

City-Wide Priorities for Advancing the Wellbeing of Ottawa's Older Adults: Opportunities and Challenges



About the COA

Our Mission Statement: As a bilingual and inclusive Council, we work to advance the wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults

Our Motto: Advancing the wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults

Our Vision: Respected, informed, and engaged older adults living in an age-friendly city

What We Do: As a bilingual and inclusive Council, we:

Bring together

older adult groups, community partners, government organizations, the business community, and individuals whose diverse backgrounds, extensive experience and expertise enable us to undertake quality strategic thinking on older adult issues

Advocate

for and with older adults, making clear recommendations and sharing the results of our work with key community decision makers

Develop and deliver

branded older adult education programs in a variety of formats

Keep older adults informed

about relevant issues
events, news,
activities and
resources in our
community

Our Values:

Accountability the willingness to work together and accept responsibility for our actions with respect and honesty

Perseverance the performance of our actions and efforts towards our goals, despite difficulties and challenges

Competence the conduct of our actions and attitudes in a manner that displays integrity, conscientiousness, and knowledge

Equity, **Inclusion and Diversity** the incorporation in our daily work of inclusive and agefriendly environments where all individuals and all communities benefit from fair and equal opportunities

Age Positiveness the view of aging as a healthy, normal part of life and the valuing of the contributions that older adults make to their families and communities

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Executive Summary

Building on the expertise and diverse backgrounds of the Council on Aging of Ottawa's (COA) volunteers and members, this document outlines the COA's priorities for City Officials during this Term of Council. It is also to inform and engage the COA's action committees and members, as well as older adults, community agencies, and policymakers to shape public attitudes and policies that impact the wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults.

We see opportunities and challenges for the City, the COA, and community partners working with and for Ottawa's older adults. Yet, we need to ensure the City and community services keep pace with Ottawa's growing, changing, and aging population. We also believe that the recommendations in this document support and align with the City's 2023-2026 Term of Council Priorities and the COA's Strategic Plan 2022-2024.

The four key priorities for City Council and the COA with its community partners to advance the wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults are:

Demonstrate leadership
with and for older adults

Create the conditions
to advance the health and wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults

Invest in affordable and accessible age-friendly housing

Reduce the burden of the cost of living

Ottawa's Rapidly Growing, Changing, and Aging Population

The population boom in Ottawa has been spurred by attracting younger professionals and immigrants to the city as well as by older residents who are living longer. These facts bring opportunities and challenges to create the kind of city in which people want to work, live, and grow older.

We see opportunities! In 2011, the City of Ottawa was recognized by the World Health Organization as a <u>age-friendly city</u> and to "provide supports and opportunities in the physical and social environment to enable older adults to be safe, healthy, and to participate in society." Twelve years later, it is critical the City renews and expands its efforts to maintain this recognition and achieve its goal of being an "equal, diverse and inclusive City."

We see challenges too! According to the 2021 Census, <u>37% of Ottawa's population is over the age of 50 and represents the fastest-growing age group in Ottawa</u>. In fact, Ottawa's population is growing, changing, and aging and requires a community response.

Here are a few more facts about the social and economic capital as well as the diversity that older adults contribute to the City!

Older adults are here and growing in numbers!

There are **172,150 older adults** over the age of 65, or 17% of the population.

There are now more older adults than children under 15.

Between 2016-2021, the highest percentage of population change was among those 65+ with an increase of 19.5%; those 85+ increased by 14%; and those 100+ increased by 22%.

Due to gender differences in life expectancy, there are more older women and there is more than double the number of women aged 90+ than men.

By 2031, older adults, aged 65 and over, will account for over 20% of Ottawa's population.

In rural Ottawa areas, there is an expected 183% increase in older adults between 2011-2031.















Older adults
are a vital part
of the
workforce
and will be
retiring soon!

In Ottawa, baby boomers make up 23% of the population. The needs of the baby boomer generation change as they get older and transition to retirement. Due to social, economic, and cultural shifts, their needs are also different from the generations before them and after them.

One in five older adults (65+) work part-time or part-year.

In addition, one in five people aged 15-64 are close to retirement. As the population ages and the working population decreases, it is predicted that by 2050 there will be a 30% decrease of close family members that could act as caregivers for older adults.



Older adults are active and engaged!

Older adults in Canada dedicate the most volunteer hours per year, about 222 hours per person.

