect & Social Inclusion

In the consultations, this category was left open in terms of a definition since participants likely had their own ideas on what respect and social inclusion meant for them. Nevertheless, discussions tended to focus on intergenerational respect for mainstream groups, and responsiveness vis-à-vis specific needs for targeted groups.



6.1 Age Friendly Advantages

The following elements were mentioned throughout the consultation phase as age-friendly advantages in this area:

- level of respect generally high in Ottawa; and
- older adults feel generally included.

“As an immigrant from Britain, I find government policies in Canada are very pro-elderly. Canadians have a positive attitude towards seniors generally.”

Level of respect generally high in Ottawa – Older adults generally reported being respected by people from younger generations in their day-to-day interactions with them. One of the things that many participants particularly appreciated was when younger people would offer their seats on the bus to older passengers. Otherwise, a number of participants emphasized the extent to which people in general were respectful in Ottawa compared to other big cities. In the consultation survey, one-third of the respondents gave scores of 8, 9 or 10 (where 1 is no respect at all and 10 is a lot of respect) when asked to rate the extent to which they feel respected when interacting with or accessing City of Ottawa services. A larger proportion of respondents (44.3%) gave middling respect scores (4, 5, 6 or 7). Furthermore, a comparatively greater proportion of survey respondents said, unprompted, that they generally experienced positive interactions when interacting with or accessing City of Ottawa services (42.7% had positive interactions versus 25.3% negative interactions).

Inclusion – Most public consultation participants felt included in their community and in the city in general. In the consultation survey, however, a comparatively larger proportion of older adults (41.6%) gave middling inclusion scores (4, 5, 6 or 7) when asked to rate the extent to which older adults were included in the City of Ottawa on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not included at all and 10 is completely included. A comparatively smaller proportion of older adults (17.9%) gave high inclusion scores (8, 9 or 10), while a minority (13.2%) gave low scores (1, 2 or 3). Of note, nearly one in five older adults (17.0%) said, unprompted, that the City of Ottawa had good services that fostered inclusion.

6.2 Barriers to Respect & Social Inclusion

The most common issues related to respect and social inclusion in the city were:

- general lack of social respect and presence of ageism;
- barriers to intergenerational mutual respect;
- lack of activities for men relative to women; and,
- issues specific to certain groups.

“Young people expect older adults to accommodate them and move around for them. They should move for older adults.”

General lack of social respect and presence of ageism – Some participants expressed discomfort with the way old age was being treated in society; for instance, a shift in attitude from others was noted by many upon reaching old age. Likewise, the way the media portrays older adults was regarded as an issue by many in terms of being perceived as a burden and reinforcing ageism in society.

Barriers to intergenerational mutual respect - Intergenerational mutual respect was not always seen as being easy to achieve, especially among multicultural communities; indeed, some participants noted deep misunderstandings between first and subsequent generations of immigrants within the same family. On the other hand, many talked about the importance for older adults to be respectful towards younger generations as well, and to accept intergenerational differences if they wanted to be respected themselves.

Lack of activities for men relative to women – Several participants said that most of the activities offered to older adults were geared toward women because of their likely bigger participation rate. Thus, it was clear to many participants that more had to be done to include and interest older men in social activities.

Difficulty to find activities in French for Francophones – Participating Francophones felt very strongly about being able to have a social life and participate in civic matters in French. A participant in one of the Francophone groups even said that she wanted to live her “last years” in French as much as possible. One issue that was noted in the consultations was that there was an equity problem between Francophones and Anglophones in terms of inclusion and respect in Ottawa. Indeed among Francophones, there was a general sense that there were less activity and civic opportunities for Francophones compared to Anglophones in Ottawa. Older Francophone adults met in the Western part of Ottawa felt particularly disadvantaged in this regard.



Difficulty to have voice heard in rural communities – One common thread among participants from rural areas was the perceived lack of attention paid to their specific needs with regards to social participation. They expressed the need for more support of community initiatives, of locales to organize activities and transportation. All this was tied to their feeling of belonging and inclusion in the city of Ottawa.

Difficulty to be included in the community for GLBTQ older adults – Several participants said that it was not necessarily easy for older gays and lesbians to interact with counterparts. Others mentioned experiencing discrimination or simply being ignored by the authorities. Respect and social inclusion was thus a prevalent issue for several participants belonging to this group.

6.3 Suggestions for Improvement

Suggestions heard in all public consultations included the following:

- promote intergenerational respect where interactions occur;
- educate students on intergenerational respect; and,
- provide avenues for minority groups to voice their concerns.

Promote intergenerational respect where interactions occur – An important platform for intergenerational interactions was the entire OC Transpo bus system. During the consultations, older adults from all backgrounds spoke about their experiences with younger passengers; they were generally good but some were more negative. Nevertheless, there was an impression that education on intergenerational relations could happen in such a setting.

Educate the public on intergenerational respect – Many participants mentioned that educating and training younger people, service industry workers and healthcare staff on how to interact with older adults would be a good idea. Service providers who attended the consultations emphasized the need to sensitize the general population to simple things such as not rushing older clients at the cash register, or not infantilize them when talking to them.

Provide avenues for minority groups to voice their concerns - In addition, minority groups (multicultural, GLBTQ and rural residents) asked for a better recognition of their particular needs; in other words, they expressed a desire for a platform to voice their concerns to feel respected and included in the city.



Key Insights

- **Older adults felt respected for the most part** – Although many participants stressed the social exclusion inherent to old age, there was a wide perception that older adults were respected in the City of Ottawa.
- **Intergenerational respect showed on the bus** – This was discussed in all consultation sessions. Generally older adults felt respected in their interactions with younger people. Those interactions mainly occurred on the bus and in stores. A commonly cited example was the promptness with which many younger bus passengers offered their seats to older passengers. Many suggested finding ways to reinforce intergenerational respect through education and awareness campaigns.
- **Minority groups and inclusion** – Minority groups such as Francophones, members of the GLBTQ community and rural residents expressed the need to be better included by having services that catered to their needs, and more channels to have their voices heard.

Ideas for Improvement Provided by Participants

- Invest in more services and activities for Francophones living in different parts of Ottawa. Similarly, ensure that older adults from rural areas and minority groups (multicultural, Aboriginal community, GLBTQ) have access to activities, services and communication channels.
- Educate the public on intergenerational respect through awareness campaigns and programs in schools.
- Offer additional activities for men at community centres to improve gender equality.
- Ensure that the training of service providers, in both the public and private sectors, incorporates training in regards to age sensitivity.
- Educate older adults on issues of respect and immigration so as to encourage inclusion between older adults and service providers.



7.0 Social Participation

Social participation includes opportunities for developing and maintaining meaningful social networks and recreational opportunities within the community.

Feedback from public consultations as well as the survey was mainly positive in this area, as there are good quality programs and services, but factors such as equity, cost, and communication are inhibitive. Participants stressed that they particularly liked public libraries, seniors' centers and groups that offer a variety of activities to older adults, while lack of affordability and of seniors' centres constituted the top concerns across consultations.



7.1 Age Friendly Advantages

Throughout the consultation phase, there was a consensus on the fact that Ottawa has a lot to offer when it comes to social activities. Top advantages in the city as identified by participants were:

- the amount of activities the city has to offer;
- church groups and related activities;
- public libraries; and,
- groups oriented toward older adults.

“Libraries in Ottawa are excellent; I always find everything I look for. Museums are excellent too. There’s a good variety to choose from.”

Amount of activities in Ottawa - Generally speaking, it was clear to most participants that the city of Ottawa offers many social activities, from museums to theaters through to festivals at all seasons of the year. Ottawa’s cultural activities were thus largely appreciated by participants.

Church groups and related activities - Several older adults mentioned churches as their primary ground for socialization and participation. Some participants said that these groups should be better supported financially by the City of Ottawa or other levels of government. For example, age-friendlier facilities (adapted to individuals with disabilities) were mentioned several times as one issue pertaining to church groups ‘locales.

Public libraries - Almost everywhere participants stated that public libraries were their favourite locales for entertainment and socialization. In the survey, the top positive social participation experience that older adults had with the City of Ottawa was public libraries, with nearly one fifth (17.9%) of the respondents’ support.

Groups oriented toward older adults - Many of the older adults who talked about activities oriented toward older adults mentioned “Retraite en action” and “Good Companions” as excellent groups providing a diverse set of affordable activities. In the survey, older adults’ visits to seniors’ centres and/or community centres (17.9%) was tied in first place as top positive social participation experience. In addition, educational opportunities were seen as important by active older adults. In the survey, more than nine percent (9.4%) of participants cited participation in classes and activities designated for older adults as a positive experience with services provided by the City of Ottawa.

7.2 Barriers to Social Participation

Several barriers to social participation were raised during the consultations. Importantly, the central argument heard was that it was easy to enjoy everything that Ottawa had to offer as long as health, sufficient level of income and easy access to transportation were there. In other words, access and ability to participate (which heavily depends on health, income, and location) were presented as challenges that prevented several older adults from enjoying opportunities for social participation in Ottawa.

The following is a list of the most common barriers encountered by older adults:

- costs and lack of affordable venues for older adults to congregate;
- issues related to distance, timing and transportation;
- isolation; and,
- lack of communication.

“For isolated seniors, because of transportation and finance, it remains very hard to access educational and cultural activities.”

Costs and lack of affordable venues for older adults to congregate – The cost of mainstream cultural activities such as movies and theatre were viewed as being too high by many consultation participants. For rural participants, there was a general problem in terms of having affordable venues to rent to organize activities for older adults. Lower-income older adults were particularly concerned about the costs of social activities in the city; many of the low-income older adults met at the consultation sessions said that they relied on the activities that were organized within their retirement homes to have an affordable social life. In the survey, a comparatively larger share of



survey participants (17.0%) stated having no negative experiences related to social participation provided by the City of Ottawa; however, of those participants who had negative experiences, those experiences were primarily associated with the high cost of activities and events (11.3%).

Inability to participate due to distance, timing and transportation - For many older adults, challenges to attending activities and social events were manifold: if they were interested in going to an event or activity, they had to make sure it was affordable, then assess whether the activity was held at a reasonable distance, whether the timing was good (not too late, generally) and whether transportation would not be complicated or tiring for them. It was reported that the more isolated and frail one was, the greater the chance that one would not be able to overcome one of these challenges. In the area of social participation, survey respondents believed the City of Ottawa must make the accessibility and affordability of seniors' programs its top priority (19.8%).

Isolation – Older adults from multicultural communities said that having a social life within their own community was very important to break isolation and provide a social life outside of the home. Of note, participation within mainstream groups of older adults seemed difficult for many participants from multicultural communities. According to several participants, a good way to overcome isolation was to have seniors' centres close to where they resided. For many, however, it was too complicated to get to their nearest seniors' centres. Accordingly, in the survey, the third most common negative experience related to social participation concerned the lack of community and/or seniors' centers near seniors' homes and/or residences.

Communication - Several participants felt that there was a lack of a go-to resource database adapted to older adults. It was reported that most of the information about activities given to the public is very concise and often directs the public to the Internet for more information. Many older adults, however, said that they needed to read about access, transportation, costs involved, type of facility where the activity occurs and so on, both on paper and online.

7.3 Suggestions for Improvement

In the consultations, the top suggestions for improvement were:

- adjust timing of activities, programs, and events;
- improve advertisement;
- improve access to continuing education/courses;
- improve access to fitness centres; and,
- provide affordable spaces for older adults' social events and activities.

Adjust timing – Adjusting the timing of some cultural events to age-friendlier times (matinees, afternoons) was mentioned by many participants in the consultations. Activities and events held late at night were generally unpopular among participants because it entailed going outside at night and getting back home too late.

Improve advertisement – Many participants stressed that the city should find ways outside of the Internet to advertise activities and events to older adults with the particular information they require



to attend. It was also noted that in many cases, the information had to “come to older adults” instead of the other way around.

Improve access to educational activities of all sorts – Several participants expressed a deep interest in continuing learning things after retirement but felt the opportunities were rather limited on that front. Thus, many participants wanted programs to improve access to continuing education/courses of all sorts by having these activities scheduled close to where older adults live or gather, by reducing fees and by using resources already provided by colleges and universities.

Improve access to fitness centres – Physical activity was largely seen as an important factor of healthy aging. Improved access to fitness centres was mentioned by many participants as a way to foster healthier living among older adults. Lower fees, age-friendly features (for example, elevators, quieter spaces, courses designed for older adults) and a better communication strategy were all factors of enhanced access mentioned in the consultations. In the survey, it is interesting to note that a noticeable proportion of respondents were concerned with the promotion of healthy and active living, both mentally and physically.

Provide affordable spaces for older adults’ social events and activities - Several participants wanted the city to ensure that all areas of Ottawa have an affordable space for older adults to organize activities and social events. Indeed, one issue that frequently came up was the difficulty to have locales to organize activities due to cost issues. Many participants in rural areas felt this was a particularly big issue where they lived. Likewise, participants from multicultural communities emphasized the importance for them to have a place where they could congregate to fight isolation and have a social life. Community centres and seniors’ centres remained some of the favourite venues for activities among participants. Accordingly, survey respondents suggested that the City of Ottawa continue to support community centers and services (15.1%) as a top priority to take action on in the area of social participation.

Key Insights

- **Favourite places for socializing** – Public libraries, seniors’ centres and church groups were participants’ top locales for social life outside of the family.
- **Informal groups need support** – Rural participants reported having a lively social life in their communities; however, a common thread was a perceived lack of support from the City of Ottawa to sustain and expand activities oriented toward older adults in these areas.
- **Barriers to attending mainstream activities remain** – The costs and timing (evenings) of cultural activities or events were frequently mentioned as barriers to social participation in the city.



Ideas for Improvement Provided by Participants

- Facilitate participation in activities and events by ensuring programs/activities are affordable and by offering subsidies for low-income older adults.
- Ensure continued financial support for community centres and seniors' centres and encourage the development of new centres in underserved areas.
- Invest in and publicize transportation programs to bring older adults from more isolated areas to their nearest community centre.
- Develop a wider variety of activities available in French – not only in the East End, but for Francophones across Ottawa.
- Ensure older adult activities/programs are offered on free public transport days.
- Provide space in City of Ottawa buildings for non-profit seniors' groups to socialize for a minimal fee or for free.
- Provide more activities for men and for all age groups.
- Improve communication and promotion of activities and events.
- Provide more continuing learning opportunities, with potential partnership with universities and colleges.
- Ensure funding equity for community agencies and fair programming across the City of Ottawa.
- Advocate for public libraries being open on Sundays.
- Implement activities that promote health and wellness of older adults.
- Improve accessibility to entertainment venues, such as theaters.
- Advocate for the amalgamation of museum memberships for older adults.
- Advocate for the implementation of a spiritual room, for any religion, in seniors' residences.
- Provide more community oriented services to increase accessibility for older adults with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Educate the public on issues concerning aging so as to prevent ageist remarks.



8.0 Communication & Information

Proper communication and information ensures that older persons are aware of the full range of programs and services available in the community.

The public consultations allowed us to learn that older adults prefer direct and personalized channels of information and that there was a lack of awareness with respect to several City of Ottawa services among participating older adults. The survey findings indicated that respondents' most positive experiences with communication services provided by the city were the 3-1-1 phone services followed by the City of Ottawa website. On the other hand, a comparatively greater proportion of survey respondents said that their top negative experience with City of Ottawa services was the lack of diversification of means of sharing information.



8.1 Age Friendly Advantages

In the consultations, a few advantages were noted across all sessions:

- information shared in community centres, libraries and churches; and
- information phone lines and City of Ottawa website.

“I had a positive experience using the city’s 3-1-1 number to get information.”

Information shared in community centres, libraries and churches - Across all consultations sessions, older adults talked about how they appreciated information that was provided in person or on the phone as opposed to online. Human contact was thus the best avenue for participating older adults to receive and understand the information they needed. As a result, several participants said that they liked to receive information in places where they could meet other people or on the phone.

Information lines and City of Ottawa website – Many participants provided positive accounts of their experiences with 3-1-1 and City of Ottawa website services. Likewise, in the survey, a comparatively greater proportion of survey participants had positive experiences with phone services, particularly 3-1-1, which garnered 29.2% of responses. The City of Ottawa website was listed as the second most popular positive experience with communication provided by the City of Ottawa, with 12.3% of respondents' support.



8.2 Barriers to Communication & Information

The top barriers identified by consultation participants across all sessions were the following:

- lack of awareness of communication channels, especially for isolated older adults and new immigrants;
- push towards the Internet/impersonal services;
- City of Ottawa website difficult to navigate; and,
- lack of information channels targeting older adults.

“There is a lack of communication and collaboration between all kinds of services. This is complex, especially for seniors who are on their own.”

Isolation and awareness of communication channels - In the consultations, isolation was brought up on many occasions as one of the main barriers to accessing information. Since a lot of the information that older adults receive is disseminated through informal networks (children, neighbours, word of mouth, etc.), isolated older adults with little informal support were described as the group most likely to miss out on communication.

Many consultation participants were not aware of the existence of services such as 3-1-1 and 2-1-1 or any other means to get informed on what is happening in their communities or in the city.

Lack of awareness of information channels was perceived as an even bigger problem with first-generation older immigrants who did not speak either official language well. On the other hand, participants from rural areas recognized that word of mouth made things easier in smaller communities as opposed to urban settings where communities are not as tightly knit.

Push towards the Internet and impersonal services - The theme of communication and information generated discussions about technology almost everywhere. There was a general impression that as technology was gaining ground services were becoming less and less personal and thus more difficult to navigate. Automated responses on the phone, as well as the Internet, were commonly cited examples of communication avenues that did not work for a number of older adults. Accordingly, many older adults stated being concerned with government and private enterprises disseminating information solely through the Internet since some did not own or have access to a computer. In the survey, a comparatively greater proportion of participants stated that their top negative experience with City of Ottawa services was the fact that information about services was not always presented in all types of communication (Internet, phone, pamphlets, in person, etc.) (14.2% of all respondents). Survey participants also perceived a lack of information regarding services provided by the City of Ottawa (10.4%).

City of Ottawa website difficult to navigate – Some consultation participants felt that the city website was difficult to navigate, especially for older adults who lack experience and familiarity with the Internet. The website was also perceived as difficult to use because of the amount of information on the website that did not focus on issues of concern for older adults.

Lack of information channels targeting older adults – There was a perceived lack of a single point of entry for older adults to respond to all the questions that they may have regarding their own needs and city-related matters.



8.3 Suggestions for Improvement

In the consultation sessions, suggestions for improvement focused on diversifying the ways in which public officials and businesses communicate with older adults. This included:

- diversify means of communication to reach older adults; and,
- foster Internet skills through training.

Diversify means of communication to reach older adults - Consultation participants offered a variety of advice on how to better reach older adults. Informing their children, having in-person information sessions, having someone call the most isolated individuals in addition to the traditional communication channels were examples of elements to be included in a communication strategy. In addition, reaching out to active groups in municipal and community affairs within immigrant communities was mentioned as an optimal way to reach immigrants who often do not rely on mainstream information channels. Older adults identifying as GLBTQ stated they would like to have the City of Ottawa provide a list of gay-friendly activities and events aimed at older persons. In the consultation survey, a comparatively larger proportion of survey respondents (21.7%) stated that the City of Ottawa had to focus on improving communication by utilizing all forms of communication (television, phone, paper, Internet). Participants also noted that the city should compile a reference list of all available services (8.5%).

Foster Internet skills through training - Although the Internet was often negatively perceived throughout the consultation period, a number of participants said that they were Internet-savvy or that they would like to be. As a matter of fact, one service provider mentioned that older adults were the number one group of new Internet users. In other words, consultations showed that the interest for the Internet was there and that many older adults would be interested in programs aimed at teaching the use of the Internet. Several participants said that a greater knowledge of the opportunities offered by the Internet was an avenue to reduce isolation among older adults and improve overall access to information.

Key Insights

- **Typical information channels for older adults** – The consultations showed that older adults often get their information through informal networks such as friends, family and neighbours. In other words, the importance of “personalized” ways of conveying information was strongly asserted by participants.
- **Awareness of information services** – Several participants felt that 3-1-1 and 2-1-1 were useful services; however the main problem identified was that many older adults were not aware of communication and information channels mainly due to isolation.
- **Technology was perceived as both an obstacle and an opportunity** – A number of participants felt that the concentration of information on the Internet was unfair to older adults; however, many asserted that a greater effort to provide Internet and computer education would open up a whole new world of opportunities to older adults.



Ideas for Improvement Provided by Participants

- Make use of all communication channels – telephone, radio, television, pamphlets, door-to-door, the Internet, inserts in tax bills, community agencies, and outreach information sessions– not all older adults have access to a computer.
- Compile and distribute a reference list of all available City of Ottawa services and activities, including those aimed at older adults from different communities.
- Make the City of Ottawa website more user-friendly for older adults, and provide a separate section for older adults with accessible formats, larger fonts, and opportunities to provide feedback.
- Increase bilingualism in advertisements and communication; translate in other language when appropriate.
- Develop Internet and computer skills classes for older adults across Ottawa.
- Better promote the 3-1-1 and 2-1-1 telephone lines.
- Develop a phone line specifically for older adults, perhaps with a navigation function.
- Use larger font for all printed materials.
- Provide sensitivity training to phone operators.
- Institute an ombudsman to investigate issues raised by older adults.
- Partner with newspapers to offer an annual listing of older adult offerings/events, which could be sponsored by seniors' residences.
- Utilize community centers and libraries as locale for the distribution of information concerning events and activities for older adults within the Ottawa region.
- Include events for older adults in the City of Ottawa calendar.



9.0 Civic Participation & Paid/Unpaid Employment

Civic participation involves the inclusion of older persons in the community decision-making processes. Employment refers to opportunities for older persons to contribute experience and skills to the community through both paid and unpaid (volunteer) work.

Discussions across all consultation sessions as well as in the survey tended to focus on volunteering. While cost and transportation were widely perceived as salient barriers to volunteering in the public consultations, survey respondents were mostly concerned with a perceived lack in specific types of volunteering opportunities such as mentorships, and with the way these opportunities were communicated to the public.



9.1 Age Friendly Advantages

During the consultation phase, the following advantages were mentioned most often:

- the number of volunteering opportunities in the city;
- positive benefits of volunteering; and,
- importance of platforms to have their voices heard.

Number of volunteering opportunities in the city - Ottawa was perceived as a city that offers a vast array of volunteering opportunities. Many participants insisted on the fact that it was relatively easy for them to find out about opportunities available. The website of the city was mentioned several times, as well as volunteerottawa.ca as sources of information regarding volunteering opportunities. Of note, those participants who said there were a lot of volunteering opportunities in Ottawa tended to be comparatively more Internet-savvy. In the consultation survey, a comparatively larger proportion of survey participants (13.2%) stated having none or limited experiences with civic participation and employment opportunities for older adults in the city of Ottawa. For those participants who had positive experiences, they did so through their volunteering, which was tied to their participation in advisory committees (11.3% for both).

“There are plenty of opportunities for seniors to volunteer. If it wasn’t for seniors volunteering, society would stop working.”

Positive benefits of volunteering - In addition, older adults said that volunteering had positive benefits on their physical and mental health, as long as it was adapted to their capabilities and to what they were interested in. Also, volunteering was seen as a good way to feel appreciated by others and to interact with younger people. Mentorships were regarded as being gratifying,

especially for men. Participants from the Aboriginal community were especially interested in getting involved with younger people as were men compared to women.

Importance of platforms to have their voice heard - Likewise participants – and especially those most involved in volunteering – found that the opportunities offered by the City of Ottawa to have their voices heard (consultations, advisory committees, Seniors Summit, etc.) were very important. Despite a certain cynicism toward the capacity of the city to respond to their needs, participants from rural areas were particularly interested in avenues to have their voices heard.

9.2 Barriers to Civic Participation & Paid/Unpaid Employment Opportunities

Many barriers were noted by older adults and included:

- costs and transportation;
- communication issues;
- police checks and complex steps to get volunteer positions;
- the amount of work involved and the lack of interest of younger generations; and
- the lack of recognition as a volunteer and as a citizen.

“I wanted to volunteer with dying people, but I had to go through a course when all I wanted to do was hold their hand and be a presence. I don’t believe in voluntary work anymore.”

Costs and transportation - Several participants said that costs often outweighed benefits when considering volunteering. Many older adults said they just could not afford the total cost of transportation and meals outside of home on a regular basis.

Communication issues – As with other themes, communication was an often mentioned issue for older adults who were isolated and comparatively less Internet-savvy. Accordingly, the survey responses illustrate that for those participants who had negative experiences with civic participation and employment opportunities in the City of Ottawa, the top answer was poor communication in regards to the opportunities available (5.7%). When asked to provide the top priority for the City of Ottawa to act on in this area, about twelve percent (12.3%) of survey participants noted that there was a need to improve communications about opportunities that are available to older adults in volunteerism and paid/unpaid employment.

Police checks and complex steps to get volunteer positions - Another common barrier reported was the police check prior to being allowed to volunteer, as well as complicated entrance steps such as training and interviews, which discouraged many to even consider volunteering. In the survey, about six percent (5.7%) of participants mentioned that there should be increased flexibility for volunteers.

Amount of work involved and the lack of interest of younger generations - Many older adults stated that volunteering was too much work because of a general lack of volunteers in the city. Many participants believed that younger generations had lost interest in volunteering and feared for the future of community initiatives. Likewise, the perceived lack of volunteers led many to believe that there was too much of a burden on older adult volunteers in terms of the tasks to undertake in that position.



Lack of recognition as volunteer - Another common concern was related to volunteer recognition. Several participants said they were interested in volunteering and being rewarded in some way. For example, mentoring younger people or helping in an area of personal interest were often cited as the most rewarding experiences. In other words, the idea of volunteering just to do the work that others do not want to do displeased most participants. In addition, getting some financial compensation in return of services provided was seen as important by some, especially when other people were paid for doing similar tasks in the organization for which they volunteered.

Lack of recognition as citizen - Several participants said that as they entered old age, they felt that they had lost their rights as democratic citizens and that society tended not to listen to them anymore because, among other things, they were not in the workforce. Democratic empowerment was thus regarded as important for many participants – and an important priority for an age-friendly city.

9.3 Suggestions for Improvement

Suggestions for improvement advanced by consultation participants included:

- increase respect for those who do not want to volunteer;
- provide more mentorship opportunities;
- establish more community centres operated by and catering to older adults; and,
- implement democratic empowerment initiatives targeting older adults.

Increase respect for those who do not want to volunteer - In the consultations, not all participants were volunteering; many felt that they had earned respite after working for several decades and taking care of their children. Others felt that they contributed by helping their children and grandchildren. Thus, a number of participants mentioned that society should show respect to older adults who decide not to volunteer at the community level.

Provide more mentorship opportunities - Others focused more on the need for better adapted volunteer opportunities that use skills older adults have acquired during their working life. The best example of that was mentorship. In addition, many participants - and particularly the Aboriginal group - stated that they viewed volunteering as an opportunity to interact with the younger generation and a good vehicle to transmit their knowledge. In the survey, a comparatively larger proportion of participants (17.0%) stated that the City of Ottawa must create more volunteer opportunities (such as mentorships) for older adults.

Establish more community centres operated by and catering to older adults - Initiatives operated by and catering to older adults were perceived by many as an excellent way to engage and motivate older adults to participate in volunteer activities on a regular basis. Several positive examples emerged from accounts of seniors' centres entirely run by older adults.

Implement democratic empowerment initiatives targeting older adults - Many participants felt that older adults should have a more direct and permanent link to decision-makers. This way, their wisdom and experience could better serve the greater good.



Key Insights

- **Volunteering good for older adults' health and well-being** – Many consultation participants were avid volunteers and reported that personal benefits of this activity were multiple and excellent.
- **Barriers to volunteering** – Apart from a personal will to volunteer, costs (transportation, food) and perceived burdensome steps to obtain certain volunteer positions were the top barriers to getting involved.
- **Knowledge transmission best way to give back** – Across most consultation sessions, mentorships and other opportunities to interact with younger people came up as a favourite avenue to attract older adults (particularly men) into volunteer work.

Ideas for Improvement Provided by Participants

- Develop mentorship programs for older adults to share experience from their working life.
- Improve communication with older adults on what volunteer opportunities are available.
- Reduce/simplify paperwork associated with applying for volunteering opportunities.
- Establish volunteer-run model for community/seniors' centres – older adults running facilities and activities for other older adults.
- Provide incentives to volunteers, such as tax rebates, free transportation, and remuneration of expenses.
- Hold large consultation events, like the Seniors Summit, to report back and to seek additional feedback.
- Always consult with older adults when making a change to city services, such as changes to bus routes.
- Involve the City of Ottawa Advisory Committees earlier in the planning process.
- Utilize the "Seniors on Site" website (www.sosonsite.com) as a model for establishing a service to communicate with older adults concerning job prospects.
- Implement more advisory volunteering opportunities within the City of Ottawa.
- Compile a ranking system for friendliness of employers towards older adult employees.



10.0 Community Support & Health Services

Community support and health services allow older residents to be healthy, independent, and able to stay in their homes for as long as possible.

Several positive accounts of support and health service provided by community, municipal and other government agencies were shared during the consultation phase. However, the cost and availability of these services were major issues for a number of participants. Importantly, there was a general impression across the board that something had to be done with regards to making the access to home support easier for older adults in need of help.

10.1 Age Friendly Advantages

During the consultation phase, community support and health services generated a lot of comments because they are key elements in assisting, maintaining, and/or bettering the health conditions of older adults. Advantages highlighted across all groups included:



- City of Ottawa services such as immunization clinics;
- the help provided by Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) staff; and,
- services provided by community centres such as Guigues and the Centretown Community Health Centre.

“A homecare nurse provided excellent care for my mother when she was housebound, and it really liberated me.”

City of Ottawa services such as immunization clinics – Several City of Ottawa services were mentioned as positive and useful experiences across all consultation platforms. Immunization clinics during the flu season, CPR training and emergency services were generally viewed as important advantages provided by the City of Ottawa. Based on the consultation survey findings, nearly one in four respondents (24.5%) stated that their most positive experience with community support and health services provided by the City of Ottawa was with immunization clinics.

Help provided by CCAC staff - Throughout the consultations, several participants said they had had positive experiences with CCAC staff when using their services. In essence, the services per se were appreciated by participants, while the process of accessing those services and the follow-up after the end of the service provision were perceived as weaknesses in the current system.

Services provided in community centres – Many participants stressed the importance of community health centres as sources of information, support and services for older adults. For example, older adults identifying as GLBTQ stressed the importance of the Centertown Community Health Centre as a place where they could access services without feeling judged and where they could meet with other people as well.

10.2 Barriers to Community Support & Health Services

In the consultations, barriers for health and support services included:

- lack of access to and inflexibility of home support;
- cost of private services;
- lack of focus on continuum of care;
- long wait times in hospitals;
- lack of caregiver support; and,
- issues specific to certain groups

“Home care services for people with acute or chronic illnesses have been cut way back, just to the bare minimum.”

