

Saskatoon Council on Aging Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Saskatoon Council on Aging?

A board of volunteers, the majority of whom are older adults, and a team of over 1200 members and a small staff complement operate the Saskatoon Council on Aging Inc., a non-profit, community based, voluntary organization that is dedicated to the promotion of dignity, health, and independence of older adults. Either alone or in partnership, the Council provides the leadership necessary to initiate, implement, and evaluate projects that anticipate and respond to the needs of older adults in our community.

The Saskatoon Council on Aging (SCOA) envisions Positive Aging for All within an environment of that addresses the widespread prejudices of ageism, enhances the age-friendliness of communities, enables healthy, active aging and supports the well-being of older adults. The Council would like to ensure that the diversity of seniors' perspectives is reflected in governmental programs and policies that relate to older adults.

The Saskatoon Council on Aging offers a multiplicity of programs and services in response to age-related needs in the community. It operates a Resource Walk-in Centre designed to support and enable older people to access education and other services that enhance their quality of life. The Resource Centre is also home to the 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.

2. What is an Age-friendly Community?

An age-friendly community is an inclusive and accessible urban environment that promotes active ageing. An age-friendly community is one where policies, services, settings and structures support and enable people to age actively by:

- recognizing their wide range of capacities, talents and gifts
 - responding to their needs and preferences
 - respecting their decisions and lifestyle choices
 - protecting those most vulnerable
 - promoting their inclusion in, and contribution to, all areas of community life
- Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide (2007)

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

Older people play a crucial role in communities - in paid or volunteering work, transmitting experience and knowledge, or helping their families with caring responsibilities. These contributions can only be ensured if older persons enjoy good health and if societies address their needs. "Older people are a vital, and often overlooked, resource for families and for society." Said Dr. John Beard, Director of the Department of Ageing and Life Course at WHO during the launch of the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities. "Their contribution will only be fully realized if they maintain their health and if the barriers that prevent them engaging in family and community life are broken down."

Making cities age-friendly is one of the most effective policy approaches for responding to demographic ageing.

The age-friendly communities initiative started with the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2006. The WHO brought together 33 cities from 22 countries to identify the key elements of the urban environment that support active and healthy ageing. Approximately 1,500 older persons, 250 caregivers and 500 service providers participated to describe features that they thought contributed to an age-friendly community. The project was completed in 2007 and resulted in the "Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide" which outlines a framework for assessing the "age-friendliness" of a city. A core aspect of this approach was to include older people as active and full partners as cities work to identify how they can become age-friendly or more age-friendly. The Guide is available online at: http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2007/9789241547307_eng.pdf

In Canada, the Age-friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide was developed to complement the WHO Age-friendly project, by looking at the unique needs of rural and remote communities. This Guide is available online at:

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/alt-formats/pdf/publications/public/healthy-sante/age_friendly_rural/AFRRRC_en.pdf

Both documents are accompanied by a checklist that can be used to conduct a local assessment and is available online at:

http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Age_friendly_cities_checklist.pdf

4. What are the eight features of an Age-friendly City?

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.

Source: http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Age_friendly_cities_checklist.pdf

5. What is the Age-friendly Saskatoon Initiative?

This project is part of the Saskatoon Council on Aging's overall vision of Positive Aging for All and the belief that this can occur within the context of an age-friendly community.

A prime motivator for undertaking this project was recognition of the fact that seniors have not had a public voice nor have they been adequately engaged in the development of policies and programmes directed toward serving seniors or addressing issues of concern to older adults and their caregivers. Since there is no provincial or city seniors strategy, the Council is intending to promote the civic engagement of seniors in the development of a seniors strategy for Saskatoon and environs.

As the number of seniors increase communities will face both opportunities and challenges as they respond to the needs and wishes of seniors. This is why the Saskatoon Council on Aging believes that advancing the WHO Age-friendly Communities model in Saskatoon is a critical way to support seniors to age positively in our city. Aging positively means leading active, socially engaged and independent lives. The Council and community stakeholders can and must work together in supporting efforts that advance the dignity, health and independence of older adults.

The Saskatoon Council on Aging received funding through New Horizons for Seniors and Affinity Credit Union to undertake the first phase of moving ahead with an Age-Friendly Community model through a process of older adult consultation that will be occurring in the next few months.

In the next few months the Council's Age-friendly Saskatoon initiative will sponsor focus groups of seniors, caregivers, agencies serving seniors and interested people to learn about their experiences growing older in Saskatoon and to get their ideas and suggestions. What we learn will form the basis of a planning document that will outline a strategic plan for implementing an Age-friendly Community model in Saskatoon.

6. What are the goals of the initiative?

The goals are three-fold:

1. To promote civic engagement and volunteerism among seniors in a community milieu in which older adults are actively engaged in the decision-making processes, and the provision of services.
2. To gather baseline information and to define and describe the contexts, issues, needs and factors promoting/hindering positive aging in an age-friendly community for Saskatoon and environs.
3. To provide a common foundational planning document for community-based organizations, seniors' groups, and governments on which they can develop and coordinate their policies, programmes and services.

The initiative will be overseen by a Steering Committee made up of older adults and key community stakeholders.