One third of older adults aged 55-64 are caregivers. Many provide care for their children, parents, and sometimes both. These caregivers are most likely to be women.

Almost one-quarter of older adults 65+ are caregivers, mostly caring for a spouse. The gender differences in caregiving evens out as age increases. In older adults 85+, men were more likely to be caregivers.

79% of Canadian older adults aged 65-74 voted in the 2019 federal election, the highest of any age group.

Ottawa's older adults are educated. 62% of Ottawa's older adults have a post-secondary education.

Older adults are diverse.

19% of older adults are French speaking, higher than the rest of Ottawa's population (17%).

23% of Ottawa's older adults have a first language other than French or English: 20% speaking a non-official language at home and another 4.5% have no knowledge of French or English.

Close to one-third of Ottawa's older adults are immigrants. Most have been in Canada for over 35 years but 1.5% immigrated in the past 5 years.

14% of Ottawa's older adults identify as a member of a visible minority group including Chinese, South Asian, Black, Arab, and Southeast Asian.

In the next 20 years, 28% of Ottawa's older adults will be members of one of the ten largest visible minority groups.

1.1% of older adults identify as Indigenous. Inuktitut is the most common Indigenous first language in Ottawa.

More than 5% of older adults identify as LGBTQ2S+. One in five of these older adults live in rural areas.



Older adults need affordable and accessible housing options.

63% of Ottawa's older adults living in private housing live with a partner.

26% of Ottawa's older adults live alone. In Centretown, that number is as high as 52.8 % and those who live alone are more likely to be women who live with lower incomes.

In 2017, **2,257 older adults in Ottawa were on the waitlist for social housing**. The reported number of older adults using shelters in Ottawa is increasing, especially for older adult women who live alone.

In the City's 2021 Homelessness Point In Time Count, 17% of those reporting homelessness were older adults.

Older adults in Ottawa were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those who live in LTC.

COVID-19 impacted population growth in all age groups, with the **highest mortality rates occurring in older adults**. Despite this, the COVID-19 pandemic had little impact on overall population aging.

Most COVID-19-related deaths in Ottawa occurred in people over 50 with 62% of deaths occurring in people over 80, most of which were older residents in long-term care homes.

These statistics reinforce the need to address the diverse and rapidly growing, changing, and aging population in the City of Ottawa in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Improving the lives of Ottawa's older adults requires action on traditional municipal services such as affordable and accessible housing, transportation, and outdoor spaces and buildings. As an Age-Friendly City, health and community support services, respect and social inclusion, social participation, civic engagement, access to information and communication, as well as income/financial security are also important factors to address. Meeting the needs of older adults can provide important cost benefits to Ottawa and create a healthier and more equitable city, in which all residents, young and older, can enjoy an excellent quality of life.



What can the City of Ottawa and the COA do to advance the wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults?

We believe that despite the growing, changing, and aging population, the City of Ottawa, the COA, and their community partners can do more to advance the wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults. We are recommending action across four key priorities:

Demonstrate leadership
with and for older adults

Create the conditions
to advance the health and wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults

Invest in affordable and accessible age-friendly housing

Reduce the burden of the cost of living

Demonstrate leadership

with and for older adults

The City of Ottawa is to be commended for developing and implementing three <u>Older Adult Plans</u> (OAP) with a new plan to be released in early 2024. In addition, the City has <u>established Council Liaisons for Older Adults</u> and <u>Councillors Kavanaugh and Hubley have been appointed</u> for this Term (2022-2026). The role creates new opportunities to collaborate with the Seniors Roundtable, community agencies, residents, and City staff.

What are we asking the City of Ottawa to do?

- 1. **Engage and partner** with older residents and community agencies to develop, implement, and evaluate a robust Older Adult Plan for 2023-2026 to be monitored by the Seniors Roundtable and the Council Liaisons for Older Adults.
- 2. **Maintain** a Seniors Roundtable using the rules and procedures outlined in the <u>2023</u>
 <u>Advisory Body Review Report</u> with the mandate to meaningfully engage older adults to improve city and community services to address their unique needs.
- 3. **Create** an advisory committee to elevate and address strategic issues concerning older adults beyond the Seniors Roundtable and the OAP.
- 4. Create and maintain a permanent 'policy home' in the City's Gender and Race Equity, Inclusion, Indigenous Relations and Social Development Branch for the age-friendly community initiatives, the Older Adult Plan, and Seniors Roundtable with adequate human and financial resources to ensure interdepartmental collaboration, communication, and action with and for older adults.
- 5. **Maintain** the City as a <u>designated member of the World Health Organization's Global</u> Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.
- Ensure older adult representation (bilingual older adults, older adults with disabilities, older women, and those representing diverse older adults - indigenous, multicultural, 2SLGBTQIA+) on key advisory committees and boards, such as, but not limited to the
 - a. Accessibility Advisory Committee
 - b. Community Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee
 - c. French Language Services Advisory Committee
 - d. Ottawa Board of Health
- 7. **Encourage and support** the Mayor and City Councillors to host annual events for older adults such as the <u>Mayor's Annual Canada Day Celebration for Seniors</u> and the <u>River</u> Ward Older Adult Summit.

