



# Town of Amherst Seniors Strategy

November 2013



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## **Introduction**

### **Message From the Mayor (DRAFT)**

**I am pleased to release the Town of Amherst Seniors Strategy. This Strategy is intended to guide Town Council in making the Town of Amherst a more senior friendly community. The Town acknowledges that seniors make up a large, and increasing proportion of our community. Through this strategy we intend to help ensure that the community they live in suits their needs as they travel through this very exciting stage of their lives.**

**Amherst's seniors have contributed greatly to the success of the Town and surrounding areas. Their life experiences are collectively the Town's recent history. It is imperative that we honor their lives, celebrate their achievements and ensure that their living environment satisfies their current needs.**

**Most of the information and ideas in this Strategy is not new. It is mostly adopted from the World Health Organization's 2006 Age Friendly Communities Guide. This document is intended to help communities like Amherst ensure that seniors have a safe, productive and inclusive living environment. The goals and principals of the Strategy have largely been adopted by Nova Scotia's Strategy for Positive Aging.**

**It is my sincere hope this Strategy is well received by the senior residents of Amherst and that its implementation will have a profound positive effect on their lives.**

**Mayor Rob Small**



The (Nova Scotia) Strategy for Positive Aging has adopted the following vision:

**Nova Scotia is an inclusive society of caring communities that supports the well-being of seniors and values their contributions.**

The (Nova Scotia) Strategy for Positive Aging has adopted the following Guiding Principles:

The guiding principles reflect the fundamental values and underlying beliefs of society. They define good practice and suggest a code of conduct for all Nova Scotians. Together, the guiding principles describe a society that values seniors.

**Dignity** – We demonstrate respect for the personal privacy, individual values, preferences, and spiritual beliefs of seniors.

**Fairness** – We equally address the distinctive needs of diverse seniors in accordance with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.

**Participation** – We enable seniors to maintain their social status and social connections in the community.

**Respect** – We promote a culture of respect across generations and recognize the contributions of seniors to family, friends, community, and society.

**Safety** – We enable seniors to live in safe and supportive living environments, free from danger, fear and exploitation.

**Self-Determination** – We respect the right of seniors to manage their affairs and participate as fully as possible in decisions affecting their health and security.

**Self-Fulfillment** - We ensure seniors can access the educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources of society.

**Security** - We ensure seniors have sufficient resources to meet their basic needs and lead self-fulfilling lives.



# Nova Scotia's Positive Aging Goals

## **1. Celebrating Seniors**

Nova Scotia's value seniors and celebrate their lifelong contributions.

## **2. Financial Security**

Secure and sufficient income provides an adequate standard of living for seniors.

## **3. Health and Well-Being**

A range of supports and services enables seniors to optimize their health and well-being.

## **4. Maximizing Independence**

Seniors enjoy maximum independence with support from family, friends, community and government.

## **5. Housing Options**

Affordable, accessible, safe and supportive housing options are available to seniors.

## **6. Transportation**

Affordable, safe and accessible transportation options are available to seniors.

## **7. Respecting Diversity**

Nova Scotia's recognize, respect and respond positively to seniors in all their diversity.

## **8. Employment and Life Transitions**

Workplaces support and encourage the participation, health, lifelong learning and volunteer activities of older workers.

## **9. Supportive Communities**

Seniors have opportunities for personal growth, lifelong learning, and community participation in safe and supportive environments.

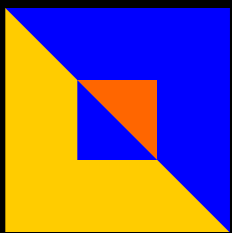


## **World Health Organization**

**The age-friendly community initiative started with the World Health Organization in 2006, and involved 33 cities of varying sizes throughout the world. *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide*, contains the lessons, strategies and information learned through discussions in these cities. Meanwhile, *Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide*, was developed to complement the WHO age-friendly project by assessing the unique needs of rural and remote communities in Canada.**