Lack of access to and inflexibility of home support - Home support was perceived as being an essential part of elder care, yet a service difficult to access due to the lack of affordable programs, stringent requirements to receive government-funded support and limited awareness of service availability. Furthermore, many participants recognized that resources were limited in the home care sector, which affected the flexibility with which care could be delivered. For instance, several participants commented on the fact that they could not go out to do certain activities because of scheduled home care visits. All these possible barriers, in addition to the perceived complexity of the home care system, meant that it was difficult for many participants who did not yet need home care to have a clear idea of what they would do the day they need support at home.

Cost of private services - Several participants used private services and were concerned about the costs involved in obtaining these services. Indeed, some private service providers who attended the consultations talked about overpricing of certain services offered as a common practice. At the same time, private services were regarded as important to support patients and caregivers because they constitute the bulk of available options outside of institutionalized care. Consequently, finding ways to offset the costs of these services was often seen as a necessity in the public consultations.

Lack of focus on the continuum of care - Upon talking about the complexity of the home care situation, many consultation participants mentioned that decision-makers had to be more creative in their approach to home care services. Commonly mentioned suggestions included using public-private mixes of services, developing a better patient follow-up system, providing in-home fall prevention programs and working closely with patients and families. As one service provider mentioned in one of the sessions, more work has to be done to make sure that support and care services are delivered to older adults in need. The lack of organization of community support and health services received the greatest proportion of dissatisfaction among survey participants (9.4%). Participants also noted the lack of financing and difficulty in qualifying for some of the



services as a barrier (6.6%). This issue was tied with the lack of communication between service providers and older adults (6.6%).

Long wait times in hospitals - There was a general impression that hospitals were short of staff and that long waits in the emergency room were not uncommon when going to the hospital. Several participants said that an effective home care system would prevent them from going to the hospital unnecessarily.

Lack of support for caregivers – During the consultation phase, several participants felt that informal caregivers (spouses, children, friends) did not have sufficient support from the municipality and governments. A variety of stories were told by participating older adults on the hardship associated with caring for a loved one. For example, one survey respondent explained, over the phone, how the lack of support towards her work with her spouse who had dementia led her into a depression and eventually to give up on her job. Likewise, a participant in the consultation with older adults with disabilities said that her health was steadily declining because she had to take care of her husband at home without sufficient support.

Issues related to certain groups - Many participants said that isolation was the number one factor for having unmet needs at home. Isolation was a prominent factor heard in targeted group sessions. Older adults from multicultural communities expressed the need to receive information regarding home care services through their own communities and to be able to talk about their needs in their own language. Older adults with disabilities said that they required their friends and families to help with accessing the support and care services needed; without having a person bridging with service providers, access was perceived to be very difficult. Furthermore, rural older adults were concerned about a perceived lack of services in their areas and felt isolated compared to city residents. Likewise, Francophones – especially those from West Ottawa – felt that there were very few options for home care and medical services provided in French.

10.3 Suggestions for Improvement

Top suggestions for improvement included:

- provide more help for caregivers;
- emphasize prevention;
- emphasize coordination of services and access; and,
- improve communication to various groups of isolated older adults.

Provide more help for caregivers – During the consultation phase, a noticeable number of participants stressed the need to enhance support for caregivers. Many participants explained the heavy burden that caring for a spouse or family member afflicted with chronic disease brought upon their shoulders. They asked for more home support, respite care and better follow-up of their situation.

Emphasize prevention - Programs assessing the risks related to staying at home were often mentioned as a good preventative measure for older adults – and especially for those living alone in their home. Several participating older adults wished there were easily-accessible programs to implement risk assessments before it is too late.



Emphasize coordination of services and access - In terms of home care services, a greater emphasis on access to and coordination of services came up in many sessions. Members of the business community, service providers as well as gerontology experts said that there was a great need to better coordinate elder care services so that every older adult receives the appropriate continuum of care services. Accordingly, a comparatively greater proportion of survey respondents (22.6%) were concerned with home support as they viewed this issue as the City of Ottawa's top priority in the area of community support and health services. The second greatest proportion of survey participants indicated that there was a need to improve communication between service providers and older adults (10.4%).

Improve communication to various groups of isolated older adults - A better communication strategy targeting isolated older adults was also stressed in several consultation sessions. In-person or phone Q&As about health related issues were seen as ways of reducing health risks among isolated and frail older adults. Furthermore, a better understanding of certain groups' needs in home care and community services was mentioned several times. For example, participants from the Aboriginal community cited that there was a significant lack of communication between service providers and older adults, and that natural healers were not covered as an option for health services. Members of multicultural communities mentioned the cultural barrier that they encountered when expressing their needs to staff at home or in community clinics constituted an important issue for them.

Key Insights

- **Older adults generally like community services** – Community clinics and community centres were appreciated by many older adults at the consultations. Likewise, several positive experiences were reported with respect to home support and care provided by the community and government-funded services. City of Ottawa services such as immunization clinics, CPR training and emergency services were generally appreciated by participants.
- **The lack of service coordination is at the heart of the problem** – Many consultation participants stressed the need for a concerted strategy to create a single point of access to obtain support and care at home while considering each patient's situation and the capacity of informal caregivers to provide care.
- **Improved communication is a first step** – Communication was deemed crucial by participants to ensure that all older adults know where to receive the care they need. Isolated older adults and new immigrants were particularly targeted as older adults who were more likely to miss out on relevant health information.



Ideas for Improvement Provided by Participants

- The City of Ottawa could act as a resource for information on options for caregivers in need of help; the information often needed relates to respite care, financial help and subsidies, retrofitting of the house and long-term care options.
- Alleviate the “silo” structure of elder care by making sure that older adults receive the continuum of care they need across community, municipally- and provincially-funded health services.
- Provide early assessment of older adults’ health and home support needs especially when they live alone in their home.
- Create a program aiming at reaching out to isolated older adults, particularly in rural areas and in multicultural communities. Even regular phone calls to answer questions about the healthcare system, or any other health-related concern could make a major difference for the more isolated and frail older adults.
- Better address specific needs of older adults belonging to multicultural communities and Aboriginal communities, such as the provision of traditional Native healers.
- Utilize pharmacies as a locale for the distribution of information of both public and private health services available to older adults.
- Increase services in rural areas.
- Conduct a study on elder abuse to educate both the older adult and the young adult population.
- Advocate for the creation of an emergency response team assigned specifically to older adults.



11.0 Public Safety & Security

Older people need to feel safe in their communities and homes in order to actively participate in society. Some examples of City services and responsibilities related to public safety and security include: by law services, fire services, and crime prevention.

While this theme was only included in the consultation survey and the Seniors Summit at City Hall, many comments heard in the other consultations touched on the topic of public safety and security. Generally, participants felt that Ottawa was a safe city and that the police and emergency services were responsive. However, several older adults stressed the need to improve security at night, put more emphasis on preventative services and install more lights outside.



11.1 Age Friendly Advantages

The most common advantages cited by consultation participants were the following:

- Ottawa is a safe city;
- safety and security services are responsive; and,
- several voluntary programs help older adults feel safe.

Ottawa is a safe city – Across all consultation platforms, a noticeable proportion of older adults mentioned without being prompted to do so that Ottawa was a safe city compared to Montreal and Toronto. Many equated the size of the city and its tighter community feel with a greater feeling of safety. Of note, nearly one in two consultation survey respondents (48.1%) did not provide any answer to that section, which may indicate that there were no salient issues to report on safety and security for a good number of participating older adults. Furthermore, almost one in five survey respondents (17.0%) did not have a negative experience with public safety and security services.

Safety and security services are responsive – Many consultation participants stressed that they had had positive experiences with emergency services. According to consultation survey respondents, the responsiveness of emergency services was the top positive experience associated with public safety and security services provided by the City of Ottawa (13.2%). This was followed by the presence of the police when needed (8.5%) and good prevention (6.6%).

Several voluntary programs help feeling safe - At the Seniors Summit and in other consultations, participants also mentioned voluntary programs such as the bike patrol as well as emergency preparedness programs like “Are You Ready?” as age-friendly advantages in this area.

11.2 Barriers to Public Safety and Security

The most commonly-cited barriers were the following:

- poor lighting in parks, parking lots, streets and around buildings;
- insufficient prevention measures in houses and buildings;
- risks related to elder abuse; and
- slow response and perceived negative attitude of emergency services.

Poor lighting in parks, parking lots, streets and around buildings – Many older adults felt that the biggest problem related to safety and security was the lack of proper lighting equipment outside. Several participants said that they were afraid to go out at night – and especially of walking through parks – because of the poor lighting. Likewise, low-income older adults pleaded for more lights around their city-funded apartment buildings.

Insufficient prevention measures in houses and buildings – Throughout the public consultations, a number of older adults mentioned that the house in which they lived was not adapted to emergency situations such as a fire. For some, there was a perceived lack of inspections and preventative services customized to the particular challenges faced by older residents.

Risks related to elder abuse – Although not widely perceived as a prominent issue in Ottawa by many, elder abuse was still part of several discussions touching on safety and security across consultations. Noticeably, many participants were concerned by the lack of recourse for older people feeling abused – particularly when receiving services in the private sector. Service providers mentioned that, sometimes, the fee structure in the private delivery of services (especially in private housing) was a form of elder abuse. Indeed, the perceived lack of regulation and surveillance with respect to fees in the private elder care sector was seen as something many providers were taking advantage of.

Slow response and perceived negative attitude of emergency services – A minority of consultation participants expressed a lack of trust towards emergency services. In the consultation survey, slow response from emergency services (7.5%), and the perceived behaviour of the police (4.7%) were mentioned by less than ten percent of respondents as a barrier.

11.3 Suggestions for Improvement

Common ideas for improvement in the area of safety and security included:

- improve lighting where needed;
- increase surveillance in certain areas of Ottawa;



- put more emphasis on preventative services; and,
- better enforce the rules of the road.

Improve lighting where needed - Improving lighting in parks, roads, bus stops, parking lots and around buildings was viewed by many as an important element to make older people feel safer when outside of the home. Of note, better street lighting was also mentioned by a number of consultation survey respondents as a priority for the City of Ottawa (7.5%).

Increase surveillance in certain areas of Ottawa – Many older adult participants stressed the need for more surveillance on the streets as well as around the entrances of retirement residences. Survey respondents' top unprompted answer when asked to provide a priority for the City of Ottawa to take on in the area of safety and security was to address crime/safety issues (10.4%).

Put more emphasis on preventative services - Prevention services were generally regarded as important and several participants stressed the need to have more frequent and consistent programs aiming at making sure older adults live in a safe environment (especially in terms of fire and crime prevention). Ten percent (10.4%) of survey participants said that better prevention and communication should be the top priority for the City of Ottawa to take on.

Better enforce the rules of the road – An important issue that was widely viewed as needing to be addressed was the perceived lack of enforcement of the rules of the roads – especially at busy intersections. Several participating older adults felt that a more visible presence of the authorities would dissuade drivers or cyclists from stepping outside their legal boundaries and put pedestrians' lives in danger.



Key Insights

- **Older adults feel safe in Ottawa** – Overall participants felt that Ottawa was a safe city for older adults, and that emergency services were responsive.
- **Rules of the road should be more visibly enforced** – Many consultation participants stated that they feared intersection crossings and sidewalks because of the behaviour of drivers and cyclists.
- **Outdoor lighting** – Street lighting was a prominent factor for feeling safe at night in parks, parking lots and on the street.

Ideas for Improvement Provided by Participants

- Ensure the streets, parks, bus stops and parking lots are well-lit at night.
- Reinforce surveillance at intersections and enforce rules of the roads.
- Be more proactive on fire prevention in older adults' homes and retirement residences.
- Make sure that social housing residences are safe; for example, ensuring that entrances are well locked and equipped with cameras.
- Encourage and support voluntary safety organizations such as neighbourhood watch groups.



12.0 General Impressions

This section differs from the preceding ones in that it reports on participating older adults' general impressions of City of Ottawa services (asked in the consultation survey) and, more generally, on participants' satisfaction scores with all eight WHO themes (asked in the mainstream older adult consultations). We learn that the most positive experiences with City of Ottawa services related to community centres and recreational activities, while public transportation and outdoor maintenance were the most commonly-cited negative experiences. Drivers of satisfaction in Ottawa were social participation as well as respect and social inclusion, while a clear driver of dissatisfaction was housing.

12.1 Most Positive & Negative Experiences with City Services

What is the most positive experience you have had with services provided by the City of Ottawa? What is the most negative experience you have had with services provided the City of Ottawa?

For about one in six survey respondents (17.0%), community centres and recreational activities were the most positive experience associated with City services, followed by transportation (14.2%), public libraries (12.3%), health services (11.3%) and responsiveness of public officials and City staff (9.4%).

However, when looking at the unprompted responses of survey participants in terms of the most negative experience with City services, transportation came in first place (15.1%) closely followed by maintenance (14.2%), communication between City officials and citizens (10.4%), and conditions of roads (10.4%).

Apart from the library services, the top five positive experiences with City of Ottawa services were also found in the question concerning negative experiences. This indicates the extent to which there is a variety of needs and expectations regarding City of Ottawa services among older adults in Ottawa.



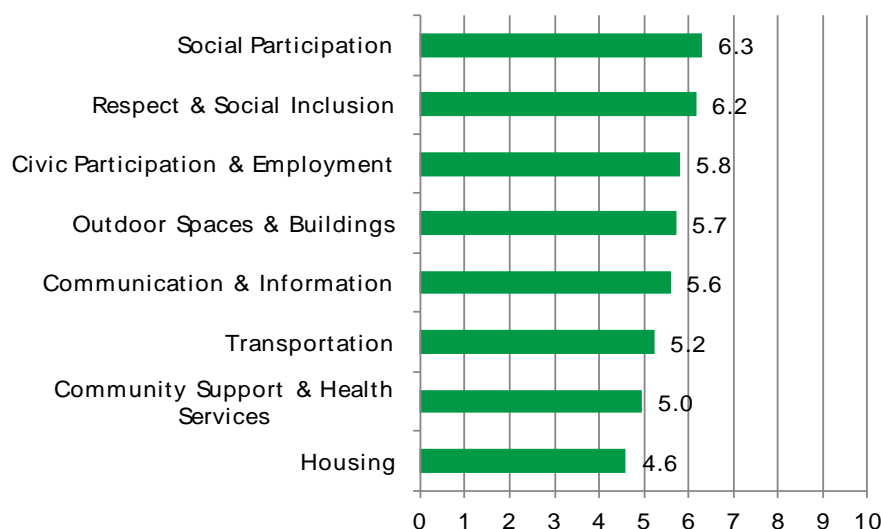
On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all satisfied and 10 is very satisfied, as an older adult how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the services provided by the City of Ottawa?

Additionally, older adults participating in the consultation survey were asked to rate their satisfaction with all services provided by the City of Ottawa on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all satisfied and 10 very satisfied. Respondents gave an overall mean score of 5.7 out of 10. About sixteen percent (16.0%) rated their satisfaction as an 8, 9 or 10 while almost six in ten respondents (57.5%) gave middling scores (4,5,6 or 7). One in ten participants scored their satisfaction as very low (1,2 or 3).

12.2 General Satisfaction with Each Theme

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all satisfied and 10 is very satisfied, please rate your overall satisfaction with each of the following:

These questions were only asked in the consultations conducted among mainstream older adults. Displayed in the chart below are the mean scores (n=100) based on a ten-point scale for each theme.



As the above chart illustrates, social participation and respect & social inclusion were given comparatively higher mean satisfaction scores by older adults participating in mainstream public consultations. This means that drivers of satisfaction had to do with life within the community – being able to take part in social activities as well as feeling respected and included. Conversely, drivers of lower satisfaction scores were related to practical aspects of the daily life of older adults: housing, community support and health services and transportation had comparatively lower mean scores.

The summary mean score for all these themes is 5.5 out of 10 and is very close to the overall City of Ottawa services satisfaction mean score of 5.7 reported in the consultation survey. This illustrates that there is room for improvement as exemplified in the minority of survey respondents who rated themselves as very satisfied with City of Ottawa services (16.0% of all consultation



survey respondents). The mean satisfaction scores provide an indication that the City of Ottawa could potentially prioritize improvements in the housing, community support & services and transportation sectors.

It is important to note that, while the communication & information category in itself was not given the lowest satisfaction score by participants, it remained the most pervasive issue across all themes as lack of information or resources to get the information needed was mentioned in relation to both housing and community support and health services in all consultations.

Key Insights

- **Services enhancing social participation provide best experience** – On the one hand, community centres, recreational services and public libraries were the City of Ottawa services with which older adults were most likely to have had the most positive experiences. On the other hand, participating older adults were divided over whether transportation, maintenance of outdoor spaces and communication provided positive or negative experiences. The public consultations highlighted that experience with City of Ottawa services was heavily dependent on participants' location, level of income and health, which explains these mixed findings. Thus, a key learning from this is the importance to recognize the wide variety of needs and personal barriers among the older adult population that uses City of Ottawa services.
- **Overall satisfaction driven by social participation and pushed down by housing and elder care services** – In terms of overall satisfaction with City of Ottawa services, there is room for improvement as illustrated by the minority of older adults who said they were very satisfied overall. Additionally, WHO theme satisfaction scores were comparatively higher for participation and inclusion, and lower for practical and supportive services. This possibly means that participating older adults would especially like to see improvement in the housing and health/community services sectors.
- **Communication is a pervasive issue** – Despite the fact that communication and information was given a middling mean satisfaction score by consultation participants, it is important to note that there was a general impression among participating older adults that communication was not always adapted to the needs of older people.



APPENDIX A

Methodology



The City of Ottawa retained Nanos Research to conduct qualitative research as part of the engagement and consultation phase of the City's Older Adult Plan. The following is a summary report of all the opinions shared during the consultations. The project had two tracks: (1) in-person consultations that addressed concerns with the age-friendliness of participants' surrounding environment in general, and (2) multimodal surveys (online, telephone, paper) that addressed concerns with the age-friendliness of City of Ottawa services.

Track 1

Between October 12th and December 2nd, 2011 a total of 24 consultation sessions were conducted in partnership between Nanos, the City of Ottawa and Age-Friendly Ottawa. Nanos Research facilitated and provided note-taking at the nine public consultations held by the City, and which took place in Carp, Greely, Navan, Orleans, Gloucester and the West Ottawa area. Two of these consultations were held in French, while the others were conducted in English. A total of 124 participants participated in these consultations.

In addition, 15 consultation sessions were conducted by Age-Friendly Ottawa. Nanos Research provided note-taking for all of the consultations. These sessions were conducted to have input from older adults with a variety of specific characteristics, which included the following:

- Older Seniors (75 years of age or older) – 1 session
- Special Needs (physical, psychiatric, intellectual disabilities with caregivers) – 1 session
- Aboriginal – 1 session
- GLBTQ – 1 session
- Low Income – 1 session
- Francophones – 2 sessions (one low income, one ethnic and cultural communities)
- Ethnic and Cultural Communities - 1 session
- Service Providers – 2 sessions
- Caregivers – 1 session
- Business community – 1 session
- Isolated older adults – 2 sessions
- Geriatric Experts – 1 session

Approximately 159 older adults and other stakeholders participated in the targeted consultations. Additionally, about 240 older adults and other stakeholders provided their opinions at the Mayor' Seniors Summit and at consultations with the Seniors Advisory Committee (facilitated by the City), as well as at the special Kanata session facilitated by the Kanata Seniors Council. The same questionnaire, modeled on that developed by the World Health Organization, was applied to all consultations.

Track 2



In order to reach the greatest number of older adults possible, Nanos and the City of Ottawa created an online survey that drew on the same themes as the consultations, but that emphasized impressions of City services. Participants also had the option to fill out paper surveys and do the survey over the phone with a Nanos analyst. A total of 106 Ottawa older adults took part in the multimodal survey.

Please note that the older adults who participated in all phases of the consultation are not a representative sample of the older-adult population in Ottawa because they were not randomly selected.

This report includes an executive summary based on the survey findings. This research project was completed in accordance with the standards of and registered with the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association of which Nanos is a Corporate Gold Seal Member.



APPENDIX B

Questionnaire & Moderator's Guide



Public Consultations - Moderator's Guide

Topics and Open Questions	Prompts
<p>WARM-UP QUESTION</p> <p>What is it like to live in Ottawa as an older person?</p>	<p>Ask about...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good features? • Problems?
<p style="text-align: center;">Topic 1. OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS</p> <p>Let's talk about outdoor spaces and buildings... I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements</p> <p>What is it like to step outside of your home to go for a walk to get fresh air, run errands or visit?</p> <p>What is it like to go into buildings, such as public offices or stores?</p>	<p>Ask about...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design and maintenance of • sidewalks and curbs? • street intersections and crosswalks? • traffic volume, noise? • particular times of day, like night time? • weather conditions? • green spaces? walking areas? • street lighting? • protection from sun, rain or wind? • benches, rest areas? • sense of physical safety? • sense of security from criminal victimization? • In buildings: stairs, doors, lift devices, corridors, floors, lighting, signage, doors, toilets, rest areas
<p style="text-align: center;">Topic 2. TRANSPORTATION</p> <p>The next area is transportation in your community. I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.</p> <p>Describe your experience using public transportation – bus, para-transpo, taxi etc. in your community.</p> <p>What is it like to drive in your community? travel?</p>	<p>Ask about...</p> <p>Are public buses, trams or subway trains...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable? • Easy to get to? • Easy to board? • Frequent enough when you want to • On time? • Extensive routes to go wherever one wants? • Waiting areas and stops with benches, lighting, protection from the elements? • Secure from crime? • Adapted transportation for disabled persons? <p>For drivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legible street signs • Legible street numbers • Lighting at intersections • Easy to understand traffic signals • Sufficient and close parking • Handicapped reserved parking • Drop off and pick up allowance



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver refresher courses
<p style="text-align: center;">Topic 3. HOUSING</p> <p>Housing is the next topic we will cover. I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements:</p> <p>Tell me about the house or the apartment where you live.</p> <p>If your needs change, what are your choices for housing in the community?</p>	<p>Ask about...</p> <p>Acceptability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost? • Comfort? • Physically safe? • Security from crime? • Proximity to services? <p>Mobility and independence in the home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • move about easily? • Reach and store things easily? • do housework and chores?
<p style="text-align: center;">Topic 4. RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION</p> <p>The next area deals with how the community shows respect for, and includes older people.</p> <p>I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.</p> <p>In what ways does your community show, or not show, respect for you as an older person?</p> <p>In what ways does your community include, or not include you as an older person in activities and events?</p>	<p>Ask about...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politeness? • Listening? • Helpfulness? • Responsiveness to needs in services and programmes? • Consultation? • Choices offered? • Public recognition of the contributions of older people? • Intergenerational activities?
<p style="text-align: center;">Topic 5. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION</p> <p>Let's now talk about social and leisure activities...</p> <p>I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.</p> <p>How easily can you socialize in your community?</p>	<p>Ask about...</p> <p>Are social and leisure activities...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable? • Accessible? • Frequent? • Convenient location? • Convenient times? • Offer choices? • Interesting?



<p>Tell me about your participation in other activities, like education, culture, recreation, or spiritual activities?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Topic 6. COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION</p> <p>The following topic we will explore deals with information. Again, I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.</p> <p>What is your experience getting the information you need in your community, for example, about services or events? This can be information you get by telephone, radio, TV, in print, or in person.</p>	<p>Ask about...</p> <p>Is information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible? • Useful? • Timely? • Easy to understand? • Difficulties with automated systems, print format and size?
<p style="text-align: center;">Topic 7. CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT</p> <p>I want to know about your experiences doing volunteer or paid work, and about your participation in public affairs. I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.</p> <p>Tell me about your participation in volunteer work?</p> <p>Tell me about your participation in paid work, if you are employed now or if you are looking for paid work?</p> <p>Tell me about your participation in public community affairs, like community associations or municipal councils?</p>	<p>Ask about...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of information about opportunities • Accessible opportunities • Variety of opportunities • Attractiveness • Recognition provided • Remuneration (paid work) • Adjustment to older persons' abilities • Adjustment to older persons' preferences • Ways used to motivate older persons' participation
<p style="text-align: center;">Topic 8. COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND HEALTH SERVICES</p> <p>I want to know more about the health and</p>	<p>Ask about...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of services available • Accessibility • Affordability



<p>social services in your community that help older people living at home.</p> <p>I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.</p> <p>What is your experience with the services in the community to help older persons?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsiveness of services to individual needs
<p style="text-align: center;">WRAP-UP QUESTION</p> <p>Before we finish, are there any other issues or areas we haven't discussed that you want to raise?</p>	<p>No prompts.</p>

Consultation Survey Questionnaire

The City of Ottawa is currently in the process of developing an Older Adult Plan with the goal to effectively serve and be responsive to the needs of older adults now and in the future.



During the months of October and November, the City of Ottawa wants to hear about your experiences and ideas for improving City services. Your input will be used to inform and shape the development of the City's Older Adult Plan.

The purpose of this survey is to collect your input on eight categories of services provided by the City of Ottawa. These categories are as follows:

- Module 1: Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings
- Module 2: Transportation
- Module 3: Housing
- Module 4: Public Safety and Security
- Module 5: Social Participation
- Module 6: Communication & Information
- Module 7: Civic Participation & Employment
- Module 8: Community Support & Health Services

You are welcome to share your views on all or some of these eight categories that comprise this consultation survey. Please note that your views will remain confidential. Thank you for participating in this very important initiative.

Overall Views

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all satisfied and 10 is very satisfied, as an older adult how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the services provided by the City of Ottawa?

Please circle the number that corresponds with your views.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all									Very
Satisfied									Satisfied

2. What is the most **positive** experience you have had with services provided by the City of Ottawa?



3. What is the most **negative** experience you have had with services provided the city of Ottawa?

An age-friendly city is one that adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.

4. In your opinion, what would the perfect age-friendly city look like?

Module 1 – Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Outdoor spaces and buildings refer to the natural and built environment that is all around us. Some examples of City services and responsibilities related to outdoor spaces and buildings include: City-owned buildings, roads and sidewalks, pedestrian walkways and cycling paths, street intersections, community design, and parks.

5. What is your top **positive** experience, if any, with outdoor spaces and buildings in the city of Ottawa?

6. What is your top **negative** experience, if any, with outdoor spaces and buildings in the city of Ottawa?



7. In the area of outdoor spaces and buildings, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority?

Module 2 – Transportation

Transportation allows us to travel where we want or need to in the community, whether by car, bus, taxis, licenses, bike, even by foot. Some examples of City services and responsibilities related to transportation include: public transport (OC Transpo), specialized transport service (Para Transpo), accessible taxis licenses, street signage, and parking (municipal lots, meters, enforcement).

8. What is your top **positive** experience, if any, with the overall transportation services provided by the City of Ottawa?

9. What is your top **negative** experience, if any, with the overall transportation services provided by the City of Ottawa?



10. In the area of transportation what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority?

Module 3 – Housing

Having a place to call home is a fundamental necessity and there is a variety of options open to older persons like houses, condominiums, apartments, shared accommodations, and nursing homes. Some examples of City services and responsibilities related to housing include: a property tax deferral program, supportive housing for vulnerable persons, development of affordable housing units, social housing, and four long-term care homes.

11. What is your top **positive** experience, if any, with housing-related services provided by the City of Ottawa?

12. What is your top **negative** experience, if any, with housing-related services provided by the City of Ottawa?



13. In the area of housing, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority?

Module 4 – Public Safety and Security

Older people need to feel safe in their communities and homes in order to actively participate in society. Some examples of City services and responsibilities related public safety and security include: by law services, fire services and crime prevention.

14. What is your top **positive** experience, if any, with public safety and security services provided by the City of Ottawa?

15. What is your top **negative** experience, if any, with public safety and security services provided by the City of Ottawa?



16. In the area of Public Safety and Security, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority?

Module 5- Social Participation

Social participation includes opportunities for developing and maintaining meaningful social networks and recreational opportunities within the community. Some examples of City services related to social participation include: four seniors' centres, libraries, museums, theatres, and a variety of recreational, cultural, and arts programs.

17. What is your top **positive** experience, if any, with services related to social participation that are provided by the City of Ottawa?



18. What is your top **negative** experience, if any, with services related to social participation that are provided by the City of Ottawa?

19. In the area of social participation, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority?



Module 6 – Communication and Information

Proper communication and information ensures that older persons are aware of the full range of programs and services available in the community. Some examples of City services related to communication and information include: client service centres, 3-1-1 and other information or phone lines and the City of Ottawa web site.

20. What is your top **positive** experience, if any, with communication and information provided by the City of Ottawa?

21. What is your top **negative** experience, if any, with communication and information provided by the City of Ottawa?



22. In the area of communication and information, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority?

Module 7 – Civic Participation and Employment

Civic participation involves the inclusion of older persons in community decision-making processes. Employment refers to opportunities for older residents to contribute experience and skills to the community through both paid and unpaid (volunteer) work. Some examples of City services related to civic participation and employment include: advisory committees, volunteer opportunities across City departments and community consultations.

23. What is your top **positive** experience, if any, with civic participation and employment opportunities for older adults in the city of Ottawa?



24. What is your top **negative** experience, if any, with civic participation and employment opportunities for older adults in the city of Ottawa?

25. In the area of civic participation and employment, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority?

Module 8 – Community Support and Health Services

Community support and health services allow older residents to be healthy, independent, and able to stay in their homes for as long as possible. Some examples of City services related to community support and health services include: home support services for older persons on low



income; financial assistance programs; a snow removal program (Snow Go); paramedic services, immunization clinics and fall prevention programs.

26. What is your top **positive** experience, if any, with community support and health services provided by the City of Ottawa?

27. What is your top **negative** experience, if any, with community support and health services provided by the City of Ottawa?



28. In the area of community support and health services, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority?

Respect & Social Inclusion

29. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is no respect at all and 10 is a lot of respect, please rate the level of respect that is shown to older adults when interacting with or accessing City services. Please circle the number that corresponds with your views.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No respect at all									A lot of respect

30. Why do you have that opinion?



36. Please specify your present occupation or, if retired, major pre-retirement occupation:

37. Your judgment of your current health: Please select the appropriate response.

- Excellent []
- Good []
- Fair []
- Poor []

38. Which of the following is the highest level of education you have achieved? Please select the appropriate response.

- Primary school..... []
- Secondary School []
- College or university..... []

39. Do you rent, or own the home where you live? Please select the appropriate response.

- Rent []
- Own []
- Other..... []

40. Who lives in your home with you, if applicable? Please select the appropriate response.

- No one else but me []
- Spouse or partner..... []
- Children living in your home with you []
- Other relatives living in your home with you..... []
- Non-relatives living in your home with you []

41. Please indicate the neighbourhood in which you live: _____

42. Please indicate in the appropriate section, what your annual income is before tax.

A) If you are single, what is your annual income before tax? Please check the appropriate box:

- Less than \$15,000 []
- Between \$15,001 and \$22,229 []
- Between \$22,230 and \$41,545 []
- Between \$41,546 and \$83,088 []
- Over \$83,089..... []

B) If you are not single, what is your annual family income before tax? Please check the appropriate box:

- Less than \$15,000 []
- Between \$15,001 and \$22,229..... []
- Between \$22,230 and \$41,545..... []
- Between \$41,546 and \$83,088..... []
- Over \$83,089..... []

43. What language, other than English do you speak in your household? (Select all that apply)

- French []
- Italian []
- Spanish..... []
- Portuguese []
- Ukrainian []



Arabic[]
Polish.....[]
Chinese[]
Punjabi.....[]
Somali.....[]
German.....[]
Greek.....[]
Other.....] Please specify: _____

Thank you very much for your time. Please log on www.Ottawa.ca/seniors for news and updates related to the public consultations.