Committee members are:

- Honorary Chairperson: Dr. Vera Pezer, Chancellor, University of Saskatchewan
- Co-chairs: Candace Skrapek and Murray Scharf
- SCOA representatives: Muriel Baxter and Mercedes Montgomery
- Project Coordinator: Shafalta Basnyat
- Community Champions: Herve Langois, Myrna Bentley
- Saskatoon Regional Health Authority: Dave Gibson, Director of Continuing Care and Seniors Health
- City of Saskatoon: Lynne Lacroix Manager Community Development, Community Services Department
- University of Saskatchewan: Donna Goodridge Faculty Member College of Nursing and Haizhen Mou Faculty Member School of Public Policy
- Saskatoon Housing Authority: Eleanor Cardoza, Board Member
- Saskatoon Public Library: Gwen Schmidt, Coordinator Outreach Services

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

From: Healthy Aging in Canada:

A New Vision, A Vital Investment From Evidence to Action

A Background Paper Prepared for the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Committee of Officials (Seniors) September 2006. Online at:

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/alt-formats/pdf/publications/public/healthy-sante/vision/vision-eng.pdf>

What Does Canada's Older Population Look Like?

Canada's population is aging quickly. In fact, Canadians aged 65 and over will become more numerous than children under age 15 around the year 2015. This unprecedented demographic shift will have far-reaching social, economic and political impacts (Statistics Canada, 2005).

In 2005, there were some 4 million Canadians over the age of 65. Due to the aging of the large baby boomer population, by 2031, there will be approximately 9 million Canadians aged 65 and over and they will account for 25 percent of the total population. This will be almost double the current proportion of 13 percent (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Canada's older population is also aging. Between 1991 and 2001, the population aged 80 and over soared by 41 percent to 932,000. It is expected to increase an additional 43 percent from 2001 to 2011. By then, it will have surpassed an estimated 1.3 million (Statistics Canada, 2005a). Because women generally live longer than men, women dominate the senior population, especially after age 80.

In Canada, "seniors" are typically described as all men and women age 65 and over. In fact, this large and growing population is a highly diverse group. Women and men experience aging in different ways. Clearly, there are significant differences between life at age 65, compared to age 75 and 85-plus. These age groups are also heterogeneous, reflecting diverse values, educational levels and socioeconomic status.

Aging may also reflect levels of independence and dependence. Most older Canadians (over 90 percent) live independently in the community and want to remain there. This will require a shift in priorities away from treatment and acute care toward health promotion, prevention, healthy aging and community support.

Seniors who need long-term care can still benefit from healthy aging initiatives adapted to their needs, strengths and interests (Health Canada and Pan American Health Organization, 2002). Currently, only 7 percent of seniors live in long-term care facilities, although this increases to 14 percent for those over age 75. This proportion is expected to grow as the number of 80-plus seniors continues to increase (National Advisory Council on Aging (NACA), 2005).

Canada is in a unique position, due to immigration and Aboriginal Peoples, in terms of ethnic, racial and linguistic diversity among the older population. Immigrant and Aboriginal seniors offer a valuable resource to Canadian society and should be encouraged to be active participants at all levels of organizations and initiatives that focus on healthy aging.

In 2001, 19.4 percent of the immigrant population in Canada was over 65: this number is significantly higher than the national average of 13 percent (NACA, 2005).

Currently, seniors make up a relatively small proportion of Canada's Aboriginal population. However, the number of Aboriginal seniors is expected to triple between 1996 and 2016 (Government of Canada, 2002).

Economic Contribution of Older Adults

In 1998, some 42 percent of Canadians aged 55-64 and 44 percent of Canadians over 65 spent an average of 2.2 hours a day as volunteers. The economic value to our communities is thought to be \$60.2 billion each year (Statistics Canada, 1998).

It has been estimated that it would take almost 300,000 full-time employees at a cost of \$6 billion per year to replace the work of the 2.1 million Canadians who care for seniors with long-term health problems (Keating et al, 2005). The majority of these caregivers are middle-aged and older women.

Older Canadians also make an important contribution to the paid economy. More than 300,000 Canadians 65 or older were in the labour force in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2001). As demographic shifts reduce the ratio between the proportion of employed and unemployed Canadians (i.e., children and retired people), governments and some employers are encouraging individuals to work longer. Remaining in the workforce and actively participating in civic affairs depends, in large part, on staying in good health.

From:

Saskatchewan Population by Age and Sex Report 2006 Census of Canada. Online at
<http://www.stats.gov.sk.ca/stats/pop/Censusagesex2006.pdf>

Saskatchewan's Census population of seniors (individuals aged 65 and over) for 2006 was 149,300, according to Statistics Canada. This represents an absolute increase of 1,735 persons (1.18%) from the 2001 Census population of 147,565 for seniors.

Compared to the 2001 Census, Saskatchewan continues to rank first with respect to the percentage of population aged 65 and over.

Currently the seniors' share of the population in Saskatchewan (15.42%), the largest in Canada.

From the City of Saskatoon:

The City of Saskatoon will see a large increase in the proportion of seniors (aged 65+) as a total of the population (increasing from 12.6% to 19.9%). Medium growth scenarios project an increase of seniors by 70.0% over the twenty-year period (increasing from 26,413 to 44,875).

The communities immediately surrounding Saskatoon will see a large increase in the proportion of seniors (aged 65+) in their population (increasing from 9.0% to 12.7%). Medium growth scenarios project an increase of seniors by approximately 86.1% over the twenty-year period (increasing from 2,779 to 5,208).

Substantial growth in the senior age group (65+) is projected for all of the Saskatoon Health Region, with an increase of 55.3% in the twenty-year period (increasing from 39,032 to 60,621 seniors).

8. Who can be contacted for additional information?

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