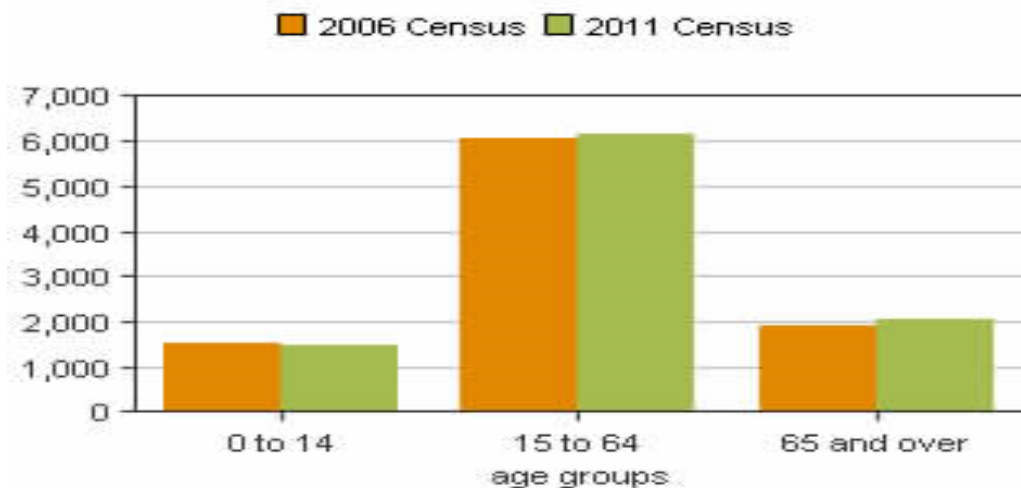
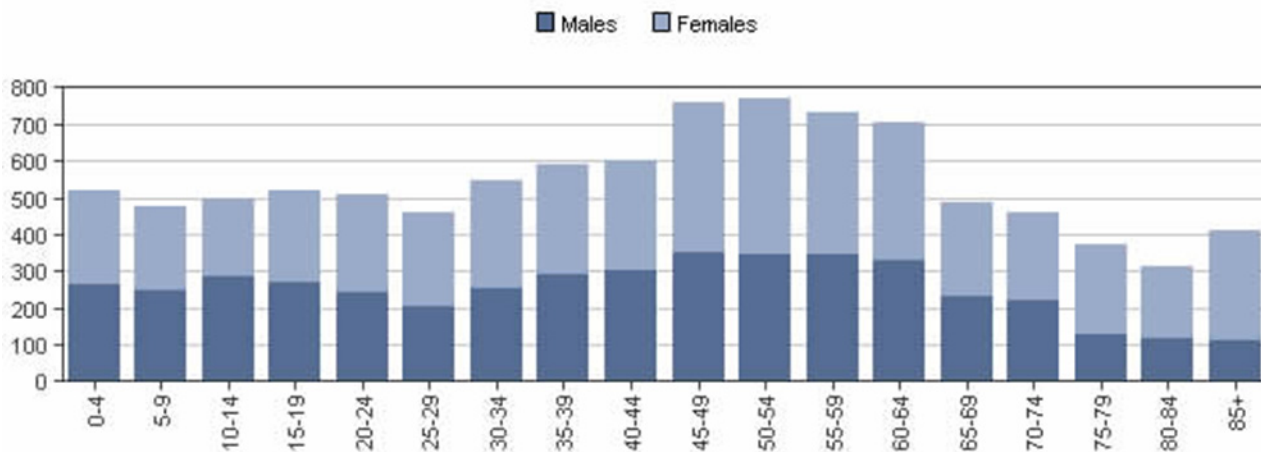
### **Eight key features of an age-friendly community:**

- 1. Outdoor spaces and public buildings are pleasant, clean, secure and physically accessible.**
- 2. Public transportation is accessible and affordable.**
- 3. Housing is affordable, appropriately located, well built, well designed and secure.**
- 4. Opportunities exist 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 cater to older persons' interests and abilities.**
- 7. Age-friendly communication and information is available.**
- 8. Community support and health services are tailored to older persons' needs.**



## Demographics

In 2011 the Town of Amherst had a population of 9,717, which was 2.2% higher than 2006. Out of our total population 21.1% are over the age of 65; in Nova Scotia it is 17.2% and in Canada it is 14.9%. The median age in the Town 45.9 years; in Nova Scotia it is 43.7 years and in Canada it is 40.0 years. In 2011 we had 2050 total seniors which is 150 more than in 2006. This represents 71% of our total growth in that time period. Of our total seniors we have 1245 females and 805 males. Over the age of 80 we have 500 female and 225 males. There are 880 widows in the Town of Amherst. Each month approximately 7 people in Amherst turn 65.