- 8. Recognize and lead the charge to mark significant days/months with older adults and other community partners including, but not limited to
 - a. Ontario's Seniors Month in June
 - b. National Seniors' Day on October 1
 - c. National Ageism Awareness Day on October 7
 - d. Intergenerational Day on June 1
 - e. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15
 - f. Ottawa Grassroots Ethno-Cultural Seniors Network Appreciation Day (spearheaded by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa)
 - g. National Caregiver Day on April 5
 - h. National Senior Safety Week on the first week in November
- Consider developing, funding, and implementing an <u>age-friendly workplace initiative</u> to recognize the contributions of older City workers, to provide training/education to city staff, and to support recruitment and retention of older workers in an inclusive and intergenerational workforce.
- 10. **Study and consider** developing, funding, and implementing an <u>age-friendly business</u> <u>initiative</u> in partnership with the City's <u>Business Improvement Areas</u> and The Council on Aging of Ottawa.

What the COA will do?

- 1. **Work with and support** the City Council Co-Liaisons for Older Adults to clarify their mandate that promotes active engagement with and for older adults.
- 2. **Actively and regularly engage** with the Mayor, Older Adults Liaison Councilors, and appropriate representatives of the City of Ottawa.
- 3. **Convene** representatives of older adult groups, community partners, government organizations, the business community, and individuals whose diverse backgrounds, extensive experience, and expertise will enable quality strategic thinking on older adult issues.
- 4. **Maintain and support** a membership of 50% older adults from diverse backgrounds and at least 20% French-speaking individuals on its Board and Committees.
- Advocate with and for older adults to shape public attitudes and policies making recommendations and sharing results of our work with key community decision makers.
- 6. Request and support the City of Ottawa to endorse a resolution to implement an antiageism policy to recognize the ongoing and significant contributions and roles played by older adults in our community and to raise awareness of the importance of addressing ageism and advancing progress in how we think, feel, and act towards age and ageing.

- 7. Sustain membership and leadership roles on the
 - a. City's Seniors Roundtable
 - b. United Way East Ontario Successful Aging Strategic Council
 - c. Ontario Association of Councils on Aging
 - d. Ontario Age-Friendly Communities Outreach Program
 - e. Ottawa Community Benefit Network
 - f. Ottawa Disability Coalition
 - g. Champlain Community Support Network
- 8. **Create** a presence of the organization in all 24 City Wards by attending and supporting councilor-led initiatives with and for older adults.
- 9. **Seek** funding and partners to update the <u>2017 Evaluation Framework to Measure the</u> Age-Friendliness of Ottawa.
- 10. Engage and consult with neighbourhood groups, tenant and resident groups, community health and resource centres, community associations, and business improvement areas to foster innovative solutions to support older adults to age in community, such as <u>Senior</u> <u>Watch Old Ottawa South</u>.
- 11. **Monitor** City's Committees and Boards **and proactively respond** to policy decisions that impact older adults including:
 - a. Accessibility Advisory
 - b. Community Safety and Well-Being Advisory
 - c. French Language Services Advisory
 - d. Ottawa Board of Health
 - e. Planning and Housing
 - f. Ottawa Community Housing Board
 - g. Community Services
 - h. Emergency and Protective Services
 - i. Transit Commission
 - j. Transportation
- 12. **Lead** an election readiness campaign with community partners in 2026 to ensure older adults are ready and engaged.

Create the conditions to advance the health and wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults

The ability of older adults to protect and maintain their health is key to aging well. City services such as <u>public health</u>; <u>social</u>, <u>recreational</u>, <u>and cultural supports and services</u>; <u>police services</u>; <u>libraries</u>; <u>winter maintenance</u>; <u>long-term care</u>; and <u>emergency services</u> are just a few ways the City of Ottawa supports the health and wellbeing of older adults to remain active and engaged.