APPENDIX C

Demographic Summaries



Mainstream Public Consultations*

AGE	n=124
Under 50	3
50-59	13
60-69	59
70+	49
GENDER	n=124
Male	29
Female	95
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	n=123
Retired	110
Not retired	13
EDUCATION	n=123
Primary School	7
Secondary School	27
College/University	89
HOUSING	n=123
Rent	20
Own	98
Other	5
WHO LIVES THERE	n=118
Alone	40
More than 1	78
ANNUAL INCOME	n=93
Less than \$15,000	6
\$15,001-\$22,229	9
\$22,230-\$41,545	24
\$41,546-\$83,088	33
\$83,089+	21

**Note: These figures represent a compilation of the data that was submitted by participants only. Additionally, these figures and demographic characteristics do not constitute a representative sample of the older population of Ottawa.*



Targeted Consultation Sessions*

AGE	n=128
Under 50	16
50-59	9
60-69	36
70+	67
GENDER	n=129
Male	40
Female	88
Other	1
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	n=94
Retired	88
Not retired	6
EDUCATION	n=85
Primary School	4
Secondary School	27
College/University	54
HOUSING	n=93
Rent	55
Own	38
Other	0
WHO LIVES THERE	n=89
Alone	50
More than 1	39
ANNUAL INCOME	n=94
Less than \$15,000	19
\$15,001-\$22,229	26
\$22,230-\$41,545	24
\$41,546-\$83,088	19
\$83,089+	6

**Note: These figures represent a compilation of the data that was submitted by participants only. Additionally, these figures and demographic characteristics do not constitute a representative sample of the older population of Ottawa.*



Consultation Surveys*

AGE	n=106
Under 50	0
50-59	16
60-69	53
70+	32
Refuse	5
GENDER	n=106
Male	27
Female	79
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	n=106
Retired	67
Not retired	38
Refuse	1
EDUCATION	n=106
Primary School	2
Secondary School	11
College/University	93
HOUSING	n=106
Rent	18
Own	84
Other	4
WHO LIVES THERE	n=106
Alone	37
More than 1	64
Refuse	5
ANNUAL INCOME	n=106
Less than \$15,000	3
\$15,001-\$22,229	7
\$22,230-\$41,545	16
\$41,546-\$83,088	24
\$83,089+	22
Refuse	34

**Note: These figures represent a compilation of the data that was submitted by participants only. Additionally, these figures and demographic characteristics do not constitute a representative sample of the older population of Ottawa.*



APPENDIX D

Statistical Tables – Consultation Survey



Exhibit 1: In your opinion, what would the perfect age-friendly city look like? [Open-ended] (n=106)

	Responses	
	n=number of mentions	Percent
City-wide accessibility	44	32.4%
Improved transportation services	28	20.6%
Social inclusion	17	12.5%
Affordability for senior citizens	12	8.8%
Improved cleanliness and city maintenance	11	8.1%
Other	11	8.1%
Improved information services	4	2.9%
No suggestions	4	2.9%
Safety and security	3	2.2%
Unsure	2	1.5%
Total	136	100.0%

Exhibit 2: What is the most positive experience you have had with services provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent ⁴	Cumulative Percent
Community centres and recreational activities	18	17.0	18.8	18.8
Transportation services	15	14.2	15.6	34.4
Library services	13	12.3	13.5	47.9
Health services	12	11.3	12.5	60.4
Knowledgeability/responsiveness of public officials & City staff	10	9.4	10.4	70.8
Maintenance services (garbage, snow removal, etc)	9	8.5	9.4	80.2
Outdoor spaces	7	6.6	7.3	87.5
Nothing	5	4.7	5.2	92.7
Other	5	4.7	5.2	97.9
Unsure	2	1.9	2.1	100.0
Total	96	90.6	100.0	
No answer	10	9.4		
Total	106	100.0		

⁴ "Valid Percent" is the percentage of responses based on the number of respondents who provided an answer to that question, while "Percent" is based on the total number of survey respondents, whether they answered that particular question or not.



Exhibit 3: What is the most negative experience you have had with services provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Transportation services	16	15.1	16.8	16.8
Maintenance services	15	14.2	15.8	32.6
Poor communication between citizens and City officials	11	10.4	11.6	44.2
Condition of roads/traffic	11	10.4	11.6	55.8
Recreation centres	8	7.5	8.4	64.2
Nothing	7	6.6	7.4	71.6
Information services	7	6.6	7.4	78.9
Other	7	6.6	7.4	86.3
Care services	6	5.7	6.3	92.6
Parking	5	4.7	5.3	97.9
Unsure	2	1.9	2.1	100.0
Total	95	89.6	100.0	
No answer	11	10.4		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 4: What is your top positive experience, if any, with outdoor spaces and buildings in the city of Ottawa?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bike/walking paths	24	22.6	28.6	28.6
Accessibility	15	14.2	17.9	46.4
Cleanliness/maintenance of outdoor spaces	11	10.4	13.1	59.5
Other	8	7.5	9.5	69.0
Number of parks and outdoor green spaces	7	6.6	8.3	77.4
Sports and recreational facilities	7	6.6	8.3	85.7
None	6	5.7	7.1	92.9
Canal	3	2.8	3.6	96.4
Unsure	2	1.9	2.4	98.8
Malls	1	.9	1.2	100.0
Total	84	79.2	100.0	
No answer	22	20.8		
Total	106	100.0		



Exhibit 5: What is your top negative experience, if any, with outdoor spaces and buildings in the city of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sidewalks in bad condition/not enough	15	14.2	17.2	17.2
Public buildings hard to access for older adults	12	11.3	13.8	31.0
Parks are unsafe/poorly maintained/too few	11	10.4	12.6	43.7
Unsafe bicycle paths/bikes and wheelchairs sharing road with traffic	10	9.4	11.5	55.2
Other	10	9.4	11.5	66.7
Reduced pedestrian/wheelchair access in winter	9	8.5	10.3	77.0
Nothing	7	6.6	8.0	85.1
Lack of affordable/handicapped/long-term parking	6	5.7	6.9	92.0
Not enough benches on the side of road	2	1.9	2.3	94.3
Not enough public washrooms	2	1.9	2.3	96.6
Unsure	2	1.9	2.3	98.9
Dimly lit streets	1	.9	1.1	100.0
Total	87	82.1	100.0	
No answer	19	17.9		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 6: In the area of outdoor spaces and buildings, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Better maintenance of sidewalks/pathways/parks	22	20.8	25.9	25.9
Enhance accessibility to buildings and outdoor spaces	16	15.1	18.8	44.7
Overall design of the city/green spaces	12	11.3	14.1	58.8
More benches, washrooms, to make outdoor activities easier	12	11.3	14.1	72.9
Safety	6	5.7	7.1	80.0
Snow removal	4	3.8	4.7	84.7
More social/community activities	3	2.8	3.5	88.2
Cleanliness	3	2.8	3.5	91.8
Access to housing	3	2.8	3.5	95.3
Other	3	2.8	3.5	98.8
Unsure	1	.9	1.2	100.0
Total	85	80.2	100.0	



No answer	21	19.8
Total	106	100.0

Exhibit 7: What is your top positive experience, if any, with the overall transportation services provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
I don't use/no longer use public transportation	21	19.8	26.9	26.9
OC Transpo routes/frequencies work well	20	18.9	25.6	52.6
Accessibility to buses	15	14.2	19.2	71.8
Taxis/taxi chits	5	4.7	6.4	78.2
Other	5	4.7	6.4	84.6
Para Transpo is good	4	3.8	5.1	89.7
Drivers	4	3.8	5.1	94.9
Nothing	2	1.9	2.6	97.4
Like new meters	2	1.9	2.6	100.0
Total	78	73.6	100.0	
No answer	28	26.4		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 8: What is your top negative experience, if any, with the overall transportation services provided by the City of Ottawa?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
OC Transpo routes are difficult/ inconvenient	21	19.8	25.3	25.3
Buses overcrowded/unpleasant experience	12	11.3	14.5	39.8
Lack of public transportation outside core downtown area	9	8.5	10.8	50.6
Bus drivers are sometimes inconsiderate	7	6.6	8.4	59.0
High cost of parking	7	6.6	8.4	67.5
Nothing/mainly positive	7	6.6	8.4	75.9
Lack of flexibility/reliability of Para Transpo services	6	5.7	7.2	83.1
High cost of transportation	5	4.7	6.0	89.2
Other	5	4.7	6.0	95.2
Booking Para Transpo difficult	3	2.8	3.6	98.8
Signage on the street	1	.9	1.2	100.0



Total	83	78.3	100.0
No answer	23	21.7	
Total	106	100.0	

Exhibit 9: In the area of transportation, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Expand and diversify public transportation	30	28.3	32.3	32.3
Improve access to buses and shelters (reduce walking distance)	16	15.1	17.2	49.5
No increase in transportation fares/more free days	11	10.4	11.8	61.3
More efficient transit system	9	8.5	9.7	71.0
Other	7	6.6	7.5	78.5
Safer roads/improved lights/signage	6	5.7	6.5	84.9
Better access to parking/car parks	5	4.7	5.4	90.3
Improved Para-Transpo/senior-oriented services	4	3.8	4.3	94.6
Drivers' awareness of seniors' needs	3	2.8	3.2	97.8
Unsure	2	1.9	2.2	100.0
Total	93	87.7	100.0	
No answer	13	12.3		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 10: What is your top positive experience, if any, with housing-related services provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
I have had no experience	15	14.2	31.3	31.3
I have had good experiences with support services/housing	11	10.4	22.9	54.2
Lack of affordable/appropriate housing for seniors	7	6.6	14.6	68.8
I have had negative experiences with support services/housing	4	3.8	8.3	77.1
Other	4	3.8	8.3	85.4
Hard to know the available options	3	2.8	6.3	91.7
Co-op housing is great	2	1.9	4.2	95.8
Unsure	2	1.9	4.2	100.0



Total	48	45.3	100.0
No answer	58	54.7	
Total	106	100.0	

Exhibit 11: What is your top negative experience, if any, with housing-related services provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lack of safe and affordable housing	11	10.4	19.6	19.6
Nothing	8	7.5	14.3	33.9
Other	8	7.5	14.3	48.2
Lack of supportive/community housing for vulnerable seniors	7	6.6	12.5	60.7
Run-down social housing	7	6.6	12.5	73.2
Long waiting lists (especially for long-term care)	6	5.7	10.7	83.9
No experience	6	5.7	10.7	94.6
High taxes	2	1.9	3.6	98.2
Unsure	1	.9	1.8	100.0
Total	56	52.8	100.0	
No answer	50	47.2		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 12: In the area of housing, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Need for affordable housing	28	26.4	35.9	35.9
Safer and more seniors-only buildings	13	12.3	16.7	52.6
Other	9	8.5	11.5	64.1
Need more long-term care homes	6	5.7	7.7	71.8
Need assistance to afford nursing home	5	4.7	6.4	78.2
Seniors should get a tax relief	3	2.8	3.8	82.1
Need for better and more extensive home care	3	2.8	3.8	85.9
Ensure a home for the homeless	3	2.8	3.8	89.7
More co-operative housing	3	2.8	3.8	93.6
Unsure	3	2.8	3.8	97.4
Include affordable/senior housing in new developments	2	1.9	2.6	100.0



Total	78	73.6	100.0
No answer	28	26.4	
Total	106	100.0	

Exhibit 13: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is no respect at all and 10 is a lot of respect, please rate the level of respect that is shown to older adults when interacting with or accessing City services. Why do you have that opinion? (n=106)

	No respect (1-3)	Some respect (4-7)	A lot of respect (8-10)	Total
Generally experienced positive interactions	16.7%	21.1%	74.2%	42.7%
Generally negative experiences	66.7%	34.2%	6.5%	25.3%
Other	16.7%	7.9%	12.9%	10.7%
More can be done	-	18.4%	-	9.3%
Experienced disrespect (lack of patience, ageist remarks)	-	13.2%	-	6.7%
Experienced neither a lack nor an excess of respect	-	5.3%	6.5%	5.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Exhibit 14: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not included at all and 10 is completely included, please rate the extent to which older adults are included in the city of Ottawa. Why do you have that opinion? (n=106)

	Not included (1-3)	Somewhat included (4-7)	Completely included (8-10)	Total
Other	20.0%	23.3%	7.7%	18.9%
The City of Ottawa has good services and programs in place to include seniors	-	16.7%	30.8%	17.0%
Not enough information	10.0%	13.3%	23.1%	15.1%
Services and programs for social inclusion are not geared to everyone	20.0%	13.3%	7.7%	13.2%
Lack of access to transportation contributes to isolation	10.0%	13.3%	7.7%	11.3%
Isolation due to the lack of activities and services in the suburbs and rural areas	30.0%	-	7.7%	7.5%
Have not personally experienced isolation	-	6.7%	7.7%	5.7%
More can be done	-	10.0%	-	5.7%
There will not be any changes made by the City of Ottawa	10.0%	3.3%	-	3.8%
Unsure	-	-	7.7%	1.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



Exhibit 15: What is your top positive experience, if any, with services related to social participation that are provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Using public libraries	19	17.9	25.0	25.0
Visiting seniors' centres/community centres	19	17.9	25.0	50.0
Participating in classes/activities for seniors	10	9.4	13.2	63.2
None	8	7.5	10.5	73.7
Using fitness and recreation centres	7	6.6	9.2	82.9
I can't access/don't know where to find seniors' programs	3	2.8	3.9	86.8
Other	3	2.8	3.9	90.8
Attending festivals and free events	2	1.9	2.6	93.4
Francophone services have improved	2	1.9	2.6	96.1
Not enough seniors' centres in Ottawa	2	1.9	2.6	98.7
Unsure	1	.9	1.3	100.0
Total	76	71.7	100.0	
No answer	30	28.3		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 16: What is your top negative experience, if any, with services related to social participation that are provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	18	17.0	29.0	29.0
High cost of activities/events	12	11.3	19.4	48.4
No community/seniors' centre near my home	6	5.7	9.7	58.1
Other	6	5.7	9.7	67.7
Not enough activities aimed at seniors	4	3.8	6.5	74.2
Not enough activities and services offered in French	4	3.8	6.5	80.6
Activities are not well advertised	3	2.8	4.8	85.5
Access issues for people with limited mobility	3	2.8	4.8	90.3
Poor condition of community/Seniors' centres	3	2.8	4.8	95.2
Not enough parking at community/seniors' centres	2	1.9	3.2	98.4



Unsure	1	.9	1.6	100.0
Total	62	58.5	100.0	
No answer	44	41.5		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 17: In the area of social participation, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Make programs more accessible and affordable to seniors	21	19.8	28.0	28.0
Continue to support community centers and services	16	15.1	21.3	49.3
Other	8	7.5	10.7	60.0
Create a venue where seniors can converse with others	6	5.7	8.0	68.0
Promote healthy and active living, mentally and physically	5	4.7	6.7	74.7
Improve quantity and quality of Francophone services	5	4.7	6.7	81.3
Create more programs and centers catered to seniors	4	3.8	5.3	86.7
Improve communication	4	3.8	5.3	92.0
Improve public spaces	4	3.8	5.3	97.3
No comment	2	1.9	2.7	100.0
Total	75	70.8	100.0	
No answer	31	29.2		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 18: What is your top positive experience, if any, with communication and information provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
3-1-1 phone service	31	29.2	44.3	44.3
City website	13	12.3	18.6	62.9
None or limited experiences	8	7.5	11.4	74.3
Information is always available	6	5.7	8.6	82.9
Other	6	5.7	8.6	91.4
No positive experiences	5	4.7	7.1	98.6



Unsure	1	.9	1.4	100.0
Total	70	66.0	100.0	
No answer	36	34.0		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 19: What is your top negative experience, if any, with communication and information provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Information must be presented in all types of communication (Internet, phone, pamphlets, in person, etc.)	15	14.2	25.9	25.9
Lack of information regarding City services, such as garbage collection	11	10.4	19.0	44.8
3-1-1 wait times are too long	9	8.5	15.5	60.3
None or limited experience	7	6.6	12.1	72.4
Other	7	6.6	12.1	84.5
Experiences with disrespect, or neglect	5	4.7	8.6	93.1
Communication channels are not friendly to persons with disabilities	3	2.8	5.2	98.3
City website is difficult to navigate	1	.9	1.7	100.0
Total	58	54.7	100.0	
No answer	48	45.3		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 20: In the area of communication and information, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Improve communication by using all forms of communications (Internet, phone, pamphlets, in person, etc.)	23	21.7	36.5	36.5
Compile a reference list of all available services	9	8.5	14.3	50.8
No actions need to be taken	7	6.6	11.1	61.9
Make the City of Ottawa website more user-friendly	7	6.6	11.1	73.0
Other	7	6.6	11.1	84.1
Increase bilingualism in advertisements	6	5.7	9.5	93.7
Unsure	4	3.8	6.3	100.0
Total	63	59.4	100.0	



No answer	43	40.6
Total	106	100.0

Exhibit 21: What is your top positive experience, if any, with civic participation and employment opportunities for older adults in the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
None or limited experience	14	13.2	28.6	28.6
Volunteering	12	11.3	24.5	53.1
Participating in advisory committees	12	11.3	24.5	77.6
Other	9	8.5	18.4	95.9
Unsure	2	1.9	4.1	100.0
Total	49	46.2	100.0	
No answer	57	53.8		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 22: What is your top negative experience, if any, with civic participation and employment opportunities for older adults in the city of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
None or limited experience	12	11.3	24.0	24.0
Other	9	8.5	18.0	42.0
Poor communication concerning volunteer opportunities	6	5.7	12.0	54.0
Nothing is going to change with these consultations	5	4.7	10.0	64.0
Lack of transportation	4	3.8	8.0	72.0
Volunteers are not appreciated	4	3.8	8.0	80.0
Had a negative experience	4	3.8	8.0	88.0
City council and advisory committee meetings are scheduled at inconvenient times	3	2.8	6.0	94.0
Unsure	3	2.8	6.0	100.0
Total	50	47.2	100.0	
No answer	56	52.8		
Total	106	100.0		



Exhibit 23: In the area of civic participation and employment, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Create more volunteer opportunities (mentorships) for seniors	18	17.0	34.0	34.0
Improve communication	13	12.3	24.5	58.5
Other	9	8.5	17.0	75.5
More flexibility for volunteers	6	5.7	11.3	86.8
Establish local committees to coordinate activities	4	3.8	7.5	94.3
Unsure	2	1.9	3.8	98.1
Improve transportation to better access to volunteer opportunities	1	.9	1.9	100.0
Total	53	50.0	100.0	
No answer	53	50.0		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 24: What is your top experience, if any, with community support and health services provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Immunization clinics	26	24.5	39.4	39.4
Limited or no experience	11	10.4	16.7	56.1
Community clinics	9	8.5	13.6	69.7
Other	9	8.5	13.6	83.3
Paramedic services	8	7.5	12.1	95.5
Good communication/relaying of information	2	1.9	3.0	98.5
Unsure	1	.9	1.5	100.0
Total	66	62.3	100.0	
No answer	40	37.7		
Total	106	100.0		



Exhibit 25: What is your top negative experience, if any, with community support and health services provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	18	17.0	26.5	26.5
Other	11	10.4	16.2	42.6
Community and health support are poorly organized	10	9.4	14.7	57.4
Lack of financing/hard to qualify for some services	7	6.6	10.3	67.6
Poor communication between service providers and seniors	7	6.6	10.3	77.9
Vaccination clinics are poorly organized	5	4.7	7.4	85.3
No experience	4	3.8	5.9	91.2
Waiting lists are too long	4	3.8	5.9	97.1
Snow removal	2	1.9	2.9	100.0
Total	68	64.2	100.0	
No answer	38	35.8		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 26: In the area of community support and health services, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Home support should be the top priority	24	22.6	32.4	32.4
Improve communication between service providers and seniors	11	10.4	14.9	47.3
Improve community health services	9	8.5	12.2	59.5
Other	9	8.5	12.2	71.6
More funding	6	5.7	8.1	79.7
Improve accessibility to emergency services	6	5.7	8.1	87.8
Hire more health practitioners (doctors, nurses)	5	4.7	6.8	94.6
Not enough experience to comment	3	2.8	4.1	98.6
Unsure	1	.9	1.4	100.0
Total	74	69.8	100.0	
No answer	32	30.2		



Total 106 100.0

Exhibit 27: What is your top positive experience, if any, with public safety and security services provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Emergency services are quick and responsive	14	13.2	22.6	22.6
Police there when needed	9	8.5	14.5	37.1
Good prevention	7	6.6	11.3	48.4
No experience	6	5.7	9.7	58.1
Ottawa is a safe city	5	4.7	8.1	66.1
None	5	4.7	8.1	74.2
Community safety initiatives (Pathway Patrol, neighbourhood watch)	4	3.8	6.5	80.6
Other	4	3.8	6.5	87.1
Paramedics do an excellent job	3	2.8	4.8	91.9
Unsure	3	2.8	4.8	96.8
Generally positive	2	1.9	3.2	100.0
Total	62	58.5	100.0	
No answer	44	41.5		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 28: What is your top negative experience, if any, with public safety and security services provided by the City of Ottawa? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	18	17.0	32.7	32.7
Slow response	8	7.5	14.5	47.3
Other	7	6.6	12.7	60.0
Safety issues in my neighbourhood	6	5.7	10.9	70.9
Negative perception of the behaviour of the police	5	4.7	9.1	80.0
Need more lighting in the city	4	3.8	7.3	87.3
Theft not taken seriously	2	1.9	3.6	90.9
Negative experience with tickets	2	1.9	3.6	94.5
Snow banks on the street	2	1.9	3.6	98.2



Unsure	1	.9	1.8	100.0
Total	55	51.9	100.0	
No answer	51	48.1		
Total	106	100.0		

Exhibit 29: In the area of public safety and security, what should the City of Ottawa take action on as a top priority? (n=106)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Address crime/safety issues	11	10.4	16.7	16.7
Better crime/safety prevention and communication	11	10.4	16.7	33.3
Better street lighting	8	7.5	12.1	45.5
Police more on the street/closer to community	7	6.6	10.6	56.1
Larger/more efficient police force	6	5.7	9.1	65.2
Faster response (especially for rural areas)	5	4.7	7.6	72.7
Unsure	5	4.7	7.6	80.3
Other	4	3.8	6.1	86.4
Positive/Doing a good job	3	2.8	4.5	90.9
A more transparent police force	2	1.9	3.0	93.9
More cameras	2	1.9	3.0	97.0
Nothing	2	1.9	3.0	100.0
Total	66	62.3	100.0	
No answer	40	37.7		
Total	106	100.0		



APPENDIX E

Consultation Summaries



CITY OF OTTAWA TARGETED CONSULTATION SESSIONS

Summary: ODAWA Session – Aboriginal Older Adults Session (October 12, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on October 12th, 2011. Participating were nine elderly Aboriginals residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Nine Aboriginal elderly persons participated in the session. The age average was 68.9, with the youngest being at 63 and the oldest at 77 years old. All participants were retired, and only two of them were males. Half of the group had a secondary school education, while the other half had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 2.5. Only one participant owned his or her property, while the rest of the group rented. Four participants lived alone (and they were all renting). The annual income for single older persons tended to be closer to \$15,000 or less, while the income of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be closer to the \$15,001-\$22,229 category.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

A participant felt that Ottawa was a more relaxed city compared to other cities like Montreal and Toronto. People liked that Ottawa has more space and felt that there is more room to breathe. There was a general consensus that Ottawa is a good place for retired people to live in.

Negative Experiences

Many participants expressed that they do not like driving in downtown Ottawa and consider the traffic “too crazy”. Another person expressed concerns of problems with drug addicts and prostitutes on the streets of Ottawa and conveyed that it is especially problematic if you don’t live in a good area.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

One participant said that they enjoy sitting outside in the summer.

Negative Experiences

Several participants expressed concern with the lack of sidewalks leading to shopping centres and supermarkets and another felt that shopping malls were set up solely for people who drive and not for pedestrians. People agreed that they are put in dangerous situations when forced to walk in the street with many fast cars on the road. A more specific concern was communicated for the Vanier area where there is a lot of speeding and cars running red lights. Another traffic concern was expressed for the Aviation Parkway and Montreal Road intersection where the button to cross does not allow enough time to cross before the light changes again. Another participant indicated that they feel that the doors to public buildings are too heavy. One participant said that handicap buttons to automatically open doors are sometimes difficult to locate and it is unclear whether the door opens inward or outward. A participant expressed dismay toward the lack of bus shelters that are needed during the winter season and another felt that the snow banks are too high and pose a risk of slipping under a bus. Another person said they had to call the city several times before someone comes to clear and salt the walkway to their residence.



Ideas for Improvement

One participant stated that they would like to see more benches along roads and bus stops and another suggested that businesses should have benches and tables located outside their buildings, like McDonalds and IGA used to. One person also expressed concerns for bus shelters, suggesting that like other cities, we should have shelter platforms near bus and train stations to protect commuters from the elements. One participant proposed that when you use the handicap button to automatically open doors, one button should open both doors. Another participant conveyed that they liked the underground shopping systems in Montreal and Toronto and thought this type of arrangement would work well in Ottawa, especially during the winter months.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

A participant felt happy with driving in Ottawa. Another was pleased with the treatment from bus drivers, stating that 95% of the time they are very nice and lovely.

Negative Experiences

Several participants expressed disappointment with public transportation in Ottawa. In particular, one person was dissatisfied with buses not arriving on schedule and another was frustrated with the recent route changes resulting in a three-bus ride to St-Laurent Centre from the one-bus ride before the change took place. Several people were annoyed with the crowdedness on buses especially when it comes to the use of strollers, expressing that it is difficult to get around them. More concerns were expressed toward Para Transpo and scheduling issues. One person indicated that it was not convenient to book a ride 24hrs in advance and not be able to make changes to the booked time. Furthermore, they expressed that Para Transpo were never on time for the booked appointments. One participant was concerned with access to parking spaces. Those who are not eligible to use the handicap parking spots find it difficult to get in and out of their cars with such limited space.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that the city should have electronic signs to display up-to-date information of when the next few buses were due to arrive, taking into account where the buses' actual locations are and not where they are supposed to be. Another expressed concern was with baby strollers on buses; one participants felt that buses should be limited to a maximum of two strollers per bus and that wheelchairs should take priority. One participant proposed a patrolling of handicap spaces to ensure that only those that are allowed to use them use that space.

Housing

Negative Experiences

Several participants expressed a concern about the treatment they get from their landlords. One participant stated that although he has been in contact with housing staff several times he still has walls held together by duct tape and received a condescending attitude from the employee. Others consider "slum landlords" to be a big issue for the city and indicated that the management is not responsive to tenant's issues. Another participant had shown disappointment with applying for handicap housing. This tenant had only access to a ramp at the back of their building that was unattainable due to parked cars and snow that was never removed. Another tenant was frustrated when turned down for low-income housing because of not meeting the low income requirement. One person felt that Native people are discriminated against when applying for housing, suggesting that when they show up to see the manager, they are told the unit has already been rented.

Ideas for Improvement



One participant suggested that those in charge of housing services and maintenance should have a better understanding of Aboriginals. Other participants felt there is a need for better communication of Native services such as housing, healthcare, and women-specific services. Another person proposed more space in senior housing, explaining that you should not have to give up space because you are a senior.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

Several participants felt that they were treated with respect by most people. One participant elaborated that when seniors are served first this shows respect. Another participant shared that they enjoy the senior's park in Orleans.

Negative Experiences

A participant expressed that many people don't know a lot about Native people and don't understand their way of life. Another said that they are victims of racial slurs and harassment. One participant suggested that other minorities are given preference over Aboriginal people. One person said that when faced with trouble, another poor person stepped in to help because they understood each other and their needs for assistance.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that different Native groups need to work together to obtain better services and activities for seniors.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

One person claimed that there used to be community meals held at Odawa once a month and it was a great way to socialize, however these events are no longer held due to lack of funding. Another participant shared that they enjoy events held at the Knights of Columbus, such as darts and dancing.

Negative Experiences

One person said they would like to join the St-Laurent Centre but is unable to afford it.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant felt that there needs to be more interaction between younger and older adults to better understand each other. Several participants brought up locations for potential social gatherings. One in particular felt that there needs to be common rooms in housing units and another felt senior housing should be within walking distance to places such as banquet halls. Another conveyed the importance of having access to a spiritual room for praying and reflecting for any religion. One participant suggested that there needs to be a better set up for the Wabano Centre so that people can just drop in for a coffee rather than having to go to Tim Horton's where there are time limits.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

One participant had a positive experience using the city's 3-1-1 information number. Another enjoys the A Channel for information. Others suggested the Aboriginal newspaper, information booth on Sparks street and the library as good methods for staying informed. One person felt word of mouth is the best form of communication

Ideas for Improvement



One participant expressed that there was not enough information available and that housing facilities should have a system to notify residents about other's complaints so they can all work together. Another one noted that not all seniors are computer-savvy and suggested there are better ways of keeping them informed such as flyers and television. One participant felt that there is a need for people who are isolated in their homes to have someone visit them to keep them informed about the community.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

One participant shared that they volunteer through the legion, visit elders in hospitals, and make quilts for cancer patients. Another person volunteers for Lifelong Care, and do planning, cooking, and delivering meals to those who are unable to leave their homes. One participant volunteers at the Court House and CHEO as a translator, and another volunteers as an elections officer. One person communicated that there is a lot of older people who volunteer and this seems to make them happy and give them a purpose.

Negative Experiences

Several participants felt that seniors are forced to re-enter the work force because they need the money to get by while others volunteer because they are bored. One participant shared that retirement is not a Native concept and makes them feel useless. The participant expressed that they still have a lot they can teach to the younger generations.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

Several participants spoke of positive experiences. One shared that Community Care services were of great assistance when the participant had a hip replacement. They helped to make the home more accessible and safe, and the resident paid a percentage of the cost. Another exclaimed that she benefited from in-home physio care that was available. Another had home care after chemo and said that was very helpful. One person shared that Para Transpo was of assistance to them when transporting to appointments after a shoulder injury.

Negative Experiences

A common concern was the lack of doctors and wait times. One participant was left confused with which health services are covered by the province and which ones are not, when speaking to different people in the field. Another person said that after a shoulder injury, he had a hard time to accessing services and places to get treatments.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant felt there should be more traditional Native healers available.

Other Comments

One participant stressed the importance of having handicap/accessible bathrooms in restaurants and if the establishment doesn't have any, they should display this outside the building.