# THEME 1 - OUTDOOR SPACES PUBLIC SPACES







# **Theme 1 Outdoor Spaces Public Spaces**

## **Introduction**

**The quality of our physical environment has a profound effect on the quality of life of all residents, including seniors. Age friendly outdoor and public spaces provide seniors a comfortable place to congregate, socialize and exercise. High quality recreation areas promote physical activity and social interaction among seniors.**

## **Age Friendly Outdoor Spaces:**

- Have pathways and trails with gradual elevation change**
- Have accessible washrooms**
- Are free of snow and ice in the winter**
- Are well lighted, clean and pleasant**
- Have long view planes**
- Have well marked pedestrian crossings**
- Are patrolled by the police**

## **Current Strengths:**

- Rotary Park**
- Dickey Park**
- Victoria Square**
- Walking track at the stadium**
- YMCA**

## **Current Weaknesses:**

- Some trails are not currently cleared of snow and ice in the winter**
- There is no lawn bowling facility in the area**

## **Focus Items:**

- Promote the Amherst Stadium as a safe place to rest for seniors out walking**
- Install new benches along Albion Street**
- Install automatic door openers for the bathrooms at the stadium**

## **THEME 2 - TRANSPORTATION**





## **Theme 2 Transportation**

### **Introduction**

**High quality transportation is essential to allow our senior population to continue to live at home and participate in civic life. Our transportation infrastructure and systems must be age friendly to allow seniors to carry out daily tasks as well as participate in recreational, cultural, and social opportunities.**

### **Age Friendly Transportation is:**

- Well maintained roads**
- Well maintained sidewalks and trails**
- Assisted transportation**
- Affordable and high quality transit and / or taxis**

### **Current Strengths:**

- Our well maintained roads, sidewalks and trails**
- Cumberland Transportation Network**

### **Current Weaknesses:**

- Lack of benches on main commercial arties (Church and Albion Streets)**
- Some sidewalks are in need of repair**
- Some trails are not currently cleared of snow an ice in the winter**
- Generally an over reliance on family for transportation**
- Inadequate scheduling of public transit**
- Cost of transportation**
- Misunderstanding about Cumberland Transportation Network for low income**

### **Focus Items:**

- Low stress driver refresher courses**
- Continue to improve existing sidewalks and the installation of new sidewalks through the annual capital budget program**

# THEME 3 - HOUSING





## **Theme 3 Housing**

### **Introduction**

**Ideally, seniors would age in place as long as possible. The ability to remain in one's own home depends on a range of factors including health, mobility, finances and availability of support services.**

### **Age Friendly Housing:**

**Is affordable**

**Is accessible**

**Is close to core services**

**Is close to 'support people'**

**Has access to affordable home maintenance services**

### **Current Strengths:**

**Fairly good supply of subsidized housing**

**Good supply of at market housing**

**Generally close to support services**

### **Current Weaknesses:**

**Much of the more affordable rental stock is not well maintained**

**Much of the more affordable rental stock is located in old buildings and is not senior friendly**

**Lack of long term care beds**

### **Focus Items:**

**Encourage the Province to construct new affordable seniors units in Town**

**Facilitate the construction of new at market senior friendly housing units**

**Encourage all new senior focussed housing units to be adaptable to other demographics once the baby boom generation passes on**

**Encourage the construction of more long term care beds**



## **THEME 4 - SOCIAL INCLUSION / PARTICIPATION**





## **Theme 4 Social Inclusion / Participation**

### **Introduction**

**Older people want to contribute to, and benefit from, community life. They want to share their life experiences with future generations. Active and socially involved seniors are likely to have stronger support networks which lead to improved quality of life.**

### **Age Friendly Social Inclusion / Participation include:**

- Cross generational respect, kindness and courtesy**
- Accommodation of seniors needs**
- Consultation and outreach**
- Events and awards for the senior population**
- Food related activities**
- Music and theatre**
- Non-physical recreation**
- Courses on crafts and hobbies**
- Continuous learning**
- Affordable**
- Intergenerational**