What are we asking the City of Ottawa to do?

- 1. Support Ottawa Public Health's Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs as an innovative and responsive service delivery model that could support the needs of older adults including access to existing services such as vaccinations, social services, dental screening, mental health, diabetes screening as well as new services such as wellness checks for those over 70 years of age and identify as having a chronic condition to support early interventions and referrals to home and community care support services.
- Recognize elder abuse as a public health and community safety issue and ensure the
 Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan addresses the needs of older survivors by
 increasing awareness of and access to services and supports that benefit them, to reduce
 the number of older adults who experience elder abuse, and to provide alternatives to
 reporting for older survivors.
- 3. **Offer and promote** <u>accessibility and affordability of social and physical activity programs</u> for older adults in Ottawa. Regular social and physical activity for older adults is extremely important for older adults to maintain health, prevent falls, and remain socially connected.
- 4. <u>Prioritize pedestrians first in the City's snow-clearing policies and practices</u>. Ottawa is a beautiful winter city, yet for many older adults, winter walking on roads, sidewalks, and pathways, is unsafe and inaccessible for them.
- 5. **Release, approve, fund, and implement** the new City Winter Maintenance Quality Standards.
- 6. **Publish** the list of <u>toilets in public buildings</u> to ensure safe, accessible, and easy-to-find washrooms for residents and visitors to Ottawa.
- 7. **Actively pursue** an <u>innovative model of care</u> in the four long-term care homes operated by the City to meet the physical, emotional, social, psychological, spiritual, language, and cultural needs of residents and families (also referred to as emotion-based or personcentred care).
- 8. **Promote** volunteer and employment opportunities for older adults in the City's recreation, cultural, and facilities services.
- 9. **Track and publish** both rural and urban ambulance response times to ensure equity of access to emergency health services across the city.

What the COA will do?

- Lead Age-Friendly Ottawa and support community initiatives to advance the wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults through its Board of Directors, Engagement and Education Committees, and Special Projects:
 - a. Age-Friendly Housing
 - b. Ottawa Seniors Transportation
 - c. Income Security
 - d. Health Issues

- e. Francophone Affairs
- f. Smart Aging
- g. Engage at Every Age Project
- 2. Maintain relationships and actively engage with older adults and community partners to pursue initiatives that advance the social, health, and financial wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults.
- 3. **Strengthen** our relationship with Ottawa Public Health **and continue** to meet quarterly to share information and identify ways to work together.
- 4. **Recruit and maintain** relationships with City staff and services to support, advise, and participate on its Engagement and Education Committees.
- 5. **Monitor and intervene** with and for older adults and community partners on City plans and strategies, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Official Plan
 - b. Older Adult Plan
 - c. Accessibility Plan
 - d. 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan
 - e. Long-Term Care Services Strategic Plan
 - f. Community Safety and Well-Being Plan
 - g. Road Safety Action Plan
 - h. Women and Gender Equity Strategy
 - i. Master Transportation Plan
 - j. Transit Services Five-Year Roadmap
 - k. French Language Services
 - I. Reconciliation Action Plan
 - m. Anti-Racism and Ethnocultural Relations Initiatives
- 6. **Facilitate** lifelong learning through information and education on issues that impact the health and wellbeing of older adults in all Wards.

Invest in affordable and accessible age-friendly housing

Ottawa faces a critical shortage in affordable housing (costing less than 30% of your income). Twenty-five percent (25%) of Ottawa's older adults (65+) are renters, with 54% of those spending 50% of their income on housing. They also represent 40% of Ottawa's social housing registry with 12,000+ of them waiting for an affordable home.

Accessibility is another key factor for older adults to be able to live and age safely in their own homes. 38% of older Canadians (65+) and 20% of working-age Canadians (aged 25 to 64 years) are living with one or more disabilities. The shortage of affordable, accessible, and appropriate housing for older adults and people with disabilities in the city or neighbourhood of their choice has led to an increased interest in innovative aging-in-community models such as home sharing, co-housing, naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs), intergenerational living, cooperative housing, and age-specific, mixed-income housing.

What are we asking the City of Ottawa to do?