Another person spoke of the lack of communication regarding abuse. The participant felt it is still happening in residential schools and that the cycle needs to be broken and people need to talk about it.



Summary: Western Ottawa Community Session – Natural Caregivers Session (October 18, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on October 18th, 2011. Participating were eight natural caregivers residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Eight western Ottawa Caregivers participated in the session. Of the eight participants, demographic information was made available for seven of them. The age average was 76, with three participants representing the youngest age being at 72 and the oldest at 83 years old. All of the participants were retired, and three of them were males. The entire group had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 2. All of the participants owned his or her property, and all of whom lived with their spouse or partner. The annual income of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be closer to the \$41,546-\$83,088 category.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

Some participants expressed that there was a lot of assistance available throughout the city for both health and entertainment-related items, so long as you were aware of where to get it. One participant pointed out that there are many things that they are able to do, especially in terms of entertainment, however this may change later, particularly in terms of the evolution of disease. Participants agreed that perceptions on living in the city of Ottawa depend on where and how long you've lived in Ottawa, expressing differences between local and non-local residents.

Negative Experiences

Several participants stated that it is difficult for seniors to know where to find help and that it is time consuming to get the right information. One participant expressed frustration in the inability to obtain assistance from a live person, stating that often in seeking help, they are directed to the wrong place.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

Some participants said that they enjoyed taking nice walks around the city of Ottawa. Another participant reported not having had any issues with the buildings.

Negative Experiences

One participant pointed out that many spaces, such as public service buildings and the cinema, are inaccessible to people in wheelchairs, resulting in a great dependence on Para-Transpo. Other participants agreed that the public buildings may be easy to go up, but are steep and difficult to go down. Some participants found that the degree of accessibility of information was inadequate compared to other cities like Montreal and Toronto, expressing frustration in the amount of time spent looking for the right information. One participant believed that automatic doors were an issue for the elderly in Ottawa because they prohibit the person who is entering the door from assisting another person. One participant stated that there should be more handicap parking spots.



Ideas for Improvement

Several participants agreed that automatic doors should be designed in a manner that is accommodating to the lifestyles of the elderly. They should open more quickly and stay open longer to allow the elderly time to get through the door.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

Participants believed that the public transportation in Ottawa, OC Transpo, is very helpful for the elderly, especially on days that it is free for seniors who can't afford public transportation all the time. One participant stated that the bus drivers are generally very helpful. Another participant added that community volunteer transportation is a great program that helps people get to their medical appointments, and despite costs it is still cheaper than taking a taxi. One participant expressed that Para-transpo is a great service.

Negative Experiences

Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with the Para-transpo service, stating that not all of their vehicles were accessible for people with wheelchairs or walkers and that the requirement of calling 48 hours in advance limited accessibility. Another participant stated that non-urgent medical transportation, such as ambulances, were quite expensive.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that Para-transpo maintain a scheduled route so that people would know when it was passing by and could use the service with greater ease. Others stated that there should be more community volunteer transportation services because you cannot always rely on Para-transpo.

Housing

Negative Experiences

Several participants agreed that there is a shortage of accessible and affordable housing, such as bungalows. Other participants stated that they did not feel safe in private residences and that care in these residences is awful. Some participants believed that architects are not building with senior's lifestyles in mind, as accessibility plays a major role in their lives.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant stated that proper legislation should be enacted for private residences and nursing homes. Others suggested that architects take into consideration the social needs of seniors and build accordingly.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences



Some participants shared that they felt young people were great with older adults and that they often showed respect to their elders because of what their parents teach them as they are kids.

Negative Experiences

Many participants agreed that the elderly are treated differently and improperly within the City of Ottawa. One participant expressed that older adults are treated like children by those who provide certain services. Another participant stated that young people tend to expect accommodation from older adults. Participants believe that people in general don't know seniors' contributions to society and all of the good things they have done. Some participants believed that there are institutions that are supposed to include older adults, but they do not work toward their goals and that society is moving too fast to include the elderly.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that the education system reinforce views of older people to see them as 'normal' rather than 'old.' Other participants agreed that senior citizens should be treated like normal people

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

One of the participants stated that despite limitations there are still social things that they are able to do. Other participants emphasized the importance of talking and connecting with others and having a social life.

Negative Experiences

Some of the participants found that although there are things to do, many that are available are not of interest, such as spending the whole day at the mall. One participant found it difficult and awkward to explain to others that their spouse was unable to participate in activities because of a cognitive disability.

Ideas for Improvement

The public should be educated about disabilities such as Alzheimer's so that seniors don't have to worry about other people's reactions.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

A participant stated that having personal contacts can be very helpful in obtaining information. Others found that the internet and pressing "0" on the telephone are good options for getting information.

Negative Experiences

Most participants agreed that the process of getting information is frustrating. One of the participants noted that if the receptionist in a building is not well informed or does not have adequate experience then they are unable to



provide accurate information. Another participant agreed that the first person you talk to can be a barrier if they do not have the correct information. Some participants found that it takes too long to get the information needed, including when trying to use 2-1-1 (information line). One participant explained that talking to a machine and a lack of personal connection was an issue in the attempt to obtain information. Several participants agreed that a lack of respect made communication difficult. When trying to get information for themselves, some participants pointed out that although the internet is useful, many people do not have the option to use it. One participant found that community support agencies are not given enough resources to assist the elderly.

Ideas for Improvement

Community support agencies should be allotted more funding to better help older adults. More training programs should be available for service employees, such as receptionists, to provide better information.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

One of the participants found that the 55 EXPO was a great resource that can be helpful in many areas. Another participant found that there are adequate opportunities to volunteer and do other activities if you have the time.

Negative Experiences

A participant found that huge waiting lists for organizations such as the CCAC were discouraging. Others stated that older adults are often caught in scams, particularly finance-related, and that they are more vulnerable in situations like this. Some participants agreed that it is difficult to volunteer and do other activities because they do not have any free time or are not in the position to do so.

Community Support and Health Services

Negative Experiences

A participant found that a shortage of funding and people hindered the overall available support. Another agreed that it takes a long time to get things done. One of the participants stated that upon election, politicians forget about the public they are intending to serve.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants found that there should be more money and people to take care of the services needed. Another believed that more pressure needs to be put on politicians, in the form of a protest for example. It is important to be in the headlines in order to get the necessary attention and reaction.



Summary: Bank Community Center Session – Low-Income Older Adults Session (October 19, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on October 19th, 2011. Participating were 12 elderly people residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Twelve elderly persons participated in the session. The age average was 74, with two of the participants being the youngest at 65 and the oldest at 85 years old. All of the participants were retired, and two of them were males. Five members of the group had a secondary school education, while four had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 2.6. Half of the participants owned his or her property, while the other half rented. Nine participants lived on their own, six of whom were renting. The annual income for single older persons and of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be between \$15,000 and \$22,229.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that Ottawa is a very good and clean place to live. Another participant agreed that Ottawa is quiet and peaceful.

Negative Experiences

One participant thought that Ottawa was the best city when they first moved here, however now they find that the traffic is awful, as people rush, don't use signals, and there are a lot of drunk drivers, all of which pose a risk to an aging population. Another participant found that seniors are not treated well in the public sphere, such as in malls, buses, and hospitals; participants felt that they were treated as though they were senile. One participant said that the snow in the winter makes it difficult to move around.

Ideas for Improvement

For one of the participants, removing the drugs from the streets and preventing drug usage would improve the city.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

Many participants agreed that Ottawa has nice outdoor spaces. One participant stated that it is very clean. Another stated that Ottawa is an excellent place with a lot of fresh air. Some participants found that there are very nice parks in Ottawa, like in the Greenboro area.

Negative Experiences

One participant advised that seniors should be careful when going out at night. Another participant found that City of Ottawa buildings are confusing and had bad experiences navigating between the buildings, in addition to poor customer service.

Ideas for Improvement



One participant suggested that parks could be improved with more garbage bins, benches with supports/arm rests for seniors, and more picnic tables. Another participant found that parks should have more water fountains. One participant would like smaller and less busy streets to walk along.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

Several participants agreed that they enjoyed the services for seniors on OC Transpo. One participant stated that the fare for people aged 65 or older was good. Another agreed that this was very good on the days in which there is no fare for seniors to ride the bus. A participant said that they enjoyed OC Transpo's presentation on services to older people. One participant stated that they enjoyed driving in the city.

Negative Experiences

Some participants found that the snow is a prominent issue affecting transportation. For one participant, getting in and out of busses can be difficult because of snow. Another participant expressed dismay toward the lumps of snow on the sidewalks during the winter. One participant stated that spilling snow on property is difficult to remove for older residents.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant stated that the city should do something about the spilling snow on property. Another participant suggested that bus drivers should enforce the priority seating for senior citizens.

Housing

Positive Experiences

One participant described that they enjoy the location of their house, as it is close to a bus stop and services. Although stairs can be a problem for some seniors, one found that their house was good because there is only one step at the side door.

Negative Experiences

One of the participants found that the stairs in their house makes it difficult; however finding alternative housing can be complicated because of price. Another participant has found that graffiti and other related problems are prevalent in their neighborhood. For one participant, health issues have made it difficult to do several things around their bungalow, such as maintaining the yard.

Ideas for Improvement

One of the participants suggested that the City of Ottawa provide services for seniors so that they can stay in their houses as long as possible that would ideally be at little or no cost because moving is costly, especially for people with low revenue. Another participant stated that there should be more affordable housing.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

One participant found that they felt respect at their volunteering location. For one participant, the best thing that happened to them after they got sick was the community centre that encouraged them to get out of the house. One participant found that while some young people don't show respect to the elderly, most do.

Negative Experiences

One participant found that they used to receive more respect when they were working, however now that they are retired they feel less respected. A participant found that sometimes the elderly feel as if they are out of the picture, and that they do not deserve the attention from younger people. For some of the participants, the



greatest threat to maintaining a sense of inclusion was falling ill, because you are not longer valuable and cannot entertain.

Ideas for Improvement

Many participants agreed that young people should be taught to be sensitive and respectful of the elderly. One participant found that elderly should do their part in terms of respect as well. A participant suggested that employers educate their staff on interacting with elderly clients and how to make them feel comfortable while respecting them.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

One participant found it easy to socialize with neighbours and through the community center. Another participant agreed that going to community centers was good for learning new things and socializing with others. For one participant, their activities included exercising and socializing with friends at Billings Bridge. One of the participants found that affiliations with their religious group, such as activities, church attendance, and gatherings with friends are good for social participation. Another participant has activities organized by the tenant president in their building, such as bingo and bean bags.

Negative Experiences

For many participants, affordability is an issue that prevents them from participating in activities that are organized by the city and at senior retirement residences. One participant said that loneliness was the biggest issue. Another participant said that their relatives are no longer in the city and they miss that.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

Several participants agreed that using the city's 3-1-1 information service was useful for getting information. One participant also stated that using 2-1-1 was good for obtaining information on community and home services. Most participants found mail, like flyers and community newspapers, and telephone to be the best means of communication. One participant also uses the radio to obtain information

Negative Experiences

One participant who prefers receiving communication through the phone and mail has found that by the time they receive the information, especially from sources like the paper Forever Young, the activities have already gone by. One participant said that 3-1-1 put them on hold and never answered their questions. No one in the group uses the internet to communicate, and one participant stated that despite expectations from others to use email services, technology is a bit nerve-wracking. Another participant found that they had no overall awareness of information and communication.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

One participant does a lot of different volunteer work and enjoys it because they meet a lot of nice people and it is better than staying home alone. Many participants agreed that socialization was more important than work. One participant expressed interest in doing meaningful volunteer work.

Negative Experiences

One of the participants had wanted to volunteer with dying people; however they have lost faith in voluntary work because they had to go through a course just to be a presence in the sick people's lives. One participant



found that they don't want to do volunteer work because they don't have enough time. Another participant does not want to volunteer because they don't want to be forced to do things they are not comfortable with.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

Some participants described positive experiences they have had with the CCAC. One had mobility issues; however after contacting the Arthritis Society, they were connected with the CCAC in a fast manner. For this participant, the Arthritis Society made getting home support less stressful. Another participant found that the CCAC were very nice and caring people.

Negative Experiences

Some of the participants found that medical treatment in the form of massage therapy and physiotherapy is too expensive. Others found that the waiting list for physiotherapy at the Riverside Hospital was frustrating, and that their calls were never returned.

Other Comments

One of the participants found that the most important issues for the improvement of seniors' lives are to improve healthcare and to teach younger generations about respect for the elderly.



Summary: Unitarian House Session – Older Seniors Session (October 21, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on October 21st, 2011. Participating were 18 elderly residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Eighteen elderly persons participated in the session. Of the eighteen participants, demographic information was made available for fifteen of them. The age average was 86.6, with the youngest being at 75 and the oldest at 94 years old. All of the participants were retired, and only one of them was a male. Two members of the group had a secondary school education, while eleven reported having had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 1.8. No participants owned his or her property, as the whole group was renting. 12 participants lived alone. The annual income for both single older persons and individuals living with more than one person tended to fall within the range of \$41,546 to \$83,089.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

Many participants agreed that living in Unitarian House was good. Several participants agreed that the transportation services in Ottawa were useful for seniors, especially because of the accessibility for wheelchair users and to door-to-door service from Para-Transpo. One participant found that volunteering is a great thing that makes you feel less lonely when you move into a seniors' residence.

Negative Experiences

One participant found it very frustrating to live in Ottawa, especially due to the failures of the transportation system. For this participant, they feel isolated in the West End if they don't have a car, and while some are able to walk approximately a mile to get to the Transitway, many are not active or mobile enough to reach the buses that go downtown. Other participants agreed that changes to the bus routes have complicated the lives of seniors because they need to take more buses to get to one destination. One participant stated that it is challenging to walk to the bus stop if it is far from their home, especially in the wintertime when the sidewalks are not cleared. For one participant, living in a retirement home is difficult because you form relationships with others, but they typically end up moving or dying within a year or two. One of the participants stated that it is not just the city of Ottawa that is an issue for seniors, as mobility can be a depressing issue regardless of location.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that there should be more places like the Unitarian House because it is different from other retirement homes. Another participant said that something should be done about the rates that retirement homes are charging for residents.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that the area around the Unitarian House is nice and accessible, with places to sit unlike other retirement homes. Another participant said that the Unitarian House has access to a volunteer driver to go to medical appointments. A participant said that they liked the buses with platforms that come down because they can easily get on and off the bus.

Negative Experiences



One participant found that bus schedules aren't always reliable. Another participant stated that there aren't enough accessible seats for seniors on buses. In the winter, one participant mentioned that sidewalks in some areas are inaccessible and that they are forced to walk in the street. One of the participants said that during construction projects, pedestrians are expected to share the road with equipment and trucks, and that it is very dangerous. One participant said that the potholes in the roads make it dangerous when using a scooter. A participant stated that it is difficult to cross the road in a lot of places where there's no lights, and that they need to wait for people to help you cross. In terms of public buildings, one of the participants has found that the doors are so heavy that they cannot open them. Another participant stated that a lot of public buildings have little steps from one part of the building to another, which poses a fall risk if there are no warning signs. One participant said that at Carlingwood and Lincoln Fields in particular, there are no wheelchair ramps and all the stairs make it hard on seniors' knees. One of the participants said that there are not enough parking spaces by the Unitarian House, and that people from nearby buildings take their parking spots, but no one enforces it.

Ideas for Improvement

One of the participants suggested that all washrooms should have a handrail on the wall next to the toilet because it is difficult to get up without one.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

One participant found that family support was useful in getting transportation to destinations.

Negative Experiences

One of the participants was a cyclist, and expressed their hate for drivers in the city. Many participants expressed concerns with OC Transpo services. One stated that executives of the company don't have any idea of what it is like to ride on the buses and they are not responsive to the needs of seniors in the West End. Another participant agreed that the bus services are more concerned with taking suburban commuters to work downtown, while bus routes for their area are complicated. One participant has stopped using public transportation because of a bladder problem. One of the participants said that Para-Transpo sometimes drops people off at the wrong destination and leaves them there, which is a big issue for the visually impaired.

Housing

Positive Experiences

One participant said that at the Unitarian House, the nursing staff makes them feel at home by talking to and providing support for people who look upset.

Negative Experiences

One of the participants stated that other seniors' residences are expensive and it is difficult especially for couples to afford. Some participants agreed that there should be someone who assists seniors in looking for a residence when they can no longer live independently as it is a big job to do alone and it is hard to tell which places are good and which ones are bad. One participant said that it is important for seniors to have companionship, but not all residences allow pets.

Ideas for Improvement

A participant suggested that the City build more not-for-profit seniors' residences.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences



One of the participants found that teenagers are generally nice and will hold to door when they are out and about. One participant has found that telling people your age makes them act more respectfully to you. One of the participants has had experiences where people offer to help you cross the street, even if you don't want to cross. Through the Unitarian House, one of the participants has found that there are a lot of activities available to seniors.

Negative Experiences

One participant stopped going to Carlingwood because people bump into and shove others without caring. For one of the participants, the biggest barrier to social inclusion has been health issues.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

Participants agreed that having access to a volunteer driver made a big difference in their ability to get to social activities outside of the Unitarian House. One participant stated that they used Para-Transpo services to get to their volunteering role at the airport. Many also agreed that the Churchill Seniors' Centre was a good place to go for activities. Participants described their social lives inside and outside of the Unitarian House. One said that activities within the Unitarian House are easily accessible. Another participant said that they play bridge, are part of the Red Hat Society; participate in Lifelong Learning, and many other activities. One of the participants stated that museums are quite affordable for seniors.

Negative Experiences

One participant stated that socializing outside of the Unitarian House is difficult because not everyone is able to rely on Para-Transpo or OC-Transpo due to mobility or eyesight issues. None of the participants used city facilities such as swimming pools, in part because it is too difficult to get there and get ready. One participant stated that they are too old to use the pool

Ideas for Improvement

One of the participants suggested that museum memberships amalgamate so that they only need to purchase one membership to gain access to all museums.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

Participants explained that they usually get information through the telephone, radio, television, and newspapers (local and national). Two women in the group are visually impaired, and they rely on the radio, telephone, and audio books from the library or CNIB. Many participants agreed that word of mouth is the best way to get information, either from the receptionist at the front desk, through the PA system at the Unitarian House, or family members.

Negative Experiences

Some participants found that information hotlines are problematic because of automated replies, difficult to understand accents, and young people who talk too fast. One participant said that seniors at other residences are talked down to by the staff. A participant said that if one has no family that comes to visit, then you are more isolated and it is difficult to communicate your needs. One of the participants found it difficult when filling out forms, because there are a lot of acronyms that people are expected to know, however they are not explained anywhere.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences



All of the participants volunteer in-house at the Unitarian House in some way, and there are lots of opportunities to do so in different ways. Most participants agreed that the volunteering contributions of seniors are valued by the community. One participant used to volunteer with the Diabetes Association, but has decided to look after themselves now and do what they wish to do.

Negative Experiences

One participant pointed out that it can be difficult for seniors to volunteer outside because there are not always good parking spaces or easy access via public transit. Another participant stated that sometimes changes in their lives make it so that they cannot volunteer, such as being moved into palliative care.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

One of the participants described a positive experience that they had with the health system after a car accident; they were well looked after. A participant said that the care they receive at the Unitarian House gave them easy access to nurses, which sets them apart from other residences. Several participants say that there are other services through community centers that help seniors.

Negative Experiences

Some participants stated issues at other retirement residences, in which nurses aren't as attentive and that there are extra fees for health services. One of the participants stated that the CCAC isn't well-suited for people with short-term illnesses, such as pneumonia, in terms of offering relevant services or information on how to get food delivered. In furthering this point, another participant stated that unless you are in a good-quality seniors' residence, home help for healthcare is very expensive. Another participant said that home care services for people with acute or chronic illnesses have been cut back. One of the participants has found that the social events aren't well-catered for in seniors' homes, and visitors are limited in terms of when they are allowed to visit.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that there should be a system where troubled/isolated youth are partnered with isolated seniors; people with similar issues would be able to share their different perspectives and discuss ways to get through it.

Other Comments

One of the participants expressed their disliking toward the bike paths, stating that they end without warning and the system has been poorly planned out. As a senior, this participant feels as if they need to carefully consider the route they take when they go biking because of the dangers of narrow paths with lots of traffic. This participant suggested that there should be a separate path for biking and for walking.

A participant finds that street signs aren't clear and the writing is too small, and therefore too difficult for seniors to read. In addition to this, the signs aren't always on the same side of the intersections which can cause confusion.



Summary: Centertown GLBTQ Community Session – (October 27, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on October 27th, 2011. Participating were nine GLBTQ elderly residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Nine elderly persons participated in the session. The age average was 68, with the youngest being at 59 and the oldest at 79 years old. All of the participants, except for one, were retired, and three of them were males. One member of the group had a secondary school education, while all others had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 1.8. Seven participants owned his or her property. Four participants lived on their own, and only one of them was renting. The annual income for single older persons tended to be between \$22,230 and \$41,545, while the income of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be closer to the \$41,546-\$83,088 category.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

For most participants, Ottawa is a city that provides good facilities, community centers, resources, programs, services, and makes its residents feel safe (compared to most other major cities). The participants were particularly pleased by the affordability of the transportation system—citing the free-days for seniors and the thirty-seven dollar monthly pass.

Negative Experiences

One participant stated that Ottawa is difficult to navigate for those who live in the suburbs because the transport system is most efficient in the downtown core. One person stated that although the programs offered by the senior centers are impressive, more needs to be offered to reach out to the GLBTQ community.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

Many participants noticed improvements in terms of accessibility both to, and within, buildings; participants mentioned Carlingwood Shopping Mall as an example. Participants were also interested in the intergenerational park in Orleans. Participants were impressed with the benches throughout the city, but particularly along Bank Street. Participants also enjoyed the outdoor space, particularly in the suburbs.

Negative Experiences

Many participants mentioned the need to continuously maintain sidewalks, explaining that, especially in the winter months, ice and snow banks make manoeuvring difficult. Additionally, when sidewalks become slanted, it hinders the movement of wheelchairs. Parking was also mentioned as being an issue, particularly in the winter due to the snow banks. Participants noted that outside stores and public buildings are in need of railings on staircases and wheelchair access. Participants were also upset by the closing of all outdoor and public restrooms. Two participants mentioned that although there are parks, there are safety issues in parks downtown.

Ideas for Improvement



The participants felt that the City of Ottawa needed to plow snow more often in order to: (i) free the sidewalk for wheelchairs and for those who need assistance, and (ii) to free-up parking space. Participants also felt that lighting could be improved throughout the city, especially in and around parking lots.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

Participants found that transportation is good, but there are improvements to be made to increase safety.

Negative Experiences

The participants mentioned that public transportation is uncomfortable because seniors are not given priority seating by most travelers, meaning that they have to ask and or beg for a seat. Additionally, in order to limit wait times, and to travel to a certain location and arrive on time, the participants mentioned having to continuously read/use the timetables. Participants noted that Para-Transpo is not effective and often takes too much time to arrive at the destination. Participants mentioned that they did not feel safe driving or biking in the City of Ottawa. Biking posed a particular problem for the participants who explained that there is a lack of communication (signaling) between the cyclers and the drivers, which makes the situation dangerous for both parties. Participants noted that transgendered persons often felt abused by cab drivers.

Ideas for Improvement

The participants mentioned that buses should run more frequently and the suburbs should have smaller buses. Participants noted that Para-Transpo needs to improve its efficiency in decreasing both travel and wait times. Participants suggested that seniors purchase monthly passes, at a lower cost, in order to be able to park with greater ease and convenience. In addition, participants suggested that seniors be given more time to park (due to physical restrictions) so as not to go over the time limits. The participants suggested that cyclers wear bright colours and that they be educated on signaling, rules, and overall safety.

Housing

Positive Experiences

One participant was pleased with the work of Unitarian House, but resented the long waiting list. Participants felt that because of the Pride Network, the City of Ottawa was working towards improvements in GLBTQ housing.

Negative Experiences

Several participants stressed the fact that there are no queer friendly places for seniors in Ottawa. One participant noted that there is a lack of affordable housing.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that there should be rental residences and long-term care facilities that are friendly to the GLBTQ community. Participants suggested that training should be conducted with staff of organizations, such as residences, long-term care facilities, and homecare support (CCAC) in order to decrease the number of homophobic staff and to encourage inclusiveness. Participants also stressed the need to assess the options of the GLBTQ community as its members continue to age and require more user-friendly (and GLBTQ friendly) residences.

Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

One participant felt that government policies in Canada are pro-elderly and that in general Canadians have a positive attitude towards seniors. Participants noted that there is respect towards older people, but that seniors



are not part of the greater society because they are treated as “special”. The participants noted that they are comfortable in their communities and pleased with the options that exist to get engaged with events. One participant mentioned how the Unitarian community is comfortable and makes its members feel accepted.

Negative Experiences

Participants cited not liking and not being interested in mainstream society. Participants observed that as they aged, younger persons disregarded them; the participants noted that they were treated as “old.”

Ideas for Improvement

Participants stated that the younger generation and mainstream society should be taught to be respectful of their elders. One participant also suggested establishing intergenerational activities (citing Pink Triangle as an example) in order to give both generations a means of interaction to be active and intellectually stimulated.

Social Participation

Negative Experiences

Many participants found that the greater part of seniors’ events are suited for couples, alienating those who are single. Two participants stated that they would not join a straight club noting that there was slight discomfort within heterosexual groups. One participant noted that sometimes transgendered persons are not welcomed in facilities. Participants mentioned the high fees for membership for some community centers and stated that such fees, compiled with transportation costs, disregard low-income seniors.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested the establishment of a GLBTQ dance spot, which would foster a greater sense of community. There was also a mention of starting a movie night. There was a general consensus that social participation can be improved by lowering costs associated with social engagements and services.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

Participants agreed that email and the Internet were the best modes of communication. The newspaper was also mentioned as a good way to stay informed. The Pride Network, Dorothy’s Closet, and Index, were also mentioned. The participants also noted the importance of having free Internet access at libraries.

Negative Experiences

One participant mentioned that a mailing list specifically for gay men is not sufficient for communicating with the greater GLBTQ Ottawa community. Participants noted that GLBTQ activities were not promoted on a larger scale by the City of Ottawa.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that GLBTQ activities be included in the listing of all activities in Ottawa, expressing the need for advertisement on a wider scale.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

Participants agreed that there are a lot of volunteer opportunities within the City of Ottawa, and that they are fairly involved within their communities.



Negative Experiences

For several participants, there was concern amongst seniors in the low-income bracket being unable to participate in certain volunteer activities, such as fundraisers that require tickets. Additionally, some participants felt that a few volunteer opportunities were demeaning and not rewarding.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

Participants reported having positive experiences with home support at Centertown Community Health Centre. Two participants noted that the personnel were “really helpful.”

Negative Experiences

Participants noted that homecare workers are not well treated (citing low wages and sporadic hours). Additionally, the participants felt that homecare workers do not receive the necessary support from the City of Ottawa. Participants reported a lack of structure in the way homecare operates, noting that they were not aware as to whom they should call for help.

Other Comments

One participant noted that when doors are not automatic, they are heavy and thus difficult to open and/or close.



Summary: Advisory Committee Session (November 2, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by the City of Ottawa on November 2nd, 2011. Participating were eight members of the Advisory Committee residing in the City of Ottawa.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

Participants reported that Ottawa is a beautiful and livable city that is generally safe and ideally suited for the elderly.

Negative Experiences

Many negative issues pertained to transportation, the general infrastructure (especially downtown), and parking, particularly at hospitals. Participants also reported that there are comparatively high taxes with a skewed distribution of services. One participant noted the lack of services available in French.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested the implementation of preventative programs for isolated senior's in terms of community-oriented support. It was also recommended that less restriction and repercussions be implied in the initiation of interest groups in order to increase opportunities for socialization

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

Many participants noted recent improvements in the overall accessibility of the City, in terms of automated doors, ramps, and countdowns on crosswalks, as a result of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. One participant noted the seniors' park in Orleans as particularly beneficial

Negative Experiences

Some participants found that the maintenance services in the City, such as snow clearance and sidewalk maintenance, are inadequate. Crosswalks were reported as significant issues because of the confusing signage, dangerous locations, and lack of time to cross the streets. One participant stated that there is a lack of promotion of outdoor areas.

Ideas for Improvements

To improve the pedestrian experience, participants suggested the City implement longer crossing times for multi-lane streets, better signage, and better information on getting audible signals at crosswalks for the visually impaired. To improve parks and other outdoor spaces, participants found that more benches, more age-friendly parks, better cycling paths, and better lighting would be very beneficial.

Transportation

Positive Experiences



OC Transpo was mentioned as a positive experience in terms of accessibility (100%) and free days for senior citizens. Other participants mentioned the agreement that the City made to partner with rural locales to provide non-urgent medical or non-medical transportation.

Negative Experiences

One participant stated that the bus stops are too far in between, especially in rural areas. In addition to the problems associated with recent route changes, one participant stated that Ottawa possesses the single highest bus fare in North America, which is still increasing while there is no senior's rate in place. Para Transpo was reported as an issue as well, as there aren't enough vehicles available and booking is difficult. Participants stated that taxi fares are too high, and that the taxi coupon program through Para Transpo is not adequately advertised. For participants who were still driving in the City, there were complaints that the downtown core is quite confusing and signage is difficult to understand. One participant stated that hospital parking is so expensive that they cannot afford to visit patients.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants recommended more areas for pedestrians only, more options in terms of Para Transpo services, and the standardization of street signs. One participant suggested that small buses for suburban areas be made on call during the day to bring senior citizens to major transfer points, thus lessening walking distances and creating more opportunities to travel across the City. Another participant suggested the potential of establishing partnerships with school buses during off-hours.

Housing

Positive Experiences

Participants made note of the advantages of aging at home.

Negative Experiences

Several participants have found that if aging at home, the cost of maintenance and property taxes have become excessively high. One participant stated that there is a lack of short term facilities for rehabilitation, which has led to the unnecessary usage of hospital beds. Retirement residences are too expensive for most, and long term care homes have long waiting lists. One participant noted that city-owned facilities are too expensive to run, thus compromising the actual benefits of maintaining municipal services of the sort.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants advised that the City attempt to provide more community support to encourage aging at home and the provision of subsidies to encourage this while freeing up beds in long term care facilities. One participant stated that there should be standardization of regulations regarding retirement homes to harmonize the level of care across the board. It was also recommended that the City increase seniors-only social housing and lessen by-laws for shared accommodations.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

Participants found that Ottawa is very senior-friendly

Negative Experiences



One participant found that although the City staff listens to complaints, they do not address them. Another participant found that there is respect, but not necessarily inclusion or understanding of needs.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested the establishment of school-based initiatives to educate youth on respect

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

Participants stated that seniors are generally well-served by all City departments. One participant found that the library card and services are the best value. Another participant mentioned the benefits of the drop in centre at St. Laurent.