### **Current Strengths:**

- Various clubs such as the Lions Club and the Golden Years Society**
- Seniors Safety Program**
- Seniors College**
- Volunteer appreciation night**

### **Current Weaknesses:**

- Disrespect, ageism, elder abuse**
- Lack of 'weekly drop in' opportunities**
- Lack of affordable, senior friendly transportation**

### **Focus Items:**

- Increase number of opportunity for inter-generational activities**
- Increase awareness of elder issues among the young**
- Start an honorary Grandparent program**
- Develop a voluntary senior's skills database – make necessary connections**
- Better advertising of senior's activities, events and opportunities in general**
- A complete community calendar**

**THEME 5 -  
COMMUNICATION AND  
INFORMATION**



**The Senior Corner**



*Calling All Seniors!*





## **Theme 5 Communication and Information**

### **Introduction**

**Keeping seniors informed about community events as well as broader community information allows seniors to be better connected to their community and supports them in their daily activities.**

### **Age Friendly Communication and Information include:**

**Posting information in areas frequented by seniors  
Newspapers, radio and church bulletins  
Access to computers and basic computer training**

### **Current Strengths:**

**Information items in Town Mail outs  
Volunteer Appreciation Night**

### **Current Weaknesses:**

**General lack of awareness of events, programs and opportunities  
Lack of access to TV, Radio, Newspaper and Internet**

### **Focus Items:**

**Well maintained Senior's page on the Town website  
Development of a community based phone committee to make calls to seniors regarding events and opportunities  
Celebrate the lives of selected living seniors  
Town staff attendance at seniors functions**

# THEME 6 - SENIORS SAFETY





## **Theme 6 Seniors Safety**

### **Introduction**

**Everyone has the right to feel safe in their homes and communities. Having a safe community, as well as the perception of a safe community is vitally important to attract seniors to the Town and allow our current seniors to enjoy a high quality of life. A community that is safe for seniors is safe for all.**

### **Seniors Safety includes:**

- Promoting awareness about senior abuse prevention, crime prevention, safety issues**
- Enhancing communication between seniors and the local police**
- Providing information, educational sessions, and referral services to seniors**
- Offering direct contact with seniors through a seniors safety coordinator**

### **Current Strengths:**

- Existing Seniors safety program and coordinator**
- Existing seniors academy**
- Involvement of Town Police and local RCMP with the above Programs**

### **Current Weaknesses:**

- General lack of awareness of events, programs and opportunities**
- Scarcity of adequate funding**

### **Focus Items:**

- Continuation of the Seniors Safety Program**
- Continuation and expansion of the Community Policing initiative**



## Focus Items Summary Table

Theme	Focus Item	Proposed Action	Lead	Timeline
Outdoor spaces and Buildings	Stadium	Promote stadium as a safe place to rest for walking seniors		
Outdoor spaces and Buildings	Benches	Install new benches along Albion Street		
Outdoor spaces and Buildings	Stadium	Install automatic door openers at bathrooms at stadium		
Transportation	Sidewalks	Continue to install new and upgrade existing sidewalks and tails		
Transportation	Driving Course	Investigate refresher driver courses for seniors		
Transportation	Cumberland Transport	Communicate to CTN that many people believe the service is only for low income		
Housing	Affordable Units	Encourage the Province to build new affordable housing units in the Town		
Housing	Market Units	Facilitate the construction of new market rent units within the Town		
Housing	Adaptable Units	Encourage new units to be adaptable to other demographics / uses		
Housing	Long Terms Care	Encourage the construction of more long term care beds		
Social / Participation	Activities	Facilitate inter-generational activities		
Social / Participation	Elder Issues	Increase awareness of elder issues among the young		
Social / Participation	Honorary Grandparent	Investigate an honorary grandparent program		
Social / Participation	Volunteer Data	Develop a seniors skills database		
Social / Participation	Promotion	Increase / improve promotion of seniors activities		
Communication	Website	Develop a seniors page on the town website		
Communication	Phone	Investigate a seniors phone committee		
Communication	Celebrate	Investigate a program to celebrate the lives of selected seniors		
Communication	Staff	Staff attendance at seniors functions		



## **Appendix A**

### **Checklist for Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities**

#### **AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES IN CANADA: COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE**



## **1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**

### ***Sidewalks, pathways and trails***

Sidewalks, pathways and trails are well maintained, cleared, non-slip and accessible.

