

Saskatoon Council on Aging Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Saskatoon Council on Aging?

The Saskatoon Council on Aging Inc. (SCOA) is a not for profit community based organization.

SCOA is dedicated to the promotion of dignity, health, and independence of older adults. Either alone or in partnership, SCOA provides the leadership necessary to initiate, implement, and evaluate projects that anticipate and respond to the needs of older adults in our community.

SCOA envisions *Positive Aging for All* where the community enables healthy and active aging and supports the well-being of older adults in an environment free from prejudices of ageism.

The organization offers a multiplicity of programs and services in response to age-related needs. These include:

- A Resource Walk-in Centre designed to support and enable older people to access education and other services that enhance their quality of life;
- A Caregiver Information Centre, the only one in the province, which provides education and support to caregivers and others who are looking for related information or services;
- Education and activity programs and services for older adults; and
- Policy advocacy to ensure seniors' perspectives are reflected in governmental programs and policies that relate to older adults.

2. What is the Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative?

SCOA believes that taking positive action now could open the door to many new opportunities. As a result, SCOA adopted the WHO Age-friendly Communities model from the "Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide" to guide their work on an age-friendly Saskatoon.

SCOA through this initiative is working to see that Saskatoon establishes itself as an age-friendly community that is an inclusive and accessible environment that promotes policies, services, settings, and structures that support and enable people to age actively.

Through its works with Saskatoon's older adult community SCOA identified that older adults have many concerns about Saskatoon's age-friendliness. Key amongst their concerns was the fact that

they felt that the city and region were not age-friendly and that public policy decisions affecting programs and services were being made without consideration or more importantly consultation with them. Approaching Saskatchewan's aging populations in this manner effectively hindered the economic and social vitality of the Saskatoon community. This problem would be assuredly exacerbated as Saskatoon and surrounding communities experienced significant increases in the number of older adults over in the next number of years with beginning retirement of the large Boomer population.

3. **What is *Age-Friendly Saskatoon Initiative: Recommendations Phase 2* final report about?**

Phase 2 of the **Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative** developed the *Age-Friendly Saskatoon Initiative: Recommendations* final report. This is a foundational document containing concrete, realistic recommended actions that once implement take Saskatoon down the path to become an age-friendly city and community.

4. **Why should Saskatoon citizens be interested in this report?**

Very little of the information in the report is new. What is key to this report is that it undertook a community conversation and information effort in order to bring together the "lived experience" comments, views and ideas of older adults and caregivers of older adults and of organizations who provide services and support to older adults into a comprehensive conversation and sets of action recommendations. The report is to be used as guiding tools tool of actions to enable organizations, service providers, community groups and governments to better develop and coordinate programs and services for older adults and to lead to real community change.

This document will be shared with the City of Saskatoon, the Saskatoon Health Region, other key stakeholders and the local community.

5. **What kind of recommendations does the report suggest that will make a difference?**

The report summarizes over 200 recommended actions and so it targets the community as a whole. Of course the provincial and municipal governments have key leadership roles; to provide the overarching message that policies, programs, services and agendas have to reflect the needs of older adult citizens.

This is not just about snow removal and access transit services, which are important. It is as well about businesses needing to think about how they manage, hire, retain and train older workers at the same time as they adjust how they sell to the older consumer. Community organizations have a role in understanding and providing community programs for their older residents. Volunteer organizations need to identify how they attract and support older volunteers. The list goes on.

6. What are the phases of the Age-Friendly Saskatoon Initiative?

The Age-Friendly Saskatoon Initiative is being delivered as a multi-phase project.

Phase 1: The Assessment Phase (Scan/Research) - 2011-2012 - The Assessment Phase of the Initiative was completed during the 2011 calendar year and the results reported in the *“Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative: Findings Report”*. Phase 1 activities focused on a community assessment involving over 500 older adults and older adult caregivers who shared their “lived” experience. The data collected provided the empirical research and baseline information that described the contexts, issues, needs and factors promoting/hindering positive aging in an age-friendly community of Saskatoon and surrounding metropolitan region. The *Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative: Findings* report has been disseminated widely to the community.

Phase 2: Analysis and Planning (Strategy Development) Phase – 2013 - In Phase 2, the following activity streams were undertaken: (1) An asset mapping and gap analysis to identify and assess Saskatoon’s assets, gaps and resources involving over 100 community organizations; and, (2) policy review and development of policy/principles framework, and (3) the Action Planning Stream which created recommended actions. The *Age-Friendly Saskatoon Initiative: Recommendations* final report contains a summary of over 200 recommended actions to be used as guiding tools by the many organizations and agencies identified as responsible agents. All recommended actions can be found in the *Age-Friendly Saskatoon Initiative: Recommendations* technical report

Phases 3: Taking Action, Monitoring/ Evaluating Progress and Sharing Learnings (future) - Phase 3 is an integral component to the completion of the **Age-Friendly Saskatoon Initiative**. The phase requires the systematic implementation or “actioning” of the *Age-Friendly Saskatoon Initiative: Recommendations* in the Phase 2 final report. This will be carried out through meaningful community engagement and partnership implementation process, including developing indicators/targets, monitoring mechanisms and evaluation process that led to changing community conditions and establishing an age-friendly environment in Saskatoon and environ. SCOA has a stewardship and coordination role in this process. In addition, this phase also envisions expanding the age-friendly concept and leanings to other (rural) communities within the Saskatoon Health Region.