Negative Experiences

Despite the existence and advantages of the St. Laurent drop in centre, participants found that there is an overall lack across the city, reflecting the unequal distribution of services between different areas of the City. This lack of equality was reported as significant disparities in terms of availability, location, and funding. One participant found that the fees are too high and getting transportation to programs/services is difficult to find.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that retirement residences offer day trips to events/programs or that the programs be brought into the homes to serve all, including those with limited mobility. One participant suggested that the City standardize days in which seniors may receive services for free (i.e. have free bus days on the same day as free museum entrance). Another participant recommended that the City congregate programming by language or culture under the model of the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

Participants found that the 2-1-1 and 3-1-1 information services, waste collection calendar, and councillor columns are all good sources of information

Negative Experiences

Some participants stated that communication to senior citizens is poor, due to the overwhelming focus on services made available solely on the internet. In addition to this problem, the promotion of seniors programming on traditional information outlets such as news print, radio and television are limited in budget, according to one participant. Another participant mentioned that council chamber and committee minutes are no longer available in hard-copy formats, only online.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant recommended that the City establish a senior's ombudsman to deal with issues raised by seniors. Other solutions that were proposed included mass mail outs targeted specifically for seniors and a single point of entry in which seniors can find all the information they need.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

Participants reported that there are a large number of volunteer opportunities.



Negative Experiences

Participants found that senior volunteers are underutilized, and that their ability to do so is limited by the changes to bus routes. One participant noted the bureaucratic issues, such as excessive paperwork and police checks, that are required to partake in most volunteering opportunities. Another participant stated that there is no recognition or direction as to the future of city advisory committees.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants believed that employment and volunteering of elderly services should be promoted, perhaps through the initiation of a recognition/reward system as incentive. Participants also suggested that the City facilitate the process of reaching out to seniors and promote inter-generational cooperation in schools.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

Participants stated that there is a good number of support services available, and particularly in terms of the advertisements for clinics.

Negative Experiences

One participant stated that there is a lack of clarity in terms of navigating through maintenance and home help. Other participants noted that there are discrepancies within the system

Ideas for Improvement

Participants recommended a single application to a multitude of services to deliver correct information or direction. One participant found that partnerships with private agencies could be better utilized. Many participants stressed the importance of aging at home, and that this should be facilitated through ways to accommodate it and services to improve and maintain a healthy home life. One participant suggested that pharmacies could be used as a distribution point to ensure that information reaches the targeted audience.

Other Comments

Overall, participants found that Ottawa is a good place to live for seniors, however there should be easier ways to find services and information. Participants also agreed that seniors should be listened to in order to improve services and that the City should reach out to youth to develop multi-generational approaches that are also 'age friendly'



Summary: Wellington Francophone Low-Income Older Adults Session (November 3, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on November 3rd 2011. Participating were 12 Francophone low-income elderly residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Twelve low-income Francophone elderly persons participated in the session. Of the twelve participants, demographic information was made available for eleven of them. The age average was 75.4, with the youngest being at 60 and the oldest at 91 years old. 9 participants were retired, and only 1 of them was a male. Two participants reported having had a secondary school education, while another two stated that they had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 3. All of the participants were renting. All participants were living on their own, except for one who was living with their spouse/partner. The annual income for single older persons tended to be closer to \$15,000 or less, while the income of the only participant living with one or more individuals fell into the \$15,001-\$22,229 category.

What is it like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

Many participants agreed that they enjoyed living in Ottawa, and that they felt safe and at home in the City. One participant mentioned that the parks made it special for everyone.

Negative Experiences

One participant felt that because they were Francophone, they were ostracized from the Anglophone community.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

Participants stated that they enjoyed the parks in their neighbourhood

Negative Experiences

Many complaints from participants about outdoor spaces pertained to a lack of grocery stores and other food services. Several mentioned that there isn't a grocery store or café in the area. Other participants felt as if the winter time was difficult for them, because the sidewalks aren't plowed and it prevents them from getting outside. One participant mentioned the price of parking in the area, which has risen. Another participant stated that there is too much construction in the area, which makes their lives especially difficult when getting off the bus. There were several concerns about the security of the building, as one participant stated that they didn't leave their house after 7pm because there are too many crazy people in the streets and not enough lighting.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that the city construct a grocery store in this area.

Transportation

Negative Experiences



Some participants who drive in the city felt there were prevalent issues in parking, especially downtown, and that the streets are too small now that the sidewalks have been widened. One participant stated that bicycling is very dangerous in the city. Another participant mentioned that the sidewalks are too far from the roads, which is particularly difficult if using a walker. Several participants expressed dissatisfaction with the Para-Transpo services, such as long wait times and arriving late for appointments because of the service. Participants also felt that bus fare was too high. One participant stated that parking is a big problem in the city, especially the hospital parking lots.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that when OC Transpo offers free fare for seniors, they should lower the age from 65 to 60. Other participants recommended that the city lower prices of gas, clean up the roads and parking services, and increase diligence in regards to snow removal.

Housing

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that they found the services available in the building for the elderly, including assistance and home care, very useful to the elderly. Another participant found that for one person, the accommodations are good and that everything, like markets, are easily accessible.

Negative Experiences

Participants found that the cost of parking is too high considering there are no cleaning services included. The cost of housing for one person was 30% of their revenue, in addition to extra costs for parking and utility. One participant said that there is no hot water and no one has given the tenants any information regarding when it will return and why they don't have it. Other participants agreed that the Housing services were not regularly responding to the complaints and that they told residents that since they are paying a lower price, they should not complain about things that don't work. Several participants agreed that there isn't enough staff on site to deal with issues as they occur. Some of the participants found that a lack of space was an issue, stating that their bedrooms were too small and there are no additional lockers or storage space available to them. One participant said that the hygiene in the building was not good and that there is mold and the carpets are very dirty.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that there should be lighting in the parking garage.

Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that they found no problems in the city of Ottawa. Another reported that young people often assisted them at the grocery store.

Negative Experiences

For one of the participants, the issue was that no one had respect for the elderly, and that they don't even look at them.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

Participants agreed that they enjoyed entertainers that went to sing for them. Another participant mentioned that Tuesdays at the St-Laurent movie theatre is cheaper.



Negative Experiences

One participant stated that they didn't want to go out at night. Many participants found that the cost of activities was too high, especially since pensions are low and the cost of living is too high. One participant stated that this prevents the elderly from having any extra money to participate in events. Another participant mentioned the cost of tickets to a performance at the NAC, which makes it impossible for them to attend. Several other participants agreed that being a francophone in this city is difficult because most services, like at the bank, announcements, and activities, are not available in French. One participant mentioned that in the wintertime, it is difficult to get outside, and there is no cable.

Ideas for Improvement

Announcements should always be made in the two official languages. One participant stated that the city should fix the problem of the cost of activities. Another suggested that the city improve the theatres to facilitate access for the elderly.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

Some participants stated that they were familiar with the 3-1-1 services.

Negative Experiences

One participant stated that they have difficulty finding telephone numbers because the writing is too small in the directory. At the hospital, one person found that the people are not helpful because they just tell them to follow the arrows rather than give directions. Parking, especially around City Hall, is an issue for one participant. Participants also found that the housing services never give the information they need, and rather only have a negative attitude when dealing with tenants. One participant found that a big problem was the automated services on the telephone, and that the elderly do not like this. Several participants found that there was a general lack of respect toward the elderly.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant stated that there should not be a charge for information, including for private services like Rogers. Several participants insisted that both official languages be used in the all communications. Another participant suggested that the City of Ottawa mail out a pamphlet with important phone numbers, rather than junk mail.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

Several participants agreed that the work they do helping others around the residence was enjoyable. One participant mentioned that the many people enjoy participating in committees at the residence. One participant stated that they were happy doing what was important to them.

Negative Experiences

One participant mentioned that, although many do want to volunteer, money is a barrier, for instance having to pay for gas.

Ideas for Improvement

One of the participants suggested that more people participate, especially in regards to bingo games at the residence.



Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

One participant mentioned that the City pays for certain things, like eyeglasses.

Negative Experiences

The cost of medications for people who don't have insurance or who aren't 65 years or older was an issue for one participant. Another participant mentioned the long wait times for operations.

Other Comments

Participants stated that they would enjoy more meetings in French on the subject of support for elderly Francophones in the city.

Other participants agreed that they enjoy the "aging in place" program.



Summary: Guigues Multicultural Francophone Older Adults Session (November 9, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on November 9th, 2011. Participating were 12 elderly Francophone residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Twelve elderly Francophone persons participated in the session. Of the twelve participants in this session, demographic information was made available for ten of them. The age average was 71.9, with the youngest being at 64 and the oldest at 80 years old. 8 participants were retired, and half of them were males. Half of the group had a secondary school education, while only two reported having had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 3. Two participants owned his or her property, while six participants from the group rented. Only two participants lived on their own, while four reported living with their spouse or partner. The annual income for single older persons tended to vary across all categories, while the income of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be closer to the \$15,001 category.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Negative Experiences

Many participants found that the parks in Ottawa are an issue. One participant stated that there aren't enough benches in the parks, and that the ones that are there aren't comfortable for the elderly. Several mentioned that there aren't enough parks in the city, and that rather than making more parks, the city is spending more money on parking lots and buildings, while also damaging the roads because of the construction. One participant stated that there are a lot of problems surrounding urban planning in this city. Several participants also agreed that security has become an issue in Ottawa, and that there isn't enough lighting in many places, which has led to increased violence and decreased safety. One participant mentioned issues with language in stores.

Transportation

Negative Experiences

Many issues reported pertained to the OC Transpo and Para-Transpo bus services. Several participants mentioned that the bus drivers were problematic, as sometimes they don't stop for people waiting, they are rude, and they begin driving before passengers are seated – one participant said that they knew someone who was injured because of this. At the bus stops, one participant stated that there are kids in the area who use the shelters to smoke and talk, which forces the elderly to wait outside in the cold. Another participant found that there aren't enough direct bus routes to shopping centers. Participants agreed that the cost of riding the bus and the Para-Transpo bus is too expensive. Other participants stated that the Para-Transpo services were not numerous enough, difficult to coordinate, slow, and at odd hours. One participant mentioned issues with these drivers as well, stating that they don't wait if riders are late and that they don't show the elderly any respect. Participants in the group who were drivers mentioned issues surrounding parking services, stating that it is too expensive, especially at hospitals, and that the parking on the streets are too difficult for the elderly to get into. Other participants stated that when walking, the intersections are too dangerous and that often the signs don't work.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that drivers should be more patient and that there should be more crosswalks for pedestrians. One participant stated that parking for public services should be free because people already pay taxes. Another suggested that the bus should be free for the elderly.



Housing

Negative Experiences

Many participants agreed that the cost of living is too high, especially when they are paying for rent, television, electricity, heat, and taxes. Some participants found that their apartments are too small, and that there isn't enough affordable housing for the elderly. One participant mentioned that they don't receive the maintenance that they require in their housing. Another found that security is a prominent issue in their housing situation.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that proprietors install grab bars in all of the bathrooms. Another stated that the elderly shouldn't be required to pay taxes, especially if they have a low income. One participant stressed the importance of encouraging and facilitating independent living for the elderly.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

Several participants reported having no issues with respect.

Negative Experiences

Some participants found that the elderly do not receive adequate respect from youth, and that there is a barrier between generations. One participant stated that society doesn't educate children enough. Other participants mentioned that culture and language gaps can lead to isolation and depression, especially since many elderly have unique dialects within their communities and there are no places for them to encounter one another and talk. One participant said that in line ups, people at the back put pressure on the elderly to finish quickly, and insult them when they don't.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

Many participants agreed that there are a lot of services offered to the elderly, including soccer, listening to music, going to parks, playing bingo, swimming, and attending church.

Negative Experiences

For several participants, language barriers were the most prominent issue pertaining to social participation. Some participants mentioned that the movie theatres and newspapers are almost always in English, and they don't have a lot of choice in terms of French entertainment. One participant found that, aside from the community centre, there aren't enough places to socialize that aren't too far away from home.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants agreed that they should find ways to encourage people to go to the community centre to learn languages and participate in activities. One participant suggested that the community centre show films.

Communication and Information

Negative Experiences

Several participants found that they don't get enough information, especially if they are not rich and cannot afford cable television or the internet. One participant mentioned that calling cards to reach their families are too expensive, and that the people who sell them aren't honest. Many participants agreed that speaking to machines is not good, especially when their speaking abilities aren't very good and when there is an urgent issue. One participant said that when calling taxis, they only speak in English.



Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that people visit the elderly and inform them on what is going on in the city.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that it is possible to volunteer in their cultural community.

Negative Experiences

Participants found that language barriers were a prominent issue in their civic participation. One participant stated that they did not know where to go to volunteer. Another participant said that it is costly, especially in terms of gas and meals.

Community Support and Health Services

Negative Experiences

Some participants found that as they age, they are no longer able to live alone at their houses. For some, this means finding a new place to live and for others, it means that they must rely on their families, even though many do not want to be a burden on their family. One participant mentioned that even if they were to live with their family, they would still be alone all day. Several participants brought up issues with health services, especially for elderly immigrants. One participant said that although the services are in place, many immigrants are not made aware of them. For another participant, being an immigrant meant that they aren't able to get a pension, medications are expensive and difficult to obtain, and there is a general lack of resources in terms of health services. Several participants agreed that the pensions were an issue for the elderly.

Other Comments

One participant mentioned that doors are very heavy, especially if they are not automated.



Summary: Orleans Francophone Community Service Providers Session (November 10, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on November 10th, 2011. Participating were 15 Francophone community service providers residing in the City of Ottawa.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

Participants stated that Ottawa was a good place to live because there are a lot of community services available in French and that there is a great quality of life and cultural richness in this city. One participant mentioned that they are able to participate in activities that the younger people do, which allows the elderly to feel youthful. A couple of participants mentioned that there are a lot of services that are close in proximity, including specialized health services which is very important for the elderly.

Negative Experiences

Participants found that the city's shortcomings included the lack of transportation in rural communities and little security.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

One participant lives in a high rise building for people with mobility issues, and it has ramps and automatic doors all over the building, which is essential for the elderly. Another participant stated that they were aware that the city is working hard to diminish the bumps on the sidewalks. Participants also brought up the green spaces and ponds and rivers in Ottawa, which is nice.

Negative Experiences

One participant stated that for those with lower income, it is difficult to change the things that prevent them from moving. Other participants mentioned issues with parks, in that they are populated by young people who make it dirty and dangerous. One participant found that there aren't enough preventative resources for health services, especially as all exercise centers and courses are in English.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested ways to encourage exercise in the elderly. One participant mentioned that in Spain, there are exercise machines in the parks, which would be beneficial for the city of Ottawa. Another found that if there are more places to encourage exercise, then the elderly will live longer and healthier lives, while also breaking patterns of isolation. One participant suggested that there should be municipal laws that control the way that public building increase accessibility for people



will low mobility. Another way to improve the public buildings for the elderly that was suggested was that there should be signs on the groups to guide people.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

The free days for seniors on OC Transpo and the standardization of prices for Para-Transpo, regardless of location, were positive for one participant. Another participant mentioned that they are able to use taxi chits (although many are not aware of it).

Negative Experiences

Many participants found negative aspects of Para-Transpo services. It was mentioned that the logistics of using Para-Transpo services is very complex. Several participants found that the policy for late users left them in a vulnerable state because the drivers do not wait for them. Other participants also mentioned the policies that Para-Transpo has in regards to mentally ill people, as they refuse to take them. One participant stated that this, in addition to cost, has made access to Para-Transpo services too restricted. Several participants also stated that Para-Transpo drivers are not well-educated in the needs of the elderly, and they do not hold responsibility for the people in the vehicles. In regards to parking services in the city, some participants found that there is not enough enforcement when it comes to the abuse of parking spots reserved for handicaps, and that the parking service in hospitals is too expensive.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that there should be parking spots reserved for the elderly, not just the handicapped.

Housing

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that resources like the CCAC were useful in helping the elderly, and that speaking to a healthcare practitioner is the best way to learn about these resources

Negative Experiences

Several participants agreed that there are not enough programs in place to adapt homes to suit the needs of the elderly. Housing costs were an issue for one participant, particularly in the east. One participant mentioned that isolation can be very dangerous for the elderly. One participant stated that the CCAC is overwhelmed with patients. Another participant mentioned that although there are many services in place for the elderly, they are not well communicated and thus people are not aware of them.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that there should be more temporary housing. Another said that people should be able to live where they want, regardless of revenue, and that there should be a grant for residents in private housing. Some participants agreed that there should be programs for students that would teach them to modify houses to meet the needs of the elderly.



Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

In general, participants agreed that there were many opportunities for social inclusion in Ottawa and that they received adequate respect. Some participants mentioned that youth like to volunteer with the elderly, which makes the youth more respectful and allows the elderly to integrate in the community and participate in society. One participant mentioned that the elderly are a lot less isolated because of resources like the Internet and mobile phones. Participants agreed that there are plenty of opportunities in Ottawa for the elderly to participate in activities for a reasonable price.

Negative Experiences

Some participants found that social inclusion is problematic for immigrants, especially concerning intergenerational conflicts between the elderly who feel lost and the children that integrate in society.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that the youth should be educated about the elderly in school to improve the respect between generations. To further this point, another participant believed that the elderly should also be educated on respect, in order to open their minds on the topics of immigration and youth.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

One participant mentioned that resources for social participation give the elderly an opportunity to make connections and create groups of friends, which fosters community building.

Negative Experiences

Participants found that there are not enough resources and nothing organized for social participation. One participant stated that these activities are too costly, especially at the Francophone centers compared to Anglophone centers—highlighting a problem of fiscal inequality.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant stated that the transition between living in a home and moving into a senior residence should be better supported. Another participant suggested that there should be more locations where the elderly can meet and socialize with coffee. Many participants agreed that people who do not want to participate in social activities should not be forced to do so.

Communication and Information



Positive Experiences

One participant stated that there are a lot of excellent community centers in Ottawa with useful information.

Negative Experiences

One participant found that talking to machines on the telephone is not well-suited for the elderly. Another issue for Francophone elderly is the amount of information that is only available in English. One participant found that it is difficult to find information because they have to seek it out.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that the City of Ottawa provide documentation for seniors in French in all public venues, such as forms at health clinics. Another participant noted that the City of Ottawa should use community centers (especially those catering to seniors) as a locale to share information about events or activists related to the senior population.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

One participant mentioned that volunteering is very important, and that its benefits should be recognized by the public. Participants stated that it is necessary to volunteer to give back to society.

Negative Experiences

One participant noted that during the winter months, there is a greater need for volunteers. Another participant mentioned that it will be difficult for the boomer generation to volunteer, as they have not been taught the necessity of volunteering.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant mentioned that interpreters should be provided to seniors who speak neither English nor French so that they can be involved in their communities.

Community Support and Health Services

Negative Experiences

One participant noted that it is difficult for French seniors to receive homecare support and services in French, contributing to greater stress between the seniors and their support workers because of communication. Another participant stated that seniors are not well treated in hospitals, citing the term “bed-blockers” as disrespectful and hurtful; additionally, there is a need for greater support for the transition from the hospital to the patient’s place of residence. Participants mentioned that the healthcare system is prejudice to seniors. The participants also noted that there is a lack of preventative care information and services in French, elaborating that the current system does not promote prevention but treatment.



Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that there be better cooperation between the City of Ottawa and community centers in order to provide more support for those in need of assistance. Another participant stated that there is a need for a uniformity of the services so as to increase communication between the needs of communities and their service providers. Participants also mentioned that more preventative care programs should be implemented.



Summary: Advisory Committee Session (November 14, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by the City of Ottawa on November 14th, 2011. Participating were eight members of the Advisory Committee residing in the City of Ottawa.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

Many participants found that Ottawa is a culturally unique city with a lot of great outdoor spaces.

Negative Experiences

One participant noted that affordable housing is a major challenge in this city. Language problems are also prominent issues.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Negative Experiences

Many participants found that the sidewalks are not numerous enough and in bad condition, which presents a problem for citizens with mobility issues. Parks were also cited as being inaccessible for many because of the narrow and dangerous bike paths and lack of seating to rest. Other participants found that the urban planning around the City is problematic, as it is too conventional and uncreative, not doing justice to the status of a national capital. One participant stated that the outlying areas of the City are often neglected.

Ideas for Improvements

Participants suggested that urban planning be made more interesting and considerate of current generations of elderly and the future as well. One participant stated that pedestrians should be allotted more time to cross the streets. Others found that new bike paths should be made and that streets should be wider, especially in areas that senior citizens are living in. One participant suggested that the City install a T-bar lift going across the canal and downtown area.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

Positive aspects of public transportation services that were listed were the new system that announces the next stop and the days in which seniors are permitted to ride for free.

Negative Experiences

Many participants found that the recent changes to bus routes are extremely problematic for the elderly, and that these changes were implemented with little consultation of senior citizens. Buses are also the source of issues for senior citizens because there aren't enough seating/standing



areas for them both on the bus and at bus stops. One participant stated that the Para-Transpo waiting times are too long and that the service is inadequate. The high cost of taxis and bus fare was a reported issue by multiple participants.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants made many suggestions for improving the transportation services within the city, including the development of a light-rail service to the east end, better traffic control (i.e. low speed limits and photo radars), and improved street signs (signage in Kitchener, ON, was stated to be a good model). Several participants agreed that the City needs to engage and involve all members of the public in consultations before changes are made.

Housing

Positive Experiences

One participant found that the Aging in Place program that operates in some subsidized buildings was beneficial to the elderly.

Negative Experiences

Many participants agreed that the cost of housing, both private and public, was too high in relation to low and middle incomes, while new development continually focuses on the building of 'luxury' condos. Participants found that subsidized housing, and specifically subsidized housing for the disabled/people with limited mobility, is inadequate and further inhibited by long waiting lists. One participant stated that emergency shelters are not age friendly, especially for women and people with mobility issues.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that the Aging in Place program be expanded upon to reach a greater range of citizens as well as taking into the consideration the varying linguistic needs of the elderly. Other participants suggested that the City, in conjunction with the provincial and federal governments, offer tax rebates and other incentives to encourage developers to build with the needs of the elderly in mind. Improving safety in parks, neighbourhoods, and shelters was suggested by some participants. Another way to improve the housing situation was to match seniors who live alone with students who attend college/university in Ottawa, thus providing housing for students and support for seniors.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

Participants stated that the City has many services to help people get engaged, and that in general the elderly receive good treatment.



Negative Experiences

One participant mentioned that low income senior citizens aren't able to afford the fees associated with social inclusion. Some participants found that large-scale retirement residences had no interest in respecting their tenets or providing adequate services

Ideas for Improvement

Participants stressed the importance of maintaining social networks through friends and family, which can often be facilitated by the use of computers

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

Many participants agreed that there is a wide range of services available for senior citizens, including libraries, museums, and university programs.

Negative Experiences

Participants stated that main issues regarding social participation pertained to the access fees and limited services available in French.

Ideas for Improvement

Several participants agreed that new seniors' centers and services should be established, and in doing so, improve public transportation to encourage participation. One participant suggested that different services should be made available to different groups of senior citizens, stating that ages 60 and 80 are very different with differing needs and desires. Other participants found that there should be more community-oriented senior's services to increase accessibility for people of different cultures and languages (especially for Francophones)

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

Many participants reported that the phone lines, and specifically the 3-1-1 and 2-1-1 services, are good.

Negative Experiences

Several participants agreed that the lack of legitimate bilingualism throughout the city, particularly in the library and with the Snow Go contractors, which are all available exclusively in English. Some participants found that the Ottawa website was an issue in terms navigation and finding information, while also acting as a barrier for gaining information because it is the main source, and many people do not use the Internet to gain information.

Ideas for Improvement



Participants recommended a mechanism for the effective reporting and resolving of seniors' complaints. One participant suggested that the City avoid advertising things in both languages if it is only actually offered in one. To improve the dissemination of information, one participant mentioned the possible use of community agencies to provide information for seniors.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

Participants agreed that there are many opportunities for volunteer work and that the existing volunteers do an excellent job.

Negative Experiences

Many participants found that the City tends to neglect consulting senior citizens when making new developments, such as route optimization and the rebuilding of Lansdowne Park. One participant stated that there is no clear role of advisory committees.

Ideas for Improvement

Several participants suggested that the City create consultation processes for seniors or ward councils. One participant recommended that the City facilitate a network of community services to share information. Another participant believed that policies should be established to facilitate paid employment of older adults and the tools they need to succeed in doing so, such as transportation.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

Participants stated that the OPH does a good job of connecting to communities and services.

Negative Experiences

The main concerns for participants regarding community support and health services were the lack of service available in French and food security.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested the implementation of nutritional counseling services. In recognition of the importance of homecare services, one participant proposed that they be covered under Medicare. Other participants stressed the importance of outreach and support networks.

Other Comments

Final comments pertained to the high degree of senior citizens living in poverty. Several participants agreed that this issue needs to be addressed.



Summary: Vanier Older Adults with Disabilities Session (November 15, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on November 15th, 2011. Participating were 13 elderly people with disabilities living in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Thirteen elderly persons with disabilities participated in the session. Of the thirteen participants in this session, eleven of them provided demographic information. The age average was 73, with the youngest being at 62 and the oldest at 83 years old. All of the participants were retired, and five of them were males. Five participants from the group had a secondary school education, while another five had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 2.5. Six participants owned his or her property, while the rest of the group rented. Eight participants lived on their own, three of whom were renting. The annual income for single older persons tended to be close to \$22,230-\$41,545.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

One participant found that the Ontario Disability Act has resulted in many positive improvements for the lives of seniors with disabilities. One participant mentioned that the presence of railings to hold onto in washrooms was particularly beneficial for people with disabilities

Negative Experiences

Some participants agreed that the lack of accessibility of public washrooms, especially in restaurants that have washrooms on a separate floor, was a negative aspect of public buildings in Ottawa. One participant stated that the degree to which people without disabilities use elevators in malls is negative and should be regulated. Another participant found that the use of scooters on sidewalks is both frightening and dangerous for pedestrians.

Ideas for Improvements

One participant stated that the city should be more pedestrian-friendly while improving conditions for people with disabilities who have pre-existing barriers in getting around. This participant suggested that the city retrofit spaces and have spaces for people with disabilities and others to congregate.

Transportation

Positive Experiences



Several participants agreed that the drivers of Para-Transpo and OC-Transpo buses are very friendly and helpful. Another benefit of the public transportation system that was mentioned was the wheelchair accessibility.

Negative Experiences

One participant found that a significant issue in regards to public transportation is the frequent prioritization of strollers over senior citizens and people with disabilities. Another issue pertaining to transportation that was mentioned is the lack of parking accessibility, especially for larger vehicles that have been adapted to accommodate people with disabilities.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that certain parking spots should be made wider to accommodate vehicles that are transporting people with disabilities to facilitate the loading and unloading processes.

Housing

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that they are quite happy with the neighbourhood that they reside in (Canterbury) because everything is within a reasonable distance. Another participant mentioned the positive aspects of recent initiatives to construct subsidized housing for people with disabilities throughout the Ottawa region.

Negative Experiences

Many participants agreed that existing housing structures are not properly equipped to accommodate people with disabilities. Common issues that pose a threat to people with disabilities are the narrow hallways, lack of automated doors, and second floors which are inaccessible because there are no elevators. Other participants mentioned the lack of nursing homes throughout the City, which has led to long waiting lists on existing homes. A couple of participants said that despite an increased presence of accessible housing developments and retirement residences, many are far too expensive.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that changes to building codes would be the most beneficial to improving housing conditions for people with disabilities.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

One participant found that a positive improvement of respect and social inclusion in the city has been the increased degree of awareness and acceptance toward people with disabilities.



Negative Experiences

Many participants agreed that the stigmas associated with disability (physical or cognitive) have led to marginalization and exclusion. One participant has found that they are often unnecessarily yelled at because of a hearing impairment.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant stated that people with disabilities should be treated normally.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that the city has a lot of volunteers, which is good for improving levels of social participation.

Negative Experiences

A lack of transportation has prevented one participant from attending many social events.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that giving discounts on fees would be one way to encourage increased participation.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

Participants agreed that the various ways to obtain information are positive. One participant, who is visually impaired, reported the usefulness of getting news via telephone. Another found that the presence of computers with internet access in libraries is beneficial for both getting information and socializing with friends in different cities. One participant stated that 4-1-1 is very helpful in obtaining information.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

One participant said that volunteering is very rewarding in many ways.

Negative Experiences



For one participant, the main issue in terms of volunteering and civic participation is the lack of equity between non-volunteers and volunteers, as more volunteers are working just as hard as paid employees with an unequal degree of compensation. Another participant is worried that too many cutbacks of funding may result in over-reliance on the work of volunteers.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

When one participant went on vacation, health care services provided respite care for their spouse which was reportedly a very positive experience

Negative Experiences

Several participants agreed that home healthcare is very expensive. One participant found another issue in nursing homes is that there is a lack of nursing staff, in which ratios of residents to staff are not reasonable.

Other Comments

Many participants stated that important ways of improving the City rest in increasing awareness on prevalent issues such as suicide, elder abuse, and healthy eating.



Summary: Western Ottawa Service Providers Session (November 16, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on November 16th, 2011. Participating were eight community service providers residing in the City of Ottawa.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

Some participants expressed that there is an abundance of opportunities for seniors to be involved, including opportunities to volunteer, to develop skills, and to assist in research. Participants also noted that there is a variety of programs and services for seniors.

Negative Experiences

Participants noted that Ottawa's environmental changes (i.e. population growth and area expansion) have contributed to the decline of small communities, thus creating more loneliness, institutionalization and over-medication. Several participants stated that housing is the most difficult issue facing seniors in Ottawa. Participants also mentioned that there is a lack of communication between service providers and seniors.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants noted that the City of Ottawa should work towards improving communication between service providers and senior residents. Some participants stated that younger generations should be taught about respect for the elderly. In addition, participants suggested that seniors should be better integrated into their respective communities. One participant noted that seniors should be educated on accepting persons with disabilities. Some participants expressed that improvements can be made to better travel for seniors, including improving sidewalk conditions and bus services. One participant mentioned the need for safety prevention amongst seniors.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Negative Experiences

One participant expressed that it is difficult to navigate in the downtown areas and in the suburbs. Participants also noted that there is a lack of public washrooms in popular locations. Some participants found that the degree of accessibility and travel significantly declines during the winter months. Many participants stressed the inaccessibility of sidewalks during construction, which contributes to further isolation. One participant mentioned that many community centers are not senior-friendly, citing the lack of elevators, and wheelchair ramps.

Ideas for Improvement

Several participants agreed that the City of Ottawa needs to improve its snow removal efforts, especially near bus stops. One participant suggested that there be a greater emphasis on



community building, citing an increase in group activities such as exercising or shopping. Participants expressed that the City of Ottawa work towards making all parks senior-friendly.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

Participants stated that they were very pleased with the “free bus days”. One participant mentioned Glebe Centre as a model service provider.