Sidewalks are continuous, with low curbs and can accommodate wheelchairs and scooters.

Snow removal is prompt and considerate of seniors (e.g. consideration is given to how snow is piled for those who need to get in and out of cars, and that seniors may be in wheelchairs or using scooters).

Snow removal is adequate.

Parking lots are well maintained and cleared of snow and ice.

Streets are well maintained.

Rain shelters are available for pedestrians.

### ***Public restrooms and rest areas***

Public washrooms are accessible and can accommodate people with a variety of disabilities (accommodations include push buttons, wide doors, hand rails, locks that are easy for those with arthritis to use) and are located at convenient locations with proper signage.

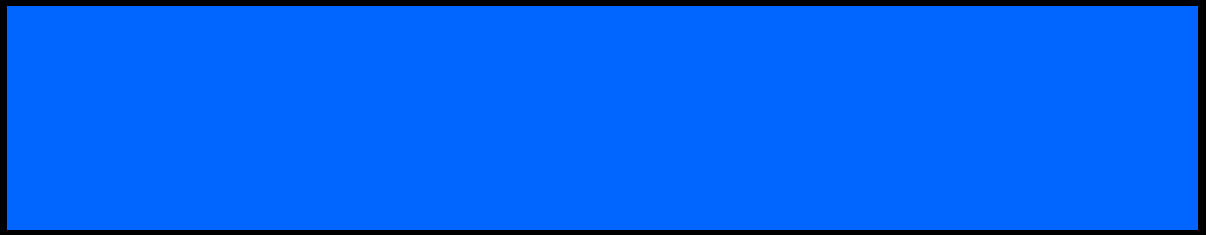
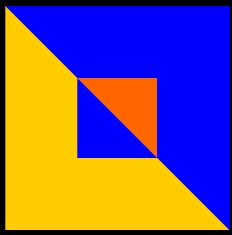
Accessible benches (the appropriate height for seniors) are located along sidewalks, paths or trails and are spaced at regular intervals.

### ***Safety and security***

Action is taken to lower crime rate.

Neighbourhoods and trails are well lit.

Traffic volumes are low and/or well controlled.



### ***Buildings***

Buildings are accessible and have:

- o ramps with a slope appropriate for wheelchairs
- o fewer stairs to get into buildings and within buildings
- o non-slip flooring
- o accessible washrooms located on the main floor
- o parking that is well maintained and located near public buildings for easier access

### ***Amenities (grocery stores, churches, government buildings, community centres)***

Services are grouped together, located near where older people live and can be easily accessed (e.g. are located on the ground floor of buildings, include wheelchair ramps).





## **2. Transportation**

### ***Roads***

Roads are well maintained, well lit and are supported by clearly visible signage.

Traffic flow is well regulated (especially in cottage communities that experience increased traffic in the summer months).

Flexible rules of the road—speed limit is not enforced (slower), not too many traffic lights, seniors given wide berth on the roads by other drivers.

Traffic lines on pavement are clear and visible.

### ***Snow removal***

Snow removal of roads and parking areas is prompt.

### ***Parking***

Parking lots and street parking are located close to amenities.

Parking regulations are enforced (preventing people from parking in emergency zones and in disabled parking spaces).

Drop-off and pick-up areas are clearly marked.

There are a sufficient number of disabled parking spots.

### ***Community transportation services***

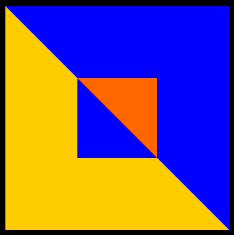
Affordable and accessible community transport services (including shuttle vans) are available to take seniors to events, shopping excursions and field trips.

Volunteer and/or an informal network of drivers is available and compensated (e.g. gas money) for their efforts.

### ***Health transportation (including to larger centres)***

Accessible transportation services are available to take seniors to and from health appointments (including appointments in larger cities)—this includes boat and air transport from remote communities.