- 1. Increase the number of available and affordable housing options, including rental units, to match older adults' demographic in our city. This means ensuring that 18% of new units are suitable for older adults right now and moving to 25% by 2036. These units must be in walkable and connected neighbourhoods and near amenities such as transportation, shopping, and other community services. In addition, our new Official Plan needs to establish and adhere to a consistent income-to-rent ratio for rental housing targets, linked to the City's 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan.
- Incorporate the principles of universal design in all new buildings and ensure that 20% of all renovated units are accessible. In addition, the City needs to support and advocate for the development of common standards of accessibility (building codes) across all levels of government.
- 3. **Invest** in innovative building models that encourage connections and relationships such as <u>NORCs</u> (<u>Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities</u>), supported independent living communities, affordable retirement and assisted living residences, multigenerational housing, co-housing, co-living, and coach/mini houses.
- 4. **Facilitate** the coordination of public health services with health teams, community organizations, and stakeholders to expand the range of home and community care support services to promote and protect the health of older adults.
- 5. Ensure the mandate of the new Liaisons for Older Adults includes housing in the list of issues affecting older adults, leading to the development of a comprehensive housing plan to meet the diverse housing needs of older adults including elements of physical, emotional, social and health needs.

What the COA will do?

- 1. **Convene and sustain** the Age-Friendly Housing Committee and its working groups to advocate for affordable, accessible, available, appropriate, and adaptable housing options in the Ottawa region.
- 2. **Engage** older adults through community conversations, surveys, and other engagement activities to build momentum and raise our voices to advocate for more affordable and accessible housing in Ottawa.
- 3. Update and distribute the popular Housing Guide for Older Adults.
- 4. **Maintain** its relationship with the City's Housing Services Department to monitor and support age-friendly housing options in new developments in Ottawa.
- 5. Act as a champion and a catalyst for resident-lead initiative in Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities across Ottawa.
- 6. Support and engage with the Stopping All Falls for Everyone (SAFE) Ottawa Collaborative Working Group with CARP Ottawa, Ottawa Public Health, HealthCraft, BuildAble, and Renos4Life to advocate for home safety features, such as grab bars in bathrooms, in all new housing developments in Ottawa.

Reduce the burden of the cost of living

Although not a new issue for Ottawa's older adults, the rising cost of living and inflation are real concerns for governments and older adults alike. While there are fewer seniors (65+) who live in poverty than other age groups, most older adults are on a fixed income and can be negatively impacted by the rising cost of living. The City provides property tax and water utility deferrals, discounted transit fares for seniors and social recreational programs, and financial assistance programs for essential health and social supports.

In addition, through the <u>Ontario Renovates</u> program, the City provides limited funding to qualifying landlords for accessibility modifications for their existing rental units as well as to low-income seniors and to persons with disabilities who own their homes for essential repairs and accessibility modifications to support independent living.

What are we asking the City of Ottawa to do?

- 1. **Ensure** the needs of older adults are considered in the municipal poverty reduction strategy as part of the <u>Community Safety and Well-Being Plan</u>.
- 2. **Improve** communication on City deferrals, discounts, and financial assistance for older adults and persons with disabilities.
- 3. **Expand** the Para Transpo Rural Service to be at par with urban rides (\$10 vs. \$2.80) and allow for rural-to-rural bookings.
- 4. **Improve access to and uptake of** the <u>Taxi Coupon Program</u> for Para Transpo users including extending it to rural older adults.

What the COA will do?

- 1. **Convene and support** the Income Security Committee to develop information that supports the financial wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults.
- 2. **Deliver** the Retiring on a Low-Income Workshops twice a year.
- 3. Participate in anti-poverty campaigns with other community partners.
- 4. **Support** the City to develop, implement, and evaluate a poverty reduction strategy to ensure the needs of low-income older adults are included.

Conclusion

Ottawa's growing, changing, and aging population creates both opportunities and challenges for the city, community agencies, and older adults. The demographic imperatives are clear. The COA is recommending the City acts and addresses the four key priorities over the next Term of Council (2022-2026) including:

- 1. **Demonstrate Leadership** with and for Older Adults
- 2. Create the Conditions to Advance the Health and Wellbeing of Ottawa's Older Adults
- 3. Invest in Affordable and Accessible Age-Friendly Housing
- 4. Reduce the Burden of the Cost of Living

While we hold the City to account to advance the wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults, it also requires the support and action of community agencies and older adults. Together we can make Ottawa a more age-friendly and "liveable city for all."



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