Negative Experiences

Some participants expressed that it is difficult to travel by scooters or wheelchairs during the winter months. Participants noted that there is a lack of innovative transportation, which forces seniors to relocate to downtown areas because of issues of inaccessibility to important (and often vital) services. Many participants noted that Para-Transpo has scheduling problems, making it difficult for seniors to benefit from the service. Additionally, Para-Transpo only accepts persons with disabilities for additional fees, and it does not accept persons with mental illnesses, which makes it difficult for many seniors to travel within the city. One participant stated that there is a lack of support in the period before and after seniors have traveled to their destinations, citing the need for additional help to unload groceries as an example.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that cycling paths with increased safety measures be introduced in all areas of the City of Ottawa. One participant stated that senior-friendly routes be introduced, in light of the fact that seniors drive at lower speeds; the participant mentioned developing one age-friendly street to serve as a model to build on. One participant suggested improving public transportation services in Kanata. Some participants noted that bus drivers should wait for seniors to be seated before restarting the engine.

Housing

Negative Experiences

Many participants stressed the fact that housing is the most important issue affecting seniors. Several participants agreed that there is a shortage of funding for improving the services offered in group homes, as well as services pertaining to long-term care. Some participants cited the lack of accessibility from their homes to a family doctor, which results in many seniors seeking medical attention in emergency rooms. Participants also stated the lack of supportive housing for low-income seniors who are ineligible for long-term care and have no “safe” place to reside in. Many participants noted the lack of support for home-based diagnosis to assess the safety of homes for seniors.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that long-term care should be integrated into communities. Some participants expressed the need for the City of Ottawa to provide funding for retrofitting houses and buildings to allow seniors to continue living in their homes. Participants stated the urgent need for the government to develop a housing strategy and suggested that the City of Ottawa form a partnership with developers in order to encourage the construction of affordable housing in several areas of the city. One participant suggested that funding be



redirected to assisting “living” initiatives, and bettering the quality of life for seniors in their homes and not in the hospitals. Participants also stated that there is a need for more creative and greater amounts of communication between service providers and seniors. One participant stressed the importance of equipping seniors’ place of residence with safety features, such as fire alarms and prevention, and a safety plan, that also take in to account seniors with special needs (i.e. a fire alarm system for seniors who are deaf).

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

Some participants shared the view that, in general, agencies and service providers are doing a “fantastic” job, as long as one is an active senior.

Negative Experiences

Many participants agreed that there is a need to remove barriers to access activities. Some participants expressed that seniors are perceived as a burden. One participant noted that although the city provides many services, if one is an inactive senior (due to health issues, or simply aging); these services are inaccessible, which contributes to citizens feeling ostracized and marginalized. Another participant stated that deaf seniors are extremely isolated.

Ideas for Improvement

Many participants suggested the introduction of intergenerational opportunities. One participant suggested that younger generations be educated on how to treat and respect seniors.

Social Participation

Negative Experiences

Participants found that for persons with developmental disabilities, the registration process for activities and services is difficult and not age-friendly. Some participants noted that due to a lack of transportation or finance, seniors are isolated and do not have access to education nor cultural activities. Participants noted that the winter months also present a challenge to community involvement.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested converting some community centers into community centers for seniors, given that the greater majority of attendees at community centers are currently seniors. Some participants stated that low-income seniors should have access to free programs at community centers. Participants suggested that educators, schools and universities should have programs for seniors.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

A participant stated that there is information for seniors regarding different services, but that a major issue is accessibility to information.



Negative Experiences

Most participants noted that a major problem is the fact that many seniors are not computer literate, nor do they have smartphones; society's growing dependence on paperless communications is isolating seniors. Many participants noted that there is a need for improved communications between seniors and services providers that include an increase in personalized communication.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested implementing a seniors' day in each neighbourhood, where seniors are provided with information regarding services related to them. Another participant suggested including an information booth in public libraries.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

One of the participants stated that there are many volunteer groups and opportunities. Another participant mentioned the benefits of volunteering, stating that it aids in community-building—something that should be encouraged in seniors' communities.

Negative Experiences

Participants stated that the computer training and police checks required for many volunteer opportunities in the city are a barrier to potential volunteers.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant stated that the next generation needs to be educated on volunteering. Another participant noted that seniors should be involved in the creation and implementation of services, so as to explore new models and promote civic participation. Some participants suggested the creation of a "seniors' channel" on television.

Community Support and Health Services

Negative Experiences

Many participants stated frustration with the allocation (and misallocation) of funds in the system. Another participant noted that the eligibility criterion makes it difficult for seniors to gain access to certain services.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that seniors be allowed to consult with a care coordinator about both formal and informal care options; the participants expressed that such an opportunity will empower seniors by allowing them to make their own decisions concerning their places of residence. One participant stated that it is important to



mobilize seniors at the grassroots level so as to improve the overall quality of services offered. Another participant stated that there need to be options to support life in home, and not solely the option of long-term care. Many participants suggested that the system be redesigned to focus on patients instead of programs. Some participants stated that the government should implement a program that subsidizes costs for seniors who wish to receive customized care from private services.

Summary: United Way Business Community Session (November 23, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on November 23rd, 2011. Participating were ten members of the business community residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Nine service providers participated in the session. The age average was 53, with the youngest being at 39 and the oldest at 69 years old. None of the participants were retired, and three of them were males.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that life in Ottawa is good if seniors have sufficient informal support.

Negative Experiences



Several participants stated increased wealth improved the quality of life for seniors in Ottawa (in terms of transportation and housing especially), which prevents and isolates low-income seniors from receiving the same quality of care. Some participants mentioned that there is a lack of support concerning the stages of transitions between a seniors' place of residence to a nursing home. One participant noted that Ottawa's geographical diversity contributes to the isolation of seniors. Participants stated that there is a lack of knowledge with respect to services provided to seniors.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant noted that Ottawa's multicultural dimension impacts the services that are provided, and so, different cultures should be provided with their own advocates. Another participant suggested that seniors be given a forum where they are encouraged to ask for the help and services they require.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

Some participants said that they enjoyed curb-free and well-lit parks, which facilitate accessibility for seniors.

Negative Experiences

One participant pointed out that there are many safety issues, the most prominent of which is snow removal. Many participants mentioned that sidewalks and roads are not necessarily accessible, especially regarding wheelchairs, and that construction of sidewalks should factor in wheelchairs. One of the participants stated that smoking outside of public offices is unacceptable. Another participant found that shopping carts in stores are oversized and too heavy for seniors, stating that seniors should have access to smaller carts.

Ideas for Improvement

Several participants agreed that there is a need for more permanent public benches, especially around long-term care facilities. Participants suggested that, when developing seniors' communities in Canada, weather issues must be taken into account—for example, no curbs, sufficient lighting, and snow removal. One participant noted that when building communities, constructing indoor walkways between buildings, will improve accessibility for seniors during winter months. Another participant noted that there is a need for better visual signs for street-crossing, so as to aid deaf seniors. Participants also suggested that church facilities, in particular the main entrance) be remodeled to accommodate the needs of seniors.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

Participants believed that the public transportation in Ottawa, OC Transpo, is very helpful for the elderly, especially on days that it is free for seniors who can't afford public transportation all the time. Some participants enjoy living in smaller neighbourhoods and communities, which allow for greater informal support.



Negative Experiences

Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with OC Transpo due to the decrease in services after 6pm, which thus forces seniors to either hire taxis or remain at home. Many participants noted that seniors are often injured when entering or exiting buses. Additionally, participants felt that Para-Transpo is not reliable and often runs late, citing that arriving to doctor's appointments on time is a major issue. Participants mentioned that waiting for transportation services is physically uncomfortable and tiring. One participant noted that parking in hospitals is very expensive. Another participant stated that the lack of public transportation infrastructure in rural communities forces seniors to leave their rural residences, or face isolation.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested an increase in escort services, which are important for seniors who are alone and require assistance to and from appointments. Some participants also noted that Para-Transpo services have to be easier and more flexible to seniors, and that costs should be decreased. One participant stated that the City of Ottawa should subsidize taxi companies to encourage accessible and affordable taxi services, which would alleviate Para-Transpo. Some participants suggested that OC Transpo should not be allowed to strike, as seniors are the first persons to suffer from transport strikes.

Housing

Negative Experiences

Several participants agreed that there is a shortage of accessible and affordable housing. Participants noted that for long-term care facilities, there are long waiting lists and that many couples are split up. One participant stated that social workers should not encourage seniors to relocate to long-term care facilities, but should instead offer services to keep seniors in their homes. Another participant mentioned that the frequent transitions for seniors (such as moving into new facilities) contribute to an accelerated decline in terms of health.

Ideas for Improvement

Many participants expressed the need for homecare support, stating that "homecare is the answer", instead of being relocated to a seniors' residence. Participants stressed the need for funding for homecare. Several participants suggested that activities between senior communities and younger generations be promoted.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

Some participants shared that seniors are more active than before, and therefore look younger; participants felt that there is now a need for awareness of what an aged persons looks like. One participant felt validated through experiences in meaningful employment for seniors.

Negative Experiences

Many participants agreed that social isolation is a prominent issue, which is only being accelerated with the growing use and dependence on social media as a means to convey information;



participants noted that many seniors receive access to information only through the television, contributing to missed information.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested persons in the service industry be educated in respecting, and dealing with, seniors. Participants stated that the government should provide services that aid seniors in understanding and using technology, so that they can both be more engaged and be provided with a venue to ask for help or information. One participant noted that there should be an increase in opportunities of mentorship and involvement in the community. Another participant suggested that more public toilets be built for persons with disabilities.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

Many participants felt that there is a variety of activities for seniors in Ottawa to choose from; participants noted that sometimes the cost will affect the choice of activity. One participant noted that there are plenty of activities in the Glebe Community Center, citing good communication in the use of posters. Another participant mentioned “Forever Young” as an exemplary program for seniors, which charges for the initial assessment fee, but offers classes for free. Participants were pleased with the National Arts Centre offering free tickets for rehearsals.

Negative Experiences

One of the participants noted that many seniors do not travel on their own because of health reasons; unless there are persons to assist seniors to and from events, seniors are ostracized. Another participant mentioned that the majority of activities are female-oriented (i.e. painting, poetry), which marginalizes the male senior population.

Ideas for Improvement

Some participants suggested that homecare be flexible so as to accommodate seniors’ social outings. Another participant noted that activities that promote health and wellness should be better advertised. Participants stated that access to information should be improved, and that it should rely less on the internet—which many seniors do not have access to.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

A participant stated that having personal contacts can be very helpful in obtaining information. Others found that the internet and pressing “0” on the telephone are good options for getting information.

Negative Experiences



Most participants agreed that the process of getting information is frustrating. One of the participants noted that automated telephone systems are problematic for seniors, as they prefer face-to-face interaction. One participant noted the issues with adapting marketing strategies to incorporate different age groups. Another participant noted that the lack of consolidation in information is a system-wide issue, which makes attaining the proper information a complex and stressful process, especially for seniors who are on their own.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant noted that information services be adapted to seniors, such as printing programs. Another participant stressed the need to remove the barrier between seniors and technology by implementing programs that assist seniors in using technological tools. Participants suggested the creation of a consolidated list of service providers.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

One of the participants stated that working for seniors is gratifying because they are grateful for the services and information they receive.

Negative Experiences

One participant noted that there are many barriers to being a volunteer, including the costs involved with registration, such as police checks.

Ideas for Improvement

A participant mentioned that seniors should be better recognized in the work they pursue, as incentives are encouraging. Some participants noted that volunteering in a field similar to a senior's former job is an easy means by which to mentor or teach other seniors. Participants also suggested an increase in pension supplementation, especially for low-income seniors. One participant noted that the introduction of paid-work for seniors would provide a supplement for small pensions.

Community Support and Health Services

Negative Experiences

A participant found that senior living is unregulated and fees can be easily added, as there are too many loopholes and lack of transparency, which allows people to take advantage of seniors. The participant stressed the need for greater regulation and disclosure, stating that an unregulated system can contribute to elder abuse. Another participant noted that private services take advantage of seniors and their families. Participants stated that navigating the health and support system is very challenging, and that seniors often require assistance.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants found that there should be more conversation with seniors about aging and nearing the end of life, so that they can be better prepared and informed for healthcare options.





Summary: Isolated People Session (November 29, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on November 29th, 2011. Participating were 12 elderly residing in the City of Ottawa.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

Participants found that Abbotsford House is invaluable in providing and accessing needed support. They also found that CNIB is an excellent service. Participants found that they are lucky to live in cooperative housing and remain involved in the community. Another beneficial service mentioned was the delivery of groceries and senior's discounts

Negative Experiences

One participant found that being over the age of 65 while not retired; there are serious gaps in services, especially for people with decreased income.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

No comments were mentioned.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

Participants reported that OC Transpo and Para Transpo services are great for transportation and the prevention of isolation. Taxi chits were also reportedly very useful services for the elderly. Participants found that volunteer drivers and regular taxi drivers are very good and helpful.

Negative Experiences

Para Transpo was mentioned as having several negative aspects, including the difficulty in making appointments, the ineligibility of people with visual impairments, and the inconsistency of services in general. One participant found that after stopping driving, social contact and independence were heavily compromised. One participant stated that the parking rates, especially at hospitals, were outrageous.

Ideas for Improvements



Participants suggested that Para Transpo extend taxi accessibility beyond 6pm and that there should be more support for longer hours and more drivers for transportation services from community organizations like Abbotsford.

Housing

Negative Experiences

Participants reported that current housing options are only available for the wealthy.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants would like the city to address the need for affordable housing and increased choices for senior citizens in terms of living accommodations.

Respect and Social Inclusion

No comments were mentioned.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

Participants reported that church activities and the public library are good services.

Negative Experiences

Participants stated that ramps and automatic door buttons are often in disrepair in public spaces, such as hockey arenas (buttons aren't functional and ramps are not cleared in the winter). In the case of the buttons not working for doors, they are often too heavy for the elderly to open without assistance, especially if using a walker.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants would like to see funding for seniors programs in community centers, such as multicultural programs.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

Participants reported obtaining most of their information through word of mouth. It was also stated that mailers from City Councillors are very nice and helpful.

Negative Experiences



Participants found that information is difficult to obtain when in isolation. Despite the existence of 2-1-1 and 3-1-1 services, many are unaware of them.

Ideas for Improvement

Suggestions for improving communication were the establishment of a central location to get all necessary information in a physical format, online, and by telephone. It is important that information is accessible in a variety of formats.

Civic Participation and Employment

No comments were mentioned.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

The availability and affordability of medical transportation through Abbotsford is very useful. Participants found that paramedics are fast, reliable, and kind. Food services are made easily accessible through the Meals on Wheels and Country Grocer.

Negative Experiences

Participants were concerned that health services available through the CCAC have been reduced. One participant said that they are no longer able to access drug supplement from CCAC, resulting in the termination of certain prescriptions due to lack of affordability. Another participant reported dissatisfaction with the CCAC because of their policy on services following hospital admittance or 14-day hiatus'. It was also reported the changing regulations for employment and social assistance services are detrimental to the well-being of senior citizens. One participant stated that what seniors end up paying for private services typically has a negative impact on the overall quality of life when living on a fixed income

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that there should be more education about services for senior citizens, particularly the foot care and physiotherapy which is covered by OHIP. There should also be increased awareness about the Helpline at Elizabeth Bruyère, which is a quality service that offers subsidies for seniors in financial need. Groceries should also be made more available for seniors.

Other Comments

Participants reiterated the benefits of a location like Abbotsford House.

Summary: Multicultural Older Adults Session (November 30, 2011)

Background



The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on November 30th, 2011. Participating were ten multicultural elderly residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Ten elderly persons participated in the session. Of the ten participants, demographic information was made available for nine of them. The age average was 75, with the youngest being at 65 and the oldest at 94 years old. All but one of the participants was retired, and five of them were males. Three members of the group had a secondary school education, while the remaining six had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 1.8. Five participants owned his or her property, while the rest of the group rented. Two participants lived on their own, and only one of them was renting. The annual income of older people living with one or more individuals was distributed between the \$15,001-\$22,229 category and the \$41,545-\$83,088 category.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

Most of the participants in the study highlighted such positive characteristics of Ottawa as: bilingualism, a general friendly outlook to multicultural communities, relative easiness in getting around the city, as well as Ottawa's relative quietness as compared to larger cities. With regards to their experience in Ottawa as older adults, the participants noted the benefit of living in senior homes, which fostered their sense of belonging to a community and developed a stronger cultural affiliation.

Negative Experiences

Among the broader difficulties experienced by the multicultural seniors, the participants noted a strong presence of cultural and linguistic barriers; and a lack of interaction with neighbours, unless they belonged to the same cultural group. One of the participants highlighted the strong support organization within the Chinese community, while another noted the general shortage of space experienced by the Chinese seniors' community in Ottawa.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

As an example of a positive experience, one individual mentioned the convenience of living near a hospital: that facilitated her access to the medical services and to the public transit.

Negative Experiences

One of the distressing experiences that the participants highlighted in the discussion was the lack of street plowing in some communities. Equally parking and especially handicapped parking near libraries, malls and community centres was mentioned as a distressing issue by some participants. Two individual participants noted the small size of the street signage as a concern, and several other citizens noted the broader issue of signs not being easily visible to the senior adults.

Ideas for Improvement



As some ideas for improvement, the participants suggested increasing the number of parks in the Barrhaven neighbourhood, closer to homes and community centres. Furthermore, the participants recommended installing bus shelters and potentially, even washrooms, at every stop, as public transportation is difficult and often requires a lengthy wait in Barrhaven. The participants also recommended creating a community contact list by means of introducing a seniors' neighbourhood association. Another participant recommended prioritizing the construction of bungalows, instead of larger two-or-more storey buildings, which are significantly less accessible to older adults.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

As the discussion on transportation in the city of Ottawa progressed, the participants' broader comments highlighted their positive experience with the free seniors' days, but overall, multiple suggestions and concerns stressed the fact that multiple further improvements would be necessary to make Ottawa's transportation system more 'age-friendly'.

Negative Experiences

Several of the participants in the consultations noted the forbidding price of transportation, which effectively, deterred the more active senior adults from participating and engaging in the community events. Several participants suggested either introducing the reduced seniors' fare throughout the week, or allowing the seniors to ride for free during the off-peak hours of the day (i.e. 9a.m. to 3p.m.). Several participants also noted significant problems with the public transportation in their individual communities: for example, and individual from South Keys noted that the access to buses was very limited in his area, with bus stops too far from the individual neighborhoods and too distantly spaced. Several participants further noted the poor state of the sidewalks, especially the poor snow plowing in the winter. One citizen also highlighted the unsafe attitude of the cyclists towards the pedestrians.

Ideas for Improvement

Several individuals together voiced the suggestion that the senior adults should be able to make the Para-Transpo reservations on the day of the trip, instead of 24 hours in advance: as one participant noted, oftentimes, the doctors would be late for his medical appointments, and thus, he would miss his Para-Transpo trip, thus being rendered virtually immobile.

Housing

Positive Experiences

To cite the positive experiences described by the participants with regard to housing, one participant declared openly that she is very grateful to be living in Canada, and she feels provided with everything she requires. Another participant noted that in his apartment building, every utility is made to accommodate seniors; yet, he noted, as he was aging, he was starting to get worried about how his future needs will be met. Effectively, other participants had some suggestions for improvement, and experiences to share.

Negative Experiences



Several participants noted that since the retirement residences were extremely expensive, many seniors were obligated to live in often sub-standard apartment buildings, or simply in housing facilities that were not designed to accommodate seniors. For instance, as one participant noted, in his apartment, he did not have bars to hold on to when he was moving around the apartment. Several other individuals noted similar experiences of living in housing that was not designed to accommodate seniors.

Ideas for Improvement

Consequently, some senior adults participating in the study suggested the possibility of building apartment buildings designed specifically for senior living; the individuals agreed that even slightly higher costs would not be disconcerting, as their standard of living would improve. Another individual suggested that health and safety standards should constantly be monitored in the subsidized housing that accommodates senior citizens. Finally, another individual suggested that more community living options, as well as more affordable home care, should be available.

Social Inclusion

Participants' Experiences

The discussion with regards to the social inclusion of the senior citizens of multicultural backgrounds, several participants noted the importance of community groups in the process of integrating immigrant seniors. One of the participants noted that it is important for every cultural group to have a specific person responsible for maintaining contact between the members, and broader community networks. As another individual stressed, while local communities were extremely significant for the integration of the senior citizens, they often had limited venues and space shortages for the group gatherings. As several individuals with a multiethnic background noted, they were often treated as foreigners by the broader community, and thus, the individual citizens had to be more assertive, to demand inclusion in order to integrate to the best of their ability.

Ideas for Improvement

A few individuals participating in the discussion stressed the importance of further public forums and consultations similar to the current one in the process of integrating the senior citizens into the broader community.

Communication and Information

Participants' Experiences

As a positive experience, one individual noted the high usefulness of the 89.1, 93.1 and 97.9 FM multicultural radio channels in disseminating information among the multicultural seniors. Also, the newsletters available for pick-up from the community centres proved very useful for many immigrant participants. With regards to the negative experiences, as one of the participants noted, many of the senior citizens did not know about the 3-1-1/2-1-1 services provided, and thus, she suggested that better advertising is necessary.



Ideas for Improvement

As the participants noted, with regards to disseminating information among the multicultural immigrants, more traditional mediums of communications, such as telephone services and newspapers (e.g. now-defunct MEC) or bulletins would be more suitable than on-line newsletters and websites. As several participants noted, the city of Ottawa's website was difficult to understand, with information not readily accessible. One participant suggested creating community counseling services for senior adults, enabling them with an opportunity to 'vent' about family problems and other concerns. Several individuals also recommended creating Internet and computer classes, and lessons in everyday English specifically for recent senior immigrants (e.g. to enable them to interact in stores, with caregivers etc.).

Social Participation

Negative Experiences

When discussing social participation matters, several participants noted that they felt confined within their own cultural community; thus, they suggested, that more multicultural community activities (and effectively, the corresponding space, advertising and resources) were necessary in order to integrate the immigrant seniors into the broader Ottawa community. Effectively, as one of the participants noted, too often the potential activities for the senior adults were limited to those provided by their church communities.

Ideas for Improvement

Several of the participants recommended creating more fitness centres and activities that would be more affordable and closer to the senior citizens. As one of the individuals noted, 'if there was more transportation available day and night, we would go out more'.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

As one of the participant volunteers remarked, volunteering was readily available and she often commuted to her volunteering locations by bus without difficulty. Nonetheless, as other participants remarked, several other barriers must be eliminated in order to facilitate the civic participation of the senior citizens.

Negative Experiences

For instance as one individual suggested, in order to volunteer, the senior citizens needed to have easy access to transportation, meals provided for them by the organization and a steady income (i.e. pension or subsidies). Therefore, as the participants recommended, more work was necessary in order to provide the senior citizens with accessible transport and resources in order to promote senior civic participation.

Community Support and Health Services

Ideas for Improvement



As the individuals participating in the study noted, multiple linguistic and cultural barriers created a difficulty in accommodating senior citizens with multicultural backgrounds. Several individuals proposed different suggestions with regards to this common theme: For instance, one participant recommended providing specialized long-term care facilities that would focus on different cultural communities, providing the residents with familiar food and language. Equally, another participant recommended re-evaluating the facilities of the old nursing homes, as some of the older nursing institutions have little to offer in terms of privacy and comfort. Effectively, as one of the senior citizens suggested, more community support workers were essential in order to encourage seniors to stay in their homes. While the discussion continued on this topic, one of the individuals recommended training more multilingual community workers, and another participant suggested better scheduling co-ordination between different workers – effectively, as he noted, his life was completely chaotic as he was always visited by different community works, with little to no co-ordination between them.

Other Comments

In conclusion, several suggestions were voiced by the participants. One individual insisted that more multicultural groups and events were necessary in order to encourage the mingling of different cultures. Another participant recommended conducting a study on elder abuse; yet another individual proposed discussing the inherent complex of being a senior, and all the issues associated with it at a similar consultation. In the end, the discussion closed with the proposal to conduct studies similar to the present one on a regular basis, and to focus on a singular issue per meeting.

Summary: Health Practitioners from Elizabeth Bruyère session (December 2, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Dominique Paris Mackay (Age-Friendly Ottawa) on December 2nd, 2011. Participating were five expert gerontologists working at Elizabeth Bruyère Hospital in the City of Ottawa.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

One participant mentioned the advantages of the expertise and knowledge that the Bruyère Continuing Care and Research Institute have.

Negative Experiences

Negative aspects of living in Ottawa were the high cost of activities, which leads to decreased participation in communities, and the challenges that pedestrians face when walking in the City

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences



Many participants listed the walking programs, and particularly ones at malls and parks, to be beneficial to senior citizens for a wide range of reasons, including the opportunity they provide to socialize, get exercise, and participate in activities. In addition to the walking programs hosted in malls, shopping centers were also noted as being very age friendly, with lots of space, seating, and safe flooring.

Negative Experiences

The lack of quality sidewalks throughout the City was mentioned as a major issue that prevents the elderly from getting around. One participant stated that bus stops are too far from the public buildings they are intended to service, particularly the new bus stop for the Nepean Sportsplex. Another participant mentioned the perceived danger associated with parks at night. Elevators in public buildings were also an issue as the doors close too quickly for people with mobility issues.

Ideas for Improvements

One participant suggested that the City develop safer opportunities for crossing the streets and design parks to increase visibility and therefore safety, while also promoting an active, outdoor lifestyle through the installation of more benches, public washrooms, and fitness parks.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that Para Transpo is a good service for seniors. Another benefit for the elderly in terms of transportation is the provision of taxi chits to reduce the impact of high taxi fees throughout the city. One participant also mentioned that during the winter, senior citizens are provided with sand to allow them to walk with ease and confidence.

Negative Experiences

Several participants found issues with the parking services throughout the city, particularly the high prices, low availability, and low accessibility. One participant found that there isn't enough enforcement of bad driving, which makes walking more dangerous. Another participant found that getting around the city was difficult for elderly pedestrians because there is not enough time for them to cross the street at crosswalks. In the wintertime, plowing services should be more careful in preventing the snow pile-ups.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that Para Transpo improve their scheduling process to reduce wait times and increase flexibility. To improve safety for pedestrians, participants suggested that cameras be installed at all stop lights and have the crossing signal illuminate before the stop light turns green to give priority to pedestrians. In terms of public transportation, participants stated that bus drivers should be educated to respect and be empathetic toward senior citizens. One participant also suggested that clear maps should be posted on the buses so that seniors feel more comfortable using this type of transportation. One participant stated that the number of falls and other incidents with senior citizens on buses should be ascertained to develop better preventative measures.



Housing

Positive Experiences

One participant mentioned the recent developments in the Kanata area that included senior friendly condominiums that feature things like exercise rooms and gardens, which help the elderly feel more at ease when facing the challenge of downsizing and moving out of their homes. One participant listed the Residence St-Louis as a very good model for senior's housing.

Negative Experiences

Negative aspects of the housing situation in Ottawa that were brought to the attention of the group were the high prices, long waiting lists, and threat of isolation.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that families play a greater role in supporting the elderly in their families; however another participant also stated that the elderly should have a final say in what their future holds in terms of housing, as sometimes families put them in long-term care homes when they do not want or need it. One participant mentioned the advantages of developing culturally-based residences as they do in Toronto. Another participant stressed the necessity for enforcing access to social housing based on need (income). Alternative housing solutions, such as communities of bungalows, would be ideal for seniors. Some participants agreed that buildings are not accessible for the elderly, in terms of the dangers of stairs and confusion related to bilingual signs, and the city should improve building codes to make them age-friendly.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Negative Experiences

Several participants found that determining what age constitutes a person as 'old' is problematic in terms of care services, such as Good Companions. The lack of clarity in terms of who is 'old' prevents these providers from giving the right services to serve specific needs.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that encouraging interaction between youth and the elderly would increase respect between generations.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

One participant mentioned the benefits of having courses at the University of Ottawa for seniors.

Negative Experiences



One participant stated that the lack of awareness and accessibility in terms of catering toward the specific needs of the elderly, such as facilities and people to assist elderly who have incontinence, prevents many from participating in activities.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants agreed that barriers should be removed to increase participating in senior citizens. One participant suggested that organizations like the CCAC should cooperate more with hospitals and community centers to establish activity programs to serve the needs of senior citizens. One participant stated that grocery stores should deliver.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

Some participants stated that churches, doctors' offices, local/cultural newspapers, and Rogers television services were good ways for seniors to receive information

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that information be made available for specific communities, rather than just general information, thus allowing seniors easy access to the events and happenings in their neighbourhoods. Another participant stated that communications need to be more age-friendly in terms of the visual aspects, such as increasing font size.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that working and volunteering is extremely beneficial for the elderly.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that the City establish a ranking system to determine the age-friendliness of employers.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

Participants listed the benefits of programs that assess needs of elderly people in the home and private sector initiatives to allow seniors to help other seniors as positive aspects of community support and health services.

Negative Experiences



One participant stated that the decreased funding for agencies like the CCAC have limited the amount of help people may receive, thus turning their own homes into dangerous places.

Ideas for Improvement

Many participants agreed that improving awareness and prevention through education was the most important aspects of community support and health services for the elderly. One participant stated the need for all care services to be concentrated in one place, rather than scattered across the city.

Other Comments

One participant stated that doors are often very heavy when they are not automated.



CITY OF OTTAWA MAINSTREAM CONSULTATION SESSIONS

Summary: Carp Session – Older Rural Residents (October 14, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Jean-Simon Farrah (Nanos) on October 14th, 2011. Participating were 8 rural elderly people residing in West Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Eight elderly persons residing in rural western Ottawa participated in the session. Of the eight participants, demographic information was made available for five of them. The age average was 67, with the youngest being at 42 and two participants being the oldest at 80 years old. Three participants were retired, and two of them were males. Four members of the group reported having had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 1.6. Four participants owned his or her property, while the one other participant rented. The one participant that rented was also the only participant that lived alone. All of the reported annual incomes were above \$22,230, with two participants stating that their annual income was above \$83,089.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive experiences

One participant felt that Ottawa is not a bad place to live. There was an overall positive outlook on the City. One person expressed that there is easy access to information and services in Ottawa.

Negative experiences

Some participants felt Ottawa was too big or too impersonal and feared it was leaning towards a city like Toronto. Urban residents conveyed that their interests are not served and that they don't get the services they pay for. Rural residents felt that because they are so few in numbers their concerns are not listened to. Many issues expressed were specific to rural seniors. Some participants shared that the Resource Centre has a hard time providing services that are needed and that there is rarely enough staff. Some participants expressed that some seniors may not be aware of available services and some may not be inclined to, or be able to speak up for themselves. Another participant conveyed that not all seniors have access to internet or computer savvy. One participant stated that people need to be heard not marginalized.



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive experiences

Several participants appreciated the fact that spaces and buildings are accessible especially for seniors and people overall thought there are many nice buildings in the city. Several participants enjoy the many parks in the city compared to other Canadian cities.