***Assisted transportation***

Accessible transportation for persons with a variety of disabilities is available across the range of transportation services.

***Public transport***

Accessible, affordable and convenient public transportation (buses, ferries, etc.) is available to older adults to conduct their daily activities—to reach such destinations as hospitals, health/community centres, shopping malls and banks.

Public transportation services are coordinated.

Services are available throughout the day and evening.

***Taxis***

Taxis are available, accessible and affordable to seniors.

***Information***

Information is provided to seniors about the range of transportation services (public and private) available to them, including information on how and where to access them, timetables and cost.

The use of public and alternative transportation is promoted in the community.





### **3. Housing**

#### ***Housing options***

A range of appropriate and affordable housing options (for sale and for rent) is available and includes apartments, independent living, smaller condominiums and family homes.

Housing is affordable and includes subsidized housing.

Home sizes reflect the needs and lifestyles of seniors today.

Housing is located in close proximity to services.

Housing is adapted for seniors and those with disabilities.

#### ***Aging in place***

Affordable supports are available to enable seniors to remain at home.

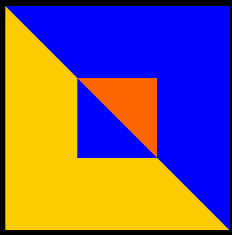
Assisted living options are available to all.

In-between housing is available (i.e. options between the large family home and the small apartment, but with more assisted living options that can be considered an intermediary step).

Alert systems are available for seniors living alone (i.e. systems that alert someone when a senior needs help).

#### ***Long-term care***

Affordable long-term care options are available that prevent the separation of families and the need to move out the community.



### ***Maintenance and modifications***

General maintenance of homes is affordable by seniors on fixed incomes.

Affordable or free general maintenance (e.g. yard work) is available for seniors.

Housing is modified for seniors as needed and new housing is built with seniors in mind.

Housing (including houses and apartments) meets the needs of those with disabilities.

Housing modifications are affordable, with financial assistance provided in the form of grants and subsidies.

Information on financial assistance programs for home modifications is readily available and easily accessible by seniors.

Home insurance is affordable.





## **4. Social Inclusion and Participation**

### ***Respect, kindness and courtesy shown***

Seniors are treated respectfully by the community as a whole—they are addressed using appropriate titles, their input on community issues is sought, their contributions are honoured and their needs are accommodated.

### ***Intergenerational respect and interaction***

Community activities bring together different generations—they include pleasure activities (e.g. arts and crafts) and practical activities (e.g. youth-taught computer courses, “honorary grandparenting” programs).

Programs are offered to children and youth that focus on how to treat seniors with respect, and to explain what it is like to get older.

### ***Inclusive communities***

Seniors are asked to participate at council meetings and similar activities and are recognized for their contributions.

Older persons are asked for their input into public issues (at the local and provincial levels).

Seniors receive social visits from members of their community.

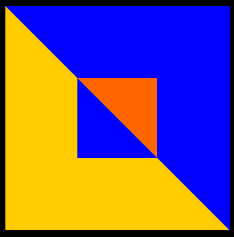
### ***Recognition events or awards***

Contributions of seniors are honoured in the community through events and/or awards.

Seniors are “celebrated” through the media (e.g. their stories are documented and shared).

### ***Promotion of activities***

Activities are well publicized to seniors.



### ***Events and activities***

There is a range of events and activities for seniors of all ages—some age-specific, some intergenerational. Activities include physical/recreational activities, spectator sporting events, church- and school-related events, gatherings with food, etc.

Activities available include outdoor (e.g. walking) and indoor activities (e.g. bingo, cards, darts).

### ***Transportation***

Events and activities are held in locations that are served by affordable and accessible transportation.

### ***Preventing isolation***

Home visits are provided to those who do not, or cannot, leave their homes.

A buddy system is set up to include seniors who are not normally active in the community.

The needs of seniors who are not interested in participating in community life are respected

### ***Courses, crafts and hobbies***

A wide range of courses is accessible and affordable (or free). Courses are offered in convenient locations (e.g. community centre, university) that are served by public transportation.

### ***Affordability and accessibility***

Activities and events are held in convenient locations and are accessible for all—including those with disabilities.