Through all stages of the **Age-Friendly Saskatoon Initiative** older adults have been active as:

- Contributors/participants providing information and lived experiences
- Project leads sitting on the steering committee and other working committees
- Volunteers to project activities (e.g. development of storyboards and posters, etc.)

7. What is an Age-friendly Community?

An age-friendly community:

- Recognizes an older adults wide range of capacities, talents and gifts
- Responds to an older adults needs and preferences
- Respects an older adults decisions and lifestyle choices
- Protects those an older adults who are most vulnerable
- Promotes older adults inclusion in, and contribution to, all areas of community life

8. How did Age-friendly Community initiatives get started?

Older people play a crucial role in communities – maintaining a productive workforce, building their neighbourhoods through volunteering, transmitting experience and knowledge, and/or helping their families with caring responsibilities. Yet, these contributions will only be truly realized if the barriers that prevent them engaging fully are broken down. Moreover, in light of the aging demographics of Saskatchewan and Canada, creating age-friendly communities becomes even more important.

The age-friendly initiative started in 2006 under the leadership of the World Health Organization (WHO). After significant research and analysis across the world, in 2007, the WHO released the “Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide”. The Guide identified key elements necessary to supporting active and healthy ageing in a community. The Guide is available online at:

http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2007/9789241547307_eng.pdf

9. What are the key features of an Age-friendly City?

The WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide identified eight key areas of community life which need to be developed in order to create an age-friendly environment. They are:

1. Outdoor spaces and public buildings that are pleasant, clean, secure and physically accessible.
2. Public transportation that is accessible and affordable.
3. Housing that is affordable, appropriately located, well built, well designed and secure.
4. Opportunities for social participation in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities with people of all ages and cultures.
5. Older people are treated with respect and are included in civic life.
6. Opportunities for employment and volunteerism that cater to older persons’ interests and abilities.
7. Age-friendly communication and information available.
8. Community support and health tailored to older persons’ needs.

10. Why is SCOA concerned about creating an age-friendly Saskatoon?

The Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative is a central element of the Saskatoon Council on Aging’s vision of *Positive Aging for All*.

9. Who is involved in the SCOA Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative?

The project's work has been supported by Phase 2 funding from the Saskatoon Health Regions, United Way and the City of Saskatoon, and Phase 1 funding from Government of Canada New Horizons for Seniors Program and Affinity Credit Union.

The initiative is being overseen by a Steering Committee made up of older adults and key community stakeholders. Committee members are:

10. Honourary Chair: Dr. Vera Pezer, Chancellor Emerita, University of Saskatchewan
11. Co-chairs: Candace Skrapek and Dr. Murray Scharf
12. SCOA Representatives: Muriel Baxter, Mercedes Montgomery and Elliot PausJensen
13. Community Champion: Dr. Hervé Langlois
14. Saskatoon Regional Health Authority: Donna Bleakney, Director and David Gibson, former Director, Seniors' Health and Continuing Care
15. City of Saskatoon: Lynne Lacroix, Manager Community Development, Community Services Department
16. University of Saskatchewan: Dr. Donna Goodridge, Faculty, College of Nursing and Dr. Haizhen Mou, Faculty, School of Public Policy
17. Saskatoon Housing Authority: Eleanor Cardoza, Board Member
18. Saskatoon Public Library: Gwen Schmidt, Coordinator Outreach Services
19. Project Coordinator: Cheryl Loadman

20. What are SCOA's goals for its Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative?

The goals of the **Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative** are three-fold:

1. To promote civic engagement by Saskatoon's older adults where they are involved in the decision-making processes and the provision of services affecting them.
2. To gather baseline information which defines and describes the variables that promotes or hinders positive aging in an age-friendly community for Saskatoon and area.
3. To provide a common foundational planning document with recommendations that can assist community-based organizations, seniors' groups, and governments to design, develop and coordinate their policies, programmes and services.

21. What are some demographics related to the older adult population

Saskatoon citizens are living longer and the proportion of older adults in the total population is increasing. The largest population increase in the next thirty years will occur in the over 65 age group. The long anticipated demographic impact of the boomer population, along with a steady rise in life expectancy accounts for the increase. At nearly 13 percent of the total population now, this age group is expected to increase to 20 percent by 2032 based on low growth projection

The 2011 Statistics Canada Population Census indicated that there are approximately 79,000 adults over the age of 50 living in Saskatoon census metropolitan area (CMA) with over 31,000 of those individuals 65+. Thus over the next 15 years, Saskatoon will see a substantial increase in the number of individuals in retirement.

22. Who can be contacted for additional information?

Cheryl Loadman
Project Coordinator
Saskatoon Council on Aging Inc.
#301-506 25th St. East
Saskatoon, SK S7K 4A7
Ph: 306-652-2255
Fax: 306-652-7525
<http://www.scoa.ca>