Negative experiences

Some participants expressed concerns for accessing outdoor spaces stating that there are no walking paths in some areas. Some exclaimed that snow is not removed in some areas and that ditches are not cleared and roads are breaking down. Another concern expressed was fear that buildings would not always be available free of charge.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that signs should be bigger and more visible to make navigating a lot easier. A person suggested that Carp was lacking sidewalks and others indicated that there should be more park benches for seniors to sit when they get tired. One participant conveyed that there was a need for more enforcement of rules and regulations in public spaces, in particular, no alcohol use. One participant suggested that during public skating people need to have more respect for those who are slower than others. Another participant conveyed the city should not count on public corporations to provide services.

Transportation

Positive experiences

One participant expressed satisfaction with the free transportation services on Monday and Friday afternoons in Stittsville and another person had no problems with the transit system, stating it was on time and you can call to obtain information. Residents felt that non-emergency transportation and ambulances are available. Another participant mentioned that things are organized to help people move around.

Negative experiences

Some participants felt that ambulances take too long to reach the person in need and another mentioned that ambulances are not available on the weekends stating people may have to wait in hospitals for several days. Other participants stated that many transportation services are health related and another shared that seniors often miss their appointments because they cannot afford the transportation. Some participants felt that the increased cost for Para-transpo was unfair and



that this type of transportation should be free for disabled seniors. One person mentioned that some seniors do not know how to use the transit system and require pick-ups and rural seniors have a hard time getting transportation services. There was also a concern that there are not many bus services in West areas. Several participants were dissatisfied with the cost of transportation.

Ideas for Improvement

Several participants felt the costs of transportation should be reduced. Others felt that transportation for health services should take a priority. Participants felt that there needs to be a better support services in place and recognize that many seniors need door-to-door services.

Housing

Positive experiences

One participant said having access to services was a positive experience of housing.

Negative experiences

Several participants feel there is a need for more affordable housing in the community, stating that the waiting lists are too long. Others shared that the increased value of homes makes affording housing more difficult. Another concern raised was the isolation of seniors.

Ideas for Improvement

Several participants felt that there needs to be a more effective housing system out in place. In particular, there should be more social housing and better control over who is accepted for this type of housing. Only those who need it should be granted acceptance. Also the city should provide more funding for housing as the population increases. More participants shared that there needs to be more affordable housing available and multi-generational housing to solve senior isolation issues. Others suggested there should be a system in place to call and check on those seniors who live alone.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive experiences

One participant shared that senior lunches are a great way to meet others and get out for a bit. Others enjoy friendship clubs and value a senior's advisory committee. One person stated that there should be more signs like that "Thank the farmer for the food you have" campaign. These initiatives show appreciation.

Negative experiences

There was a general consensus that there are too many negative comments about baby boomers putting a burden on the system. Some felt seniors are treated like children and are not respected and another suggested the media gives young people the wrong ideas about how to treat seniors. Some participants expressed concerns regarding the neglect of rural areas. Some feel there is a



perception of the low population being not important and others said they are told often they chose to live there and are not respected. One participant felt that people have the wrong idea of having rural residents pay more.

Ideas for improvement

Several participants agreed that certain negative comments that marginalize seniors need to be avoided. One person suggested that living in the country should not be perceived as a bad choice. Another participant proposed that the city should be informed about activities going on for seniors and these activities should be included in the city's calendar.

Social Participation

Positive experiences

One participant expressed appreciation for the directory of services 3-1-1 line. Another stated that there are lots of activities for seniors but often seniors are hesitant to participate.

Negative experiences

Many participants shared the concern that seniors are not aware of social activities available to them. Some feel there is not enough media coverage, advertising, nor publicity. One person expressed that many haven't heard about the senior consultations that are taking place. One participant raised the fear that some seniors have been isolated for so long they are reluctant to participate in social events. A few participants felt there is not enough social activities available to seniors and another felt people should be more educated of the needs of seniors.

Ideas for improvement

Several participants felt there needs to be more activities for seniors and more media coverage to make people aware what is taking place. Another suggested there should be more outings for seniors that could perhaps be hosted by community associations. A few participants proposed that there should be a call out service to notify seniors of events and to check up on those who live alone.

Communication and Information

Positive experiences

One person said they can go to places like church and the community centre to check for activities and another stated it might be easier to obtain information in rural areas due to the smaller community.

Negative experiences

Some participants expressed that many don't know where to obtain information and some who do know need assistance navigating the system. Some expressed a lack of knowledge of the support systems available and another person said some seniors have a hard time hearing the instructions



given over the 3-1-1 line. Another concern raised was for new community members and those who are isolated have a difficult time.

Ideas for improvements

A popular matter that was brought up was the method of information delivery. Some participants felt the best way to communicate with seniors was through newspapers, others suggested senior council, libraries, and friendship clubs would be beneficial. Several participants felt that there should be more notice given before these events. One participant proposed that there should be a good health program in place for seniors.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive experiences

One participant felt that senior consultations were of value and should continue. Another person stated that people can always volunteer and that there are many opportunities out there to do so.

Negative experiences

One person shared that seniors rarely participate but also stated that it is up to the senior community to encourage each other. A few participants mentioned concerns with the ability to get involved. Some feel living in a rural area holds them back from such opportunities while another said there are not always many opportunities and it depends on the type of activities. One participant felt that issues raised were ignored and never addressed.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive experiences

Some participants shared that they generally have positive experiences with healthcare.

Negative experiences

Several participants felt that access to services was an issue. Some stated that living in rural areas limits their access and one specifically singled out the west as not being serviced well. Another person expressed concerns regarding distance and isolation and felt that the city needs to address these issues and not expect those who are affected to pay more. One person shared that community support is dwindling and services have been cut and other said the city doesn't have the money or the volunteers invested into these issues. Others expressed that seniors do not get the services they are entitled to and felt the wait times are far too long. One person said there was a lack of awareness.

Ideas for improvements

Some participants felt that there needs to be a better use of medical personnel and more support services available. Several participants shared there should be better access to services and in particular there is a need for a health centre in Kanata. One person suggested there was a need of transportation to get to available services.



Other Comments

Other comments made included concerns regarding distance and isolation of seniors. Others felt there are not enough services in rural areas.



Summary: Greely Community Session – Older Rural Residents (October 25, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Jean-Simon Farrah (Nanos) on October 25th, 2011. Participating were eight elderly persons residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Eight elderly persons participated in the session. Of the eight participants in this session, demographic information was made available for seven of them. The age average was 67, with the youngest being at 42 and the oldest at 80 years old. Five participants were retired, and two of them were males. Two participants of the group had a secondary school education, while the remaining five had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 1.7. All of the participants owned his or her property. Two participants lived alone. The annual income for single older persons tended to be closer to \$22,230 to \$41,545 while the income of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be closer to the \$83,089 or more category.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

Participants felt that there is an abundance of programs and services. One participant noted that help is available for those who require assistance in travel to and from appointments. Participants also noted that are good facilities for children, community centers with good resources, and good nursing homes. The participants mentioned that overall transportation in Ottawa is good.

Negative Experiences

Participants generally felt that housing is an issues, especially for those who are low-income individuals and those looking for accommodations in the rural areas; participants found that living in rural areas and/or being low-income individuals created isolation. The participants noted that although there are programs in the City of Ottawa, they are poorly promoted.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant noted that there is a need to improve Para-Transpo in Greely. Participants felt that more programs and activities should be implemented and that the City should works towards better promotion of these activities. Additionally, activities and programs should be affordable so as to cater to the whole senior population, including low-income individuals. One participant noted that the City of Ottawa needs to invest more in housing, especially in Greely.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

Many participants agreed that the outdoor spaces and parks are very nice. One participant stated that the sport multiplex is good, however is in need of repairs.

Negative Experiences

One participant believes that the sidewalks are terrible, especially for people in wheelchairs. In terms of pathways, one participant stated that snowmobiles use them and it can be a problem. One person said the despite the good parks, teenagers go crazy in them.

Ideas for Improvement



Some participants suggested that there should be more benches and picnic tables in the parks, as well as better lighting and more pathways to facilitate accessibility. One of the participants suggested that a 'walk program' be initiated for seniors because they like to walk and be social. Other participants believe that there should be more initiatives to get involved so that seniors may enjoy the outdoors more. One of the participant stated that the centre needs a lot of repairs and upgrades.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

Participants found that transportation is good, but there are too many cars.

Negative Experiences

Several participants agreed that because they live in rural areas, transportation services are limited; one participant pointed out that as a result of this, some seniors have to drive when they shouldn't be. Some participants had issues with Para-Transpo services, as it is never on time, sometimes it doesn't arrive, and it is costly for people in rural areas. Others found issues with parking, in terms of the availability of spaces and the lack of parking spaces for people with handicaps. One participant stated that there are too many cars, which is bad for pedestrians.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that bus drivers must speak English and French to accommodate all users.

Housing

Positive Experiences

One participant reported having no issues with regards to housing. Another stated that there is a lot of public housing available.

Negative Experiences

Several participants stressed the effect of living in rural, as opposed to urban, areas. Participants pointed out that it makes seniors more isolated and forces them to drive when they shouldn't. Limited income is the biggest problem for everyone. One participant stated that seniors would prefer renting rather than buying houses. Another participant brought up issues particular to seniors' apartments, stating that they are small with very little room in the kitchen. Some participants mentioned the higher number of seniors per capita, and that it takes too long to get the nursing care that they need. In regards to private retirement homes, one of the participants noted that some are not registered in Ontario, while all must be in Quebec. This raises the issue of trust if they are not registered. Participants agreed that housing affects health and social interaction.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that housing for seniors be located better to eliminate the effects of isolation. Other participants stated that rental houses and apartment buildings are best for seniors. One participant suggested a need for better maintenance of long term care facilities. In regards to public housing, a participant stated that clear guidelines and standards should be implemented. A non-profit and affordable housing solution is the best combination.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

Some participants agreed that they receive adequate respect, especially at the Carleton Lodge and Good Companions. Participants concluded that in order to receive respect from youth, they need to show them



respect as well. One participant pointed out that for Volunteer Ottawa you only need one police check that allows you to volunteer in many programs.

Negative Experiences

Some participants found that seniors don't receive respect, especially in long term care facilities, from the City of Ottawa when dealing with complaints, and from children. One participant stated that no one volunteers because they ask you for a police check, which is costly.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant stated that kids should be taught to be respectful of their elders.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

Several participants agreed that there are a lot of interesting and affordable activities in Ottawa. One participant expressed their interest in the community centre fitness classes, and another brought up the advantages of going to the library, which they stated was a wonderful facility with a lot to offer. One participant said it was interesting to interact with people who are not fluent in English, so they can improve their language skills

Negative Experiences

Many participants found that budget constraints can affect their ability to participate in activities and can lead to isolation. Other participants found that transportation is a prominent issue for seniors, as it can be difficult to get to some activities.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that libraries should be open on Sundays.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

Participants agreed that the 3-1-1 and 2-1-1 information lines are a good way to stay informed. One participant reported that they like being informed of how long they will have to wait to get the information needed (i.e.: "your call will be answered in 8 minutes")

Negative Experiences

One participant stated that when there is an emergency, it takes too long to get the information and help needed. One person brought up the Heart Institute in particular, stating that you cannot get an answer from them. One participant had negative experiences with advertisements, as they are easily missed in the paper and therefore you don't get the information you need.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

Many participants agreed that there are a lot of volunteer opportunities, and that despite required police record checks, they give you invaluable experience. Other participants pointed out that teaching and mentoring is a great benefit for seniors, especially in terms of giving knowledge on to younger generations.



Negative Experiences

For several participants, the required police check poses an issue in volunteering. One participant also pointed out that there is not a lot of flexibility in terms of what they let you do.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

Participants reported having good experience with home support.

Negative Experiences

Many participants expressed concerns with home support, in terms of the availability, pricing, and treatment received. One participant reported that she didn't get a bath as often as she should have, and that upon reporting the problem it is not solved. A lack of home support has left people in the hospital, despite the fact that hospital beds are needed, according to one participant. Another participant stated that people aren't properly trained for home care.

Ideas for Improvement

Recommendations depend on the need of each person. One participant suggested that apartment buildings with many units would be easier for older adults to get the help they need.

Other Comments

One participant noted that when seniors have to switch doctors it can be terrible. A participant suggested that living arrangement for two or more seniors should be facilitated and encouraged. Opinions varied between participants on issues of nursing homes with some having good experiences, and others having negative ones. Participants found that there are benefits of living in a smaller community, such as everyone aiding one another.



Summary: Orleans Anglophone Session – Older Residents (November 4, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Jean-Simon Farrah (Nanos) on November 4th, 2011. Participating were seven elderly residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Seven elderly persons participated in the session. The age average was 69, with the youngest being at 62 and the oldest at 77 years old. Six participants were retired, and four of them were males. One member of the group had a secondary school education, while the other six had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 1.4. Six participants owned his or her property, while the other group member rented. Four participants lived on their own, only one of which was renting. The annual income for single older persons tended to be closer to \$41,546-\$83,088, while the income of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be fall within the \$83,089 or more category.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

One participant mentioned that Ottawa offers a lot of volunteering opportunities, which allows for doing fair bit of volunteering upon retirement. Another one said that she felt secure living in a small and friendly neighborhood. A participant also said that having a community centre in a small community provided a place to congregate and made for a cohesive community. Several participants felt that Ottawa had good walking paths, as well as positive recreation programs, social services, and community services. One person said that they had a good relationship with the councillor (Orleans).

Negative Experiences

One individual stated that he had generally positive experiences with the City of Ottawa as a younger person, but that he was unsure as to whether it was going to be as good as an older person. A participant felt that, despite having many advantages, Ottawa had some issues with transportation for some areas and language barriers. Another revealed being very active, but that walking across the street is dangerous because there is not enough time to cross if you have a walker or a cane, and especially so in the winter. Concerns were expressed with regards to an attitudinal shift towards seniors which translated into being lumped in with older adults and ageism. Finally, communication was mentioned as an issue, especially in terms of getting information regarding services provided in Orleans.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

The access to green spaces was seen as an advantage; for example, the number of parks was mentioned, the fact that one can go in almost any direction and can find a forest and the bike paths. Likewise, one participant felt that the older communities in the region were better designed with green space and pathways. When one participant mentioned that there was a senior's park near Place D'Orleans, no one knew where it was.

Negative Experiences



For one participant, many buildings have too many steps and are lacking ramps – an issue for everyone – not just older people. Some participants stated that pathways could be improved because of an inherent conflict between cyclists and pedestrians. Safety was also an issue at Pineview, where one participant expressed concerns with the overpass which needs to be safer. Others mentioned that sidewalks need to be better maintained in the city. As for the general community design for new development areas, one respondent said that they were better in the past and that these days, they do not provide enough green space and that processes lack in transparency.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant said that salt should be added to sidewalks for improved safety. Likewise, another said that times to cross the street have to be expended. Security was a common concern: several participants mentioned that better security was needed on paths and parks, that emergency phones had to be installed and that a visible presence for security had to be enforced. One participant said that students can be used to volunteer for security or to maintain parks.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

One participant said that the senior's bus pass rate is excellent and that this is an excellent policy to keep people mobile. Senior's days on the bus were also seen as a positive thing by participants. One individual felt that bus signs had been improved as their size was bigger. One participant said that indoor parking machines are better due to the fact that there's always someone around to help, pay, etc.

Negative Experiences

Parking was a concern – especially around hospitals. One participant mentioned that being on a fixed income, there should be a senior's rate for parking, especially at hospital, while another one said that the City is very quick at ticketing at the hospital. An individual said that seniors so not only need money for parking but also for mobility. The issue of accessibility was also raised by some participants. Accessibility in Para-transpo vehicles was seen as difficult because of timing, because of the long time it takes to get picked up. Someone was also wondering about other options besides Para-transpo that are available to be able to take people that are in wheelchairs outside.

Ideas for Improvement

There should be a sign to show that your bus is approaching the next stop
Parking discount for parking so have an ID card that can be accepted at pay machines
More accessible cars for volunteers

Housing

Positive Experiences



One participant said that affordable housing was good for low income immigrant seniors and another one mentioned that waiting times for senior housing was quite good. Likewise, one participant mentioned that 211 is a good service to find out what type of services are out there (communications).

Negative Experiences

One participant said that there is no sufficient space for long term care for Chinese people. Another one felt that more services were needed to stay in homes longer. A good model for that, according to one participant, is the Veteran's independence program (services designed to help keep veterans in their homes).

Ideas for Improvement

Many participants wondered about the best ways to keep people in their homes, and one felt that removing the property tax for those on a fixed income was a good way to do that. Many participants pledged to have more of a planning for senior housing in the region. For example, one participant said that a senior living location model could be developed for the rest of the city. Others emphasized the importance of creating an area for affordable housing and building single senior's citizen residences with common areas.

Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

Participants found that as more people age and the percentage of elderly populations increase, more seniors find a voice for themselves and are able to share their knowledge. Several participants felt that they have had very positive experiences between community associations and City Staff. One participant mentioned their satisfaction with City staff after an incident surrounding school bus routes, which was resolved promptly.

Negative Experiences

Participants stated that youth do not show a lot of respect to the elderly, and that this attitude is reinforced by negative stereotypes of the elderly that are portrayed in the media. Another issue in terms of social inclusion was the prominent barriers between French and English populations.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants emphasized the importance of cultivating and encouraging respect, regardless of age, gender, language, or culture. Several participants suggested that the City continue to host senior's forums on a regular basis. Other suggestions included an increased number of volunteer translators and interpreters, matching troubled youth with seniors to provide support and assistance, and increased opportunities for seniors to contribute their knowledge.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

One participant found that there is a great deal of services available in the City. Another participant stated the positive effects of the library brochures that detail available services.



Negative Experiences

Several participants agreed that social participation is severely limited by financial circumstances (especially when on a fixed income) and lack of transportation services. One participant felt that there is very few recreation services available in the east end. Another participant was displeased by the lack of availability of hard copies of brochures on services, as most are only available online.

Ideas for Improvement

In order to ensure that services are equitable and transparent, participants suggested that the City establish a shuttle service for transportation to services that are not available in certain neighbourhoods. One participant felt that creating a community design in cooperation with developers would help increase social participation in isolated populations. Other suggestions from participants were the establishment of computer courses for senior citizens and improving library services to increase consistency in terms of the dissemination of information.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

Participants found the blue book to be very useful

Negative Experiences

One participant stated that they felt excluded because brochures are only available online and difficult to obtain in hard copy. Other participants felt uncomfortable using the internet, and would rather speak with people. One participant found that there is not enough information in general.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants recommended that the city promote and provide assistance for the navigation of services, such as the 2-1-1 phone line. To increase the effectiveness of the transmission of information, participants suggested the establishment of a television network or program to provide information and the increased use of community associations and agencies to create a network of available information.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

Participants felt as though there are many opportunities for volunteerism in the City. One participant mentioned the advantages of Senior's On Site, a paid employment program for senior citizens to contribute and work at home.

Negative Experiences

One participant mentioned that after becoming a volunteer, the elderly tend to lose a significant amount of their personal time.



Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that more companies encourage volunteering days and better promote volunteering opportunities. One participant suggested the establishment of mentorship programs in business and in the City. Another participant recommended the use of the Senior's On Site website (www.sosonsite.com) as a good model for the use of older adults experience and the facilitation of employment.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

Participants found that the CCAC employees and other respite workers were excellent at providing nursing care and consultations. One participant mentioned the advantages of a community-run CPR training group with paramedics.

Negative Experiences

One participant stated that many seniors don't have additional insurance for crucial (and expensive) services such as dental care and physiotherapy. Another participant found that caregivers are not receiving adequate support. Several participants agreed that palliative and dementia care services need to be improved.

Ideas for Improvement

Many participants felt that this is the most important topic that the City should concern itself with. One participant suggested that the City provide home support and subsidies for those with chronic illnesses. Other participants felt that the City should make a conscious effort to create more preventative programs and home care organizations. One participant suggested that the City develop a series of booklets to assist and educate caregivers in the business of the elderly.



Summary: Sunnyside Community Session – Older Residents (November 7, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Jean-Simon Farrah (Nanos) on November 7th, 2011. Participating were 24 elderly residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Twenty-four elderly persons participated in the session. Of the 24 participants, demographic information was made available for 23 of them. The age average was 70, with the youngest being at 50 and the oldest at 83 years old. 19 participants were retired, and only two participants were males. Four members of the group had a secondary school education, while the remaining 19 had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 1.5. 12 participants owned his or her property, while ten from the group rented. Nine participants lived on their own, eight of which were renting property. The annual income for single older persons tended to be between \$15,001 and \$22,229, while the income of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be at \$83,089 or greater.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

Participants felt that Ottawa is a safe city, has a small-town atmosphere, lots of green spaces, bicycle paths, as well as museums and libraries. Of note, libraries seemed to be particularly cherished by this group. Many participants also mentioned opportunities for continuing education—particularly at university—as a positive aspect of living in Ottawa. In addition, participants noted the availability of free exercise classes for seniors when accompanied by a medical note; however, participants felt that these classes are not well publicized. Participants said they were pleased with the health services in the city.

Negative Experiences

Participants are displeased with transportation services in Ottawa. Participants mentioned the sidewalks in winter (snow & ice) and in the fall (leaves, other things falling from trees) as being dangerous. Participants noted having negative experiences with housing. For example, one participant said that there are not enough seniors-only residences at affordable prices in Ottawa, whilst another spoke of poor maintenance in social housing. The participants also mentioned the high cost of living in Ottawa, citing the costs associated many activities and services. Participants are also displeased with the healthcare and support services, noting that there is a lack of resources for treating the aging population.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant mentioned that seniors should have special fees for activities and services, stating that it is demeaning and ostracizing to have to declare one self's inability to afford said services.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Negative Experiences



For several participants, pedestrian crossing light times are too short. Participants noted that walking in the winter was made more difficult because of snow not being plowed; leading to the obstruction of walkways and bus stops by snow banks. Participants also felt that the ice on the sidewalks and bridges is a hazard. Participants felt that the doors of public buildings are difficult to open because of their weight. In addition, participants noted that bicycles should not be ridden on the sidewalk. Participants mentioned motorized wheelchairs as being a menace. There was consensus on the fact that there is a lack of: (i) public washrooms, (ii) garbage bins, and (iii) public benches (such as at the Rideau Centre).

Ideas for Improvements

Participants noted that there should be law enforcement at intersections so as to prevent cars from entering the intersection when pedestrians are crossing. Participants suggested installing more automatic doors in public spaces. The participants also felt that the City of Ottawa should enforced the law required that *all* motorized wheelchairs have a flag. Additionally, participants noted that cars should not be allowed to park in bicycle lanes.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

Participants mention that they are able to purchase taxi chits if they reside far from public transit routes; however, participants noted that this program was not well advertised. The participants also mentioned that they enjoy the fact that two to three days a week they are able to ride the bus for free. - -Negative: Bus services have been eliminated from certain areas, and it takes me longer to get anywhere now than it used to.

Negative Experiences

Participants mentioned that bus services have been eliminated from certain areas, and have thus made travel more difficult due to longer wait times, which can contribute to missed connections. Participants felt that public transportation was particularly unreliable in the winter season. The participants noted that Para-Transpo is open to abuse from the public, as some utilize it as their own personal taxi service.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that bus drivers should be required to be more civil and friendly towards passengers. In regards to Para-Transpo, participants mentioned that a greater effort should be made to have greater number of people per trip that Para-Transpo makes. In streamlining Para-Transpo, the participants feel that the service will become more efficient and that it will be more difficult for persons to take advantage of the system. In addition, participants felt that there should be a taxi rate for seniors. Lastly, participants suggested that cyclists should be licensed by completing mandatory training before being allowed to ride on the streets with cars.

Housing

Positive Experiences

One participant was please with services provided by Abbotsford House, and noted that the House is a good model for seniors residing in Ottawa.



Negative Experiences

Participants noted that there are very long wait times to be placed into the “better” seniors’ residences, such as Unitarian House. The participants noted that not enough seniors’ homes, nor social and affordable housing, are being built. The participants stressed the fact that, “affordable housing needs to be truly affordable”. Furthermore, the participants stated that basic maintenance is not carried out for seniors in low-income residences and residents are powerless to solve the problem by themselves; one participant cited that landlords refuse to treat infestations in the buildings.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that all seniors’ apartments should have elevators that are big enough to accommodate wheelchairs and furniture. Participants noted that elevators in residences should also have a separate power outlet in the event that the main power goes out—such as during a blackout. Additionally, participants felt that there should be a greater variety of people who can provide homecare to, and other services for, seniors who choose to remain living in their own homes. Lastly, there should be a program to retrofit private houses with the accessories seniors need for everyday living (railings around the bath, higher toilets, etc.).

Respect and Social Inclusion

Negative Experiences

One participant noted that the younger generation does not give up their seats to seniors and that they listen to their music very loudly and are talking on their cellular phones, all of which the participants noted as being rude behavior. Another participant stated that there is not enough interaction between seniors and children/teenagers. Participants also noted that students running on sidewalks during after-school hours are a safety hazard. One participant mentioned that the ageist remarks made about seniors, especially in the healthcare setting, are disrespectful and hurtful, citing “bed-blockers” as an example.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that salespersons smile more often. Another participant mentioned that it is important to provide the younger generation with a chance to interact with seniors, so as to build relationships and foster a sense of intergenerational respect.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

One participant mentioned being pleased with the family physiotherapy program that is available to seniors at the physiotherapy centre for free, if accompanied by a referral from a doctor. Another participant noted that there is a wide selection of activities available to seniors, citing a program that for thirty dollars per year, seniors can enjoy a variety of activities.

Negative Experiences

Participants mentioned that they would be interested in taking classes at university, but cannot afford the tuition. One participant noted that ailing seniors can benefit from physical exercise classes, but that these classes are not readily accessible to people with physical disabilities or other health issues. Another participant, however, noted that the majority of classes are cancelled because there is not enough interest. Participants stated that the greater majority of seniors cannot



drive after dark, and therefore are unable to attend cultural programs, which are mostly held in the evenings. One participant mentioned that there is a lack of programs specifically for males.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that university classes be offered to seniors at reduced cost, or that they be allowed to audit classes; one participant suggested that special classes be offered in the summer months. Another participant suggested that reduced-price tickets for seniors at the National Arts Centre be available both in the afternoons and in the evenings. Participants noted that more opportunities for part-time, paid work for seniors be implemented by the City of Ottawa. Participants mentioned that there should be a central location (such as, website, newspaper, or newsletter) where seniors can locate information about ALL courses, classes, and events, offered to seniors.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

One participant mentioned that television and radio are the most effective ways for getting information to seniors.

Negative Experiences

A participant mentioned that the neither the newspaper nor the internet are the best way to get information to seniors; other methods need to be explored. Another participant noted that the fine print on contracts is problematic for seniors, who feel rushed to sign without having a full understanding of the document. Participants also stated that there are too many information hotline numbers for people with mental or physical disabilities.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) should increase both advertising and programming that is geared towards a senior audience. Another participant noted that CBC Radio should have a weekly program where local (city-wide) events and information is shared. Another participant noted that advertisements should have larger fonts. In regards to information hot lines, one participant mentioned that there should be one universal number and from that number seniors with specific needs can be redirected to the appropriate service. Participants also suggested that companies sponsor iPads with large print for seniors in order to keep the baby-boomer generation engaged.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

One participant mentioned a website, called “Linking Boomers”, as an ideal resource for finding volunteer opportunities for seniors.

Negative Experiences

One participant mentioned that the City of Ottawa does not facilitate the application of seniors for volunteer positions, and that reliance on the internet and/or computers to complete applications,



alienates those who do not have access to those resources. Participants also noted that organizations should not refer to all seniors as “boomers”; such a generalization prevents the older generation from having their specific concerns listened to. Participants stated that the majority of seniors need to continue their paid work past the age of retirement because pensions alone do not cover the costs of aging. One participant noted that although volunteering is important, volunteer opportunities should not replace paid jobs, which could prevent the younger generation from attaining the necessary experiences to advance in the job market if seniors are doing the same work at no cost.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that the City of Ottawa implement posters in public places with information concerning volunteer opportunities, including the contact information relevant to the specific organization.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

One participant noted that a parent (mother) had received high quality of care at the Ottawa Civic Hospital both during her stay and in organizing after-care at home.

Negative Experiences

One participant noted that their community health centre removed their name from patients’ list due to inactivity. Another participant stated that there is a lack of communication concerning healthcare and its programs, citing that the majority of persons are unaware of the fact that they are allowed access to their medical records. Participants mentioned that it is difficult to receive homecare following an accident, and that the wait times are too long. One participant states that seniors who speak neither English nor French have great difficulty in accessing the healthcare they require.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that more emphasis be placed on preventive care for seniors (such as physiotherapy, exercise, and nutrition).

Summary: Tallwood (West) Francophone Community Session – Older Residents (November 14, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Jean-Simon Farrah (Nanos) on November 14th, 2011. Participating were 17 elderly Francophones residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Seventeen elderly persons participated in the session. The age average was 74, with the youngest being at 55 and the oldest at 83 years old. All of the participants were retired, and only two of them were males. Four members of the group had a secondary school education, while seven had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 2.75. 14 participants owned his or her property. Eight participants lived alone, typically with an annual income of \$22,230-\$41,545. The income of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be the same.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that the City is very nice, especially for the elderly who still maintain an active lifestyle. Several participants agreed that the library services were excellent, particularly in the availability of books in French and audio-books for the visually impaired.

Negative Experiences

Many participants found that receiving services in French was difficult, especially in the west end. French services that many found to be inadequate throughout the city included library books and community centers.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

One participant reported that they found the countdowns and signals at crosswalks to be helpful, especially for the visually impaired. Several participants found that there have been recent improvements in accessibility throughout the city, such as more ramps and cycling paths.

Negative Experiences

On the topic of parks in the city, some participants found that they were quite dirty and that they were not fun enough to bring children. One participant found that the lights change too quickly, not allowing adequate time for the elderly to cross the street. Street signs and numbers were noted as problematic for one participant, especially at night. Another issue in terms of public buildings that was mentioned was the lack of accessibility in washrooms in restaurants, especially for people in wheelchairs or those using walkers

Ideas for Improvement

To improve safety in parks, one participant suggested that cyclists should be obligated to use a bell for the sake of pedestrians. One participant believes that there should be a park designed specifically for the elderly to encourage them to do exercise outdoors, rather than being forced to use parks that are meant for families.



Transportation

Positive Experiences

Several participants agreed that public transportation services (both OC Transpo and Para Transpo) were excellent. The increased accessibility on Para Transpo buses for the blind was noted as a great aspect of the service. The bus drivers, stated as being kind and helpful, were another aspect of the city's transportation services that one participant found particularly good. Despite route changes, one participant reported that the route maps were very useful in keeping up with new developments.

Negative Experiences

One negative aspect of the public transportation services that was reported was the distance to bus stops. Many participants found that parking, especially at the hospital, is too expensive and too far from entrances.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that buses should limit the amount of space that is taken up by strollers as it makes it difficult for the elderly to board, especially when using walkers. Another participant found that despite increased numbers of bilingual bus drivers, there should be greater numbers on busy routers in particular.

Housing

Positive Experiences

One participant found that many long-term care homes in the city are better than private housing, especially in terms of the activities they provide. Another participant found that the services provided through the GIGE center were practical.

Negative Experiences

Several participants found that housing is far too expensive in the city, mainly for the elderly who have only their Old Age Pensions as a source of income. Living alone posed a threat for some of the participants, as it leads to isolation and prevents them from gaining necessary information about services. One participant found that theft and abuse are very problematic in situations where people are receiving support services.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that the City focus on developing affordable housing.

Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

Participants agreed that people with handicaps tend to receive adequate respect, and that the elderly in general receive a great deal of respect on buses and through their interactions with bus drivers.



Negative Experiences

One participant found that there is a general negative attitude toward elderly Francophones because of the linguistic barrier.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

One participant noted that certain community centers, and specifically the Pauline-Charron center, were excellent for the elderly as they promote activities for the daytime and in the evening.

Negative Experiences

Many participants agreed that there are an inadequate number of community centers in the west end. Another issue with these services is the lack of Francophone community centers. One participant found that the local buildings are not accessible enough, as they don't have any elevators or ramps for people with mobility issues.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested that more Francophone or bilingual community centers be constructed in the west end. One participant believed that if the city were to encourage more volunteers to work in Francophone centers, then there would be more activities that a greater range of people could enjoy. Another participant suggested that physical recreation centers be developed to encourage physical activity in the elderly.

Communication and Information

Negative Experiences

One participant found that there is too much information on the Internet that the elderly aren't able to access because of their inexperience in using it. Many other issues in terms of communication and information services pertained to the lack of French-speaking employees, particularly in the health care and banking sectors. One participant found that automated machines were very frustrating.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants believed that the city should promote bilingualism. A couple of participants suggested that alternative means be used to disseminate information, either through public announcements on the radio, newspapers, or in books. One participant proposed that the City establish a singular entity for the dissemination of information so that all members of a community are aware of all of the events that are occurring.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

Several participants agreed the being a volunteer is a valuable experience.

Negative Experiences



One participant found that the number of steps required to become a volunteer is discouraging for the elderly. Another stated that there aren't enough bilingual or Francophone volunteering positions available.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that the services in the west end are becoming more available

Negative Experiences

Many participants found that the services in the west end are still limited and always in English. One participant said that wait times for clinics are too long.



Summary: Orleans Francophone Session – Older Residents (November 18, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Jean-Simon Farrah (Nanos) on November 18th, 2011. Participating were 10 Francophone elderly Francophones residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Ten elderly persons participated in the session. The age average was 66, with the youngest being at 54 and the oldest at 71 years old. Eight participants were retired, and only one of them was a male. All of the group members had a college/university education, except for one who had secondary school. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 2. All participants owned his or her property. Four participants lived on their own, whose annual income for ranged between \$22,230 and \$83,088. The income of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be above \$83,089.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

Several participants agreed that the positive aspects of living in the city of Ottawa as a senior citizen are the nice outdoor spaces (e.g. bicycle paths, well-lit streets) and the availability and variety of organizations and associations designed for the elderly (e.g. aquafitness, aerobics, museums)

Negative Experiences

Many participants have found that the lack of French services is a major problem in the City. Services, retail stores, and the Council on Aging are not equipped to serve the needs of Francophone citizens, which has led to decreased participation and increased social exclusion. One participant found that there aren't enough services designed for senior citizens. Another participant was displeased by the length of time it took to obtain a referral to Paramed health care services. One participant stated that traffic is dangerous.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Negative Experiences

A lot of participants discussed the negative aspects of the sidewalks and bicycle paths in the City. Bicycle paths are dangerous for several reasons, specifically the lack of indication as to when they will end and the speed with which most cyclists take on these paths. Sidewalks were reportedly too bumpy, uneven, and inaccessible, particularly for people in wheelchairs. In the wintertime, many sidewalks and ramps remain uncleared, making them impossible to walk on. Lack of snow removal was an issue for another participant, who stated that it can result in accidents. Other participants stated that there is a serious shortage of benches, garbage cans, and public washrooms in the outdoor spaces of the city. One participant said that shopping malls aren't accessible for older people without cars because they are so far away. For another participant, a negative aspect of outdoor spaces is the excessive cigarette smoke that enters their apartment if the windows aren't kept closed.

Ideas for Improvements

One participant suggested that there should be municipal regulation that would make it mandatory for cyclists to have lights at the front and rear of their bicycles. Another participant believes that the



Bixi bike rental company should make tricycle-style bikes designed specifically for neighbourhoods with a large population of senior citizens.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

Many participants reported having positive experiences with the OC Transpo bus services, particularly in terms of the free days for senior citizens, the extensiveness of the routes which allow for easy connection between the core of the city and the suburban areas, and the politeness and friendliness of the drivers. One participant stated that the pedestrian crosswalks that feature the countdowns are very useful.

Negative Experiences

One participant stated that they were not pleased with the fact that animals are no longer allowed on the buses. Another participant found that there is a lack of enforcement of the reserved handicap parking spots, and that many people in good health violate these reservations on a regular basis.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that parking spots be established for senior citizens who don't have handicaps, but who still have limited mobility. One participant believes that all crosswalks should include the countdown so that people know how long they have to cross the street. In Gatineau, the different colored lights in traffic lights are also different shapes, which is beneficial for people who are colorblind. One participant said that Ottawa should have something similar

Housing

Negative Experiences

In terms of retirement residences, several participants found that they are often built too small, and that those that are of better quality are unaffordable for most. One participant stated that affordable housing in general is in short supply, and that which is available is often in bad shape with poor services.

Ideas for Improvement

In Toronto and Hawkesbury, programs exist that retrofit houses to adapt to aging and decreasing mobility – one participant stated that Ottawa should have similar programs to help the elderly live more comfortably. One participant said that there should be a service offered by the City for someone to inspect homes and come up with solutions to adapt the homes to the needs of senior citizens, allowing them to age in place. Another participant suggested that municipalities should congregate to offer better long-term housing solutions for senior citizens and to supplement the funding provided by the province. One participant said that a good system to reduce monthly rental fees at long-term care homes would be to let residents do small jobs around the building.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

One participant found that young people can be quite welcoming and respectful if the elderly make an effort to reach out and engage with them.



Negative Experiences

Several participants reported feeling a lack of respect from other members of society, as the elderly are treated as if they are a nuisance to the rest of society or as if they are children. Many other participants reported a lack of respect in terms of linguistic differences, as many people are not accommodating to French-speaking elderly. One participant stated that the city does not capitalize on the experience and knowledge that the elderly possess, as they are not hired or consulted for anything. This led another participant to state that once retired, many elderly feel as if they are unable to contribute to society in a meaningful way.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that restaurant menus be offered in both French and English to increase equality between the two languages. Another participant believed that if elderly housing and residences are not isolated in specific areas of the city, then increased generational mingling would lead to improved intergenerational relations.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

Many participants agreed that community centers throughout the City, such as the Shankman Centre and Orleans Art Centre, are excellent locales for senior citizens. One participant mentioned the benefits of the 'Retraite en Action' group which offers discounts to the elderly for various activities. One participant stated that the library in Orleans is an essential service for senior citizens, providing entertainment, interaction, and information.

Negative Experiences

Several participants found that social participation is inhibited by the lack of French services, and particularly French cinema. One participant said that the English school board is good for distributing information about upcoming cultural events and activities; however the French board does not do anything of the sort. One participant found that events are often cancelled because of a lack of participation.

Ideas for Improvement

Some participants agreed that activities should be made more accessible for senior citizens, by providing transportation and making them more affordable.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

One participant stated that it is easy to get information in French in the city.

Negative Experiences

One participant found that French services are difficult to find. Another participant stated that the frequent reliance on the internet for information is a barrier for the elderly because they don't have access to or know how to use a computer/the internet. One participant said that the lack of information regarding the new traffic circle in Orleans is particularly problematic because many people still don't know how to use it, and the City has not made a sufficient effort to keep the population informed.



Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that the City work toward increasing awareness of the 2-1-1 information line. Another participant believed that Radio-Canada should dedicate more time to local news and information on Ottawa and Orleans, rather than Gatineau and Montreal.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

The Northern Lights job centre was mentioned as a good place for senior citizens to find employment and volunteer opportunities

Negative Experiences

One participant was thoroughly discouraged from volunteering because of all of the required security and police checks and training courses. Another participant stated that the elderly are often criticized for volunteering because it is believed that they are taking away jobs from young people.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that more outreach programs be established to encourage participation by the elderly, thus preventing isolation. Another participant said that this encouragement must be fostered at an early age to ensure that there is enough support for a growing elder population in the future. One participant stated that there should be more opportunities for senior citizens to engage in paid work to provide extra revenue for those with low income.

Community Support and Health Services

Negative Experiences

One participant found that initiatives on elder abuse are inadequate because of a lack of funding and underdevelopment.

Ideas for Improvement

Many participants agreed that often, due to a lack of resources, many elderly end up unnecessarily in the emergency room for their healthcare needs, thus decreasing the availability of already-scarce resources. As solutions for this prominent issue, participants suggested that there be increased numbers of healthcare options and services for senior citizens and an increased role of nurses in home care. One participant said that there is a need for more caregivers who will escort senior citizens to their medical appointments. This, however, is impeded by the lack of assistance and support for the field of caregivers, as noted by another participant. One participant stated that there should be a mandate team to intervene in cases of elder abuse.



Summary: Gloucester Senior's Centre Session – Older Residents (November 22, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Jean-Simon Farrah (Nanos) on November 22nd, 2011. Participating were 20 elderly residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Twenty elderly persons participated in the session. The age average was 71.25, with the youngest being at 58 and the oldest at 93 years old. 19 participants were retired, and five of them were males. Eleven members of the group had a secondary school education, while seven had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 2. 16 participants owned his or her property. Two participants lived on their own, while 14 reported living with their spouse/partner. The annual income for single older persons varied across all categories, while the income of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be closer to the \$41,546-\$83,088 category.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

The participants highlighted the wide range of activities, the variety and availability of support groups, resources and services, as well as the strong sense of community and friendship among the senior citizens of Ottawa as the city's strongest assets from their experience. Furthermore, some participants appraised Ottawa's quiet aspect and minimal pollution (as compared to larger cities), as well as the general friendliness of the city-dwellers.

Negative Experiences

Limited choice of assisted housing; shortage of doctors and other health-care specialists, as well as the oft-forbidding cost of retirement homes and long-term care facilities emerged as the main sources of negative experience and discomfort for the senior citizens participating in the consultation. Furthermore, several participants highlighted some limitations in the city's traffic and pedestrian accommodations: for example, poor state of sidewalks, limited signage, and all-too-brief pedestrian lights at crossing were noted as particularly important areas of concern.

Ideas for Improvement

When it came to suggestions for improvement, the participants of the consultation suggested, firstly, ameliorating street signage (i.e. enlarging fonts, more numerous signage, longer pedestrian lights) as well as sidewalk quality (better snow-clearing in the winter, improving the pavement); and secondly, streamlining the certification of health professionals in order to reduce the number of doctors and medical staff available, and thus, to minimize waiting times for health care services.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Positive Experiences

The participants' general positive experiences focused on their acknowledgement of the government's broader support for the needs of seniors; yet nonetheless, most of the participants provided mostly negative experiences when prompted about the outdoor spaces and buildings in Ottawa.

Negative Experiences

Some participants from Gloucester highlighted the fact that there were no good parks in Ottawa's East End for recreational activities, or even just to go out for a stroll with one's grandkids. A very common theme among the



participants experiences highlighted the broader discontent with the quality of traffic light maintenance (once broken, they remain in disrepair for far too long); and also, insufficient enforcement of traffic laws concerning pedestrians. One of the participants noted the poor signage of construction zones with large ditches, which was a significant safety concern to the participant in wheelchair. Another participant decried the absence of buses in his/her area (Cumberland), and the absence of night-time lighting. Overall, poor building and street lighting was a significant area of concern, as well as a lack of night-time patrolling that could ensure the safety of the individuals passing through parks or other isolated areas at night.

Ideas for Improvement

The consultation participants suggested multiple possibilities for improvement; the most recurrent suggestion focused on expanding the size and the number of the seniors' centers, as well as making them more accessible. Other suggestions concentrated on security problems, including, for instance, better street and building lighting; introducing foot patrols to parks and other isolated areas; improving the signage and the pavement quality in Ottawa, as well as providing more bus routes to suburban areas.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

The positive experience with the public transportation system that the individual participants highlighted was the free seniors' day provided by the OC Transpo, the availability of Para Transpo services, as well as the designated parking spots for handicapped persons.

Negative Experiences

From the discussion on the city's transportation services, a clear concern emerged very quickly: it was, effectively, the formidable cost of OC Transpo, Para Transpo and parking in the city. One of the participants highlighted the fact that he/she was being charged double simply because he/she lived on the other side of Trim Road city boundary; another lamented the fact that there was not a reduced week-round seniors' fee, thus limiting seniors as to when they could travel. The most significant concern seemed to be the high cost of hospital parking – a matter that several individuals voiced as a problem.

Safety concerns with transportation also emerged in the consultation; thus, one individual highlighted the danger of roundabouts for senior pedestrians; another participant strongly recommended introducing cyclist licenses as a means of improving general public safety.

Housing

Positive Experiences

It must be noted that when asked to describe their experiences with housing accommodations in the city of Ottawa, the vast majority of the participants focused on the negative experiences. Nonetheless, one of the participants eagerly acknowledged the availability of long-term subsidized care, as well as of retirement homes and residences in Ottawa.

Negative Experiences

When it came to negative experiences, multiple participants brought forward the recurring theme of the forbidding costs of retirement homes and of maintaining a private house after retirement. Several participants focused on the long waiting period of long-term subsidized care, and the limited variety of health and personal care options. Furthermore, security in the retirement residences was mentioned as a significant concern: from one individual's words, an acquaintance was being constantly robbed in his retirement home. Another participant noted a common occurrence: wives and husbands would often be placed in different long-term care



facilities with limited access to public transportation, and thus would effectively be cut off from each other. Other participants also mentioned the total absence of interim care options available for the individuals waiting for long-term care, and the forbidding costs of house mortgages, that would often become insurmountable for the retired individuals.

Ideas for Improvement

Several significant opportunities for improvement were brought forward during the discussion on housing. For instance, one participant suggested more marginal investment into home care as opposed to institutionalized care, considering it's a lower-cost, more popular care option for the individuals waiting or not qualified for long-term care. Other individuals suggested extending amortization period for mortgage for 25 years, instead of 2-3, in order to make housing more affordable for the retired seniors. Further into the discussion, some participants proposed reducing typical size of the housing constructed at the city of Ottawa; as the individual put it, 'If we had built more bungalows to begin with, there wouldn't have been as much of an issue for seniors trying to find accessible living options.'

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

A large number of the consultation participants shared multiple positive experiences regarding their day-to-day social interaction with the younger citizens of Ottawa. The general consensus focused on the positive, with the participants agreeing that generally, the broader community respected and included Ottawa's senior citizens in social activities and events.

Negative Experiences

At the same time, some participants noted that the language of daily interaction has changed significantly since their youth – contemporary culture is generally more accepting of rude language and familiarity. One of the participants suggested that the children should be formally instructed at school on how to interact respectfully with older individuals; yet there was no broader consensus on the topic.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

When prompted by the moderator to share their experiences of participating in social and recreational activities, some participants adhered strongly to the positive side, stating that city of Ottawa service providers have always been extremely friendly and helpful towards the senior citizens. Others had some constructive criticism, yet it was mostly focused on the particular facilities in the Gloucester community. Yet it must be noted, that the library and museum services for seniors have received consistently high praise from the consultation participants.

Negative Experiences

Most of the participants' negative experiences centered on the scheduling and fees of the Gloucester community centre. One of the individuals decried the fact that the hours for the seniors' activities (e.g. aquafitness) would be generally given a lower priority in order to accommodate children's sports. Thus, effectively, the seniors would often be denied an opportunity for socialization and physical exercise. One of the participants also remarked that the fees for using distinct services should be separate: thus, it would be unfair to be charged for using a wave pool when one is only using a hot tub.

Ideas for Improvement

Some of the suggestions for improvement were of a broader nature, i.e. improving advertising, as well as fee reduction, of the senior-oriented activities; others were focused on the specific facilities in the Gloucester area. For instance, one of the participants proposed reserving parking spots specifically for seniors, as the senior



citizens oftentimes had to compete for parking with sports players and their parents at the Gloucester seniors' and community centre.

Communication and Information

Ideas for Improvement

In the process of discussing their concerns with the communication aspect of the city of Ottawa's services, the senior participants had multiple suggestions for improvement. For instance, of the individuals suggested that 2-1-1 and 3-1-1 telephone services be amalgamated into one point of contact. Another participant proposed the creation of a 'Seniors' Corner' at 3-1-1, where Ottawa's older population could obtain all of the information channelled specifically towards it.

Furthermore, several participants remarked the necessity to provide more non-Web-based advertising of social and cultural activities, due to the limited familiarity of many senior citizens with the Internet.

Negative Experiences

Several individuals participating in the consultation noted how difficult it was to reach service providers by telephone. For instance, one person stated that it has taken him/her a shocking 'three weeks to reach a contact specializing in building permits'. Overall, the broader impression reflected by the participants in the consultation was that the information services delivered by the city of Ottawa are biased towards the Internet as the main medium of communication, effectively excluding the senior individuals that are not as well-versed in their computer skills as the younger generations.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

During the discussion on civic participation and employment, multiple participants acknowledged the availability of numerous volunteering opportunities for Ottawa's senior citizens. One of the participants eagerly noted that he/she regularly sees the city of Ottawa advertisements in the Ottawa Citizen that appear every few months: definitely a positive experience. The participants also noted that volunteers were essential for the existence of the Gloucester seniors' centre, thus stressing the value of volunteerism for the seniors' community in Ottawa.

Ideas for Improvement

Some participants decried the absence of advisory volunteering opportunities at the city of Ottawa; as one individual noted, the experience and knowledge of the senior citizens was resting unutilized, and could potentially be a valuable source for consultation and guidance.

Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

When the discussion proceeded to the participants' experiences with community support and health care, several positive impressions were brought to the table. For instance, one of the participants noted a very positive experience of home care. When his/her mother was housebound, a home-care nurse's excellent care allowed the individual to continue working.

Negative Experiences

Among the negative experiences discussed, several individuals mentioned nurse and doctor shortages as a persistent problem; some individuals thus suggested that the private-sector healthcare providers step in. Others



proposed a greater investment into preventive care, as opposed to acute. One individual mentioned the relatively lower quality of community services as opposed to clinical and hospital medical care.

Ideas for Improvement

In the area of the ideas for improvement, one participant stated directly that there needs to be better planning with regards to providing health services in retirement homes, as often they would be built first, and then, the proprietors would start making arrangements for medical service provisions. As one individual remarked, 'the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing'. Moreover, some individuals suggested the development of further public-private partnerships in the health-care industry to compensate for the shortages and delays existing in the public sector.

Other Comments

In the concluding part of the consultation, the participants did not voice any further concerns; nonetheless, some individuals expressed interest as to the date of the report publication.



Summary: Tallwood West Anglophone Session – Older Residents (November 26, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Jean-Simon Farrah (Nanos) on November 26th, 2011. Participating were 13 elderly persons residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Thirteen elderly persons participated in the session. The age average was 66.25, with the youngest being at 57 and the oldest at 81 years old. All but one of the participants was retired, and four of them were males. All members of the group had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 1.7. Ten participants owned his or her property, while the rest of the group rented. Six participants lived on their own with an annual income that tended to be within the \$22,230-\$41,545 range. The income of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be closer to the \$41,546-\$83,088 category.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?

Positive Experiences

As their positive experiences with the city of Ottawa, the participants in the study cited the Ottawa public library, the wonderful, numerous parks, the art on the streets of little Italy, and the community gardens, as well as multiple social organizations and clubs, festivals and events as examples.

Negative Experiences

As for their negative experiences, the participants mentioned the poor signage (little advance signage, new signs difficult to read at night), difficulty in distinguishing the traffic lights, a shortage of seniors' centers as the examples of their negative exposure.

Ideas for Improvement

Different ideas were presented as opportunities for improvement by the participants: for instance, one participant suggested reducing the number of stop signs in the suburbs; another requested the increase of dog parks in Tallwood community, and another warned about the risks posed by speeding cyclists on the sidewalks of the Rideau canal – as the participant noted, many cyclists would often be going very fast, but without any bells or sound signals, posing a significant danger to the pedestrians. Yet another participant recommended the creation of pedestrian walkways, to encourage senior citizens to walk, all the while providing safety.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Ideas for Improvement

While discussing the potential areas for improvement in the outdoor spaces, some of the participants recommended improving lighting by installing low-impact lighting simply to increase the safety of pedestrians. Other participants suggested increasing the number of water fountains, and yet further recommendations proposed installing large, well-lit street numbers on all large commercial buildings, e.g. malls. Some of the individuals recommended increasing the number of washrooms and benches in the public areas.

Negative Experiences

As for their negative experiences, the participants mentioned such problems as the shortage of women's washrooms in public buildings (e.g. the National Art Gallery); others mentioned the poor quality of urban development in Ottawa. Others highlighted the fact that many buildings downtown were simply leftovers, not



really attractive for visiting or working in. One participant noted that there were many old, dilapidated low-income buildings in the Tallwood area. Another individual pointed out that it was difficult for him to get from the buses to the malls due to often large distances between them. And yet another participant noted the generally poor state of signage.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

As an example of her positive experience with Ottawa's transportation system, a participant noted the timers on the walking lights: it was very useful for her to know how much time she had got to cross.

Negative Experiences

With regards to their negative experiences with Ottawa's transportation, the participants of the study pointed out the high cost of transportation, the decrepit state of many of the city's taxis, poor bicycle parking, and the often excessively long waiting times for the OC Transpo buses as some examples of such experiences. One participant noted the poor state of some roads in the Tallwood area as a negative experience.

Ideas for Improvement

When providing suggestions for improvement, some individuals proposed instituting a bicycle license; others proposed compulsory cleaning of the city's taxis and stricter policing of all traffic participants, including pedestrians, drivers and cyclists alike.

Housing

Ideas for Improvement

When prompted about providing some suggestions for improvement, the participants suggested making modifications to the general equipment within the housing units in order to accommodate seniors – i.e. installing elevators, increasing the height of the toilets, building larger meeting rooms in the seniors' centres. Some individuals recommended that all buildings should have an accessibility mandate prior to opening for exploitation.

Negative Experiences

When talking about their negative experiences with housing in the Tallwood area, the study participants concentrated especially on the difficulties associated with nursing homes (i.e. lack of regulation, long waiting lists, and over-priced private retirement homes).

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

One of the participants, contrary to the experience of others, stated that he found young people were very courteous in Ottawa, and that he personally never had any problem with the city's younger population.

Negative Experiences

As several of the study's participants indicated, multiple problems in the area of providing social inclusion for the senior citizens emerge in the context of transportation. Several participants noted being pushed, and generally being rude to in the buses and bus stops. As some individuals noted, they were often ignored in stores and shops. Another individual highlighted his experience of being ignored by the community services due to his gender: in this participant's experience, all services were oriented towards female seniors, while men were being



ignored. Yet another participant found appalling the disrespect she experience from the individuals considering her as slow: she felt insulted by those who treated her as if she was in their way. One other individual piercingly remarked that he felt he was not respected and heard, and subsequently mused: was it due to the fact that he was no longer in the workforce?

Social Participation

Ideas for Improvement

Several participants suggested reducing the fees for at least the fitness activities: that would effectively reduce the long-term health care costs due to increased fitness levels among older adults. Another individual proposed that museums should have free days when OC Transpo had free seniors' days.

Participants' Experiences

The majority of the participants noted that the most significant limitation to their social participation was the forbidding cost of activities and courses. One of the participants even noted that it was impossible to get free space reservations for any activities; another mentioned the fact that the course catalogues, previously printed by the city, were only available on the Internet. As a result, he stated, numerous senior adults did not even know about the variety of courses provided. Overall, the participants explained that due to the fact that most seniors have fixed incomes, they could easily be isolated if they could not afford to participate in some activities.

Communication and Information

Participants' Experiences

As the individuals partaking in the consultation shared, many seniors had limited access to information due to a limited access to a computer. As some of the participants noted, many nursing homes and retirement residences do not have computers readily available – and without one, the participants cannot partake in the social media websites like Facebook or Twitter, and equally, they cannot access the city of Ottawa's and community centers' websites. Furthermore, one of the participants decried the poor quality of the city of Ottawa's website, describing it as very inaccessible to older adults. Other participants suggested that further advertising is necessary to making the individuals more aware of the 3-1-1 and 2-1-1 numbers. Another individual noted that the city promoters and media developers must be aware of the physical and mental disabilities experienced by many older adults, including dementia and Alzheimer's syndrome.

Ideas for Improvement

As one of the participants suggested, computer literacy courses for seniors would be an essential instrument in ending their social isolation. Other individuals suggested making computer programs and the city of Ottawa's website more user-friendly, with information being more easy to find, and not 'hidden'.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

One of the participants noted his very positive experience with volunteering with some of the city's committees: in the process, he noted, he had been able to provide solid input of knowledge, and also, he felt respected and valued as an individual. Another participant noted her equally positive experience while working for the elections, but noted that she was paid less than the minimum wage for her efforts.

Negative Experiences

Other participants noted that they felt the current political processes have put them aside; as they noted, they were losing the ability to participate in the matters that concerned them.



Community Support and Health Services

Participants' Experiences

In the area of community support and health services, some of the participants noted the lack of differentiation between the committees servicing the senior adults; other individuals further suggested that home care be expanded, and that more fall prevention be incorporated into home care. Overall, the participants were stressing the importance of expanding home care and preventative services.

Ideas for Improvement

Some of the participants in the study suggested creating an emergency response team that would be assigned specifically to seniors. Another individual proposed introducing community check system to ensure that the senior citizens were taking medication properly and staying healthy. Equally, as the individual noted, many isolated seniors were 'falling through the cracks' of the health care system – hence even a greater need for community support. Other participants remarked that an improvement in the support system for caregivers was necessary, and demanded an increase of community support standards at the provincial and the municipal levels.

Summary: Navan Community Session – Older Rural Residents (November 28, 2011)

Background

The following is a summary of the focus group session conducted by Jean-Simon Farrah (Nanos) on November 28th, 2011. Participating were 17 elderly residing in the City of Ottawa.

Demographic Composition

Seventeen elderly persons participated in the session. The age average was 67, with the youngest being at 48 and the oldest at 84 years old. All of the participants were retired, and five of them were males. Three members of the group had a secondary school education, while the remaining 14 had a college/university education. In terms of health condition, the average score on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is good and 4 is poor, was 1.8. 14 participants owned his or her property, while two participants rented. Three participants lived on their own with an annual income that tended to be between \$22,230 and \$41,545. The income of older people living with one or more individuals tended to be closer to the \$41,456-\$83,088 category.

What it is like to live in Ottawa as an older person?



Positive Experiences

Some participants expressed positive views of emergency response services, such as 9-1-1 and the Para services. One participant appreciated the real sense of community in Navan, in comparison to other parts in Ottawa.

Negative Experiences

Several participants stated that there is a lack of affordable services and facilities. Participants also noted that there is a need for a seniors' center. Some participants cited transportations as being an obstacle in accessing services. Participants mentioned the need for a home support program for seniors in Navan.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Negative Experiences

Several participants stated that accessibility is the main issues concerning seniors in Navan. Many participants expressed that it is very difficult for seniors to walk on sidewalks, especially in the winter. Some participants noted that private buildings lack the proper opening and closing regulations that enable disabled persons to exit and enter buildings, citing the NCC as an example. Other participants agreed that the stairwells in public buildings may be easy to go up, but are steep and difficult to descend.

Ideas for Improvement

One participant suggested that parking in medical buildings should be free.

Transportation

Positive Experiences

One participant noted that Para-Transpo workers were helpful in assisting with entering and exiting buildings, but noted that the service is impersonal.

Negative Experiences

Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with the transportation services, citing that the schedules are designed for persons strictly traveling to and from work. One participant noted that rural communities are discriminated in the sense that the bus fares are higher to travel to rural communities. Participants stated that Para-Transpo service times need to be better coordinated so as to reduce the amount of waiting time. One participant also mentioned disdain for the cost of parking in hospital parking lots. Participants agreed that signage had to be improved.

Ideas for Improvement

Participants suggested regular buses be replaced with smaller buses, which would be less costly. In addition, the smaller bus schedules could be coordinated with other programs in the vicinity—the library programs were cited as an example—so as to maximize the number of travellers.

Housing

Negative Experiences



Several participants agreed that there is a shortage of affordable housing. Participants also noted that there are no affordable long-term care services. Other participants stated that the lack of support services for seniors forced the senior community to relocate.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Positive Experiences

Some participants shared that they felt respected and that people were generally nice.

Negative Experiences

Many participants agreed that the elderly are treated in a manner suggesting inferiority. One participant expressed that older adults are treated like children by those who provide certain services. Another participant stated government service persons show greater disrespect and that government policies discriminate the older population.

Social Participation

Positive Experiences

Some participants stated the various church groups that provide classes and venues for social interaction. One participant noted that libraries in the Navan area are excellent.

Negative Experiences

Some of the participants found that, although activities are offered from times to times, there is no great variety. Furthermore, several participants noted that the costs are often a disincentive to participate in activities. Another participant stated that Navan needed multiservice centres, such as the arena, to be free of charge and open seven days a week for seniors.

Communication and Information

Positive Experiences

One participant noted that the 2-1-1 service is very helpful, especially for new immigrants since it can assist in translation. Another participant noted that the City of Ottawa has a good website for seniors.

Negative Experiences

Most participants expressed frustration with the lack of communication between seniors and service providers. One participant noted that the 3-1-1 service was not accessible and delayed the acquisition of information. Participants noted that although the City of Ottawa has a webpage for seniors, it is not user-friendly. Participants agreed that the lack of computer literacy in senior communities makes it more difficult for seniors to access information.

Civic Participation and Employment

Positive Experiences

One of the participants noted that the senior community has a venue for discussion through the community association.

Negative Experiences

A participant found that although there is a number of volunteer opportunities, as the community ages, it has been difficult to attract new volunteers. The participant also noted that there is no diversity amongst volunteers. Another participant mentioned that there are even fewer volunteers for children's programs.



Community Support and Health Services

Positive Experiences

One participant stated having received good services from a private organization.

Negative Experiences

A participant found that there is a shortage of services for the elderly who are disabled, or have chronic diseases. Another participant stated that there is a shortage of doctors. Participants also mentioned that there is very low support for caregivers, and that homecare is being neglected by the City. One participant also stated being unaware of the available elder care services in the Navan area.

Ideas for Improvement

Some participants stated that pharmacies need to communicate with one another to ensure that prescriptions are given to whom they were prescribed for. One participant noted that more nurse practitioners are needed. Another participant said that personal support workers need to be better trained, better managed, and better supported. Several participants agreed that Navan requires an assessment of needs in terms of health/elder care services.

Other Comments

No additional comments.