Events, activities and cultural events (e.g. music, theatre) are affordable to all seniors.

### ***Family-oriented***

Events and activities are intergenerational and designed to appeal to people of different ages and backgrounds.



## **5. Communication and Information**

### ***Widespread communication***

There is regular and reliable distribution of information about events and programs (including contact information) through local government and/or voluntary organizations. Information is disseminated/posted where seniors conduct their daily activities—such as the post office, places of worship, local centres and town halls.

Local channels (TV and radio) advertise community events and news items of interest to seniors—for example, through community access channels.

There is a central directory where older adults can find information about what activities and services are available, and how to access them (including phone numbers).

### ***Interactive contact (word of mouth)***

Important information is disseminated in public forums (including public meetings and information sessions).

Information to older adults who are socially isolated is delivered by phone, or through personal visits.

An interactive speaker series is created that delivers important information (e.g. on health issues, protecting against fraud).

### ***Accessible information***

Written communication is clearly printed in large letters and is easy to read, with simple messaging.

Literacy programs are available.

Seniors are recruited and used as volunteers as experts, disseminators of information and trainers.

### ***New technologies***

Access to computers and the Internet is available at a local centre open to the public.

Training courses on new technologies are available and accessible to seniors.

### ***Types of information***

Information of interest to seniors is disseminated—such as local events (including obituaries), vital information (health, security, etc.), and programs and services that are available to them.

Seniors' accomplishments are highlighted occasionally in the media.





## **6. Civic Participation and Employment Opportunities**

### ***Volunteering***

Volunteers are supported in their volunteer work (e.g. by providing them with transportation, reimbursing their costs and/or paying them an honorarium).

A range of volunteer opportunities is available that meets the interests of seniors.

Volunteering options allow for intergenerational involvement.

Opportunities for volunteering are flexible (e.g. short term) to accommodate seniors who travel or have other commitments.

### ***Employment***

There is a range of paid employment opportunities for seniors.

Older adults are fairly compensated for their work.

### ***Accessibility***

Seniors with disabilities are accommodated in volunteer, civic or paid work.

Transportation is available and accessible to older adults who want to participate in volunteer, civic or paid opportunities.

### ***Encouragement to participate***

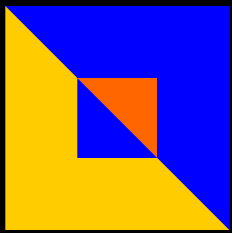
Older adults are encouraged to volunteer and remain engaged in the community by providing them with flexible and accessible opportunities.

Individuals are approached personally to participate in volunteer activities.

### ***Training opportunities***

Older adults expected to use newer technologies in paid, civic or volunteer work are provided with appropriate training.





***Recognition and appreciation***

Older adults are acknowledged for their contributions in volunteer, civic and paid work.

***Civic participation***

Older adults are well represented on councils, boards and committees.





## **7. Community Support and Health Services**

### ***Caring and responsive professionals***

Physicians are available in the community.

Public health nurses are available at health centres and to conduct home visits.

Specialists (including gerontologists) conduct assessments on a regular basis in the community and arrange follow-up with primary care physicians.

### ***Home health and support services***

Affordable and available health and home services are in place and include health, personal care and housekeeping.

Home supports are available in a timely manner.

Affordable meal programs are available to *all* seniors in the community, regardless of their health status.

Delivery services (groceries, medicines) or escorted shopping services are available to seniors.

Delivery of services is well coordinated (e.g. through a cluster-of-care model).

Health assessments are conducted during home visits.

### ***Diversity of health services and facilities***

Health care facilities include clusters of services (e.g. doctors, podiatrists, occupational therapists, pharmacists), providing one-stop health or wellness services.

Affordable palliative care services are available in the community.

Specialty services are available in the community, including mental health services, mammogram and diabetes clinics, and cancer care outreach.

### ***Availability of equipment and aids***

Medical equipment (including medical alerts) is available through a loan program, at no cost to seniors.

### ***Caregiver support (including respite)***

Caregivers are given a break from their responsibilities through programs such as home support and seniors daycare programs.

Education programs on elder care and similar available services are provided to families who are, or will be, caring for an older adult.

### ***Information***

Older adults are kept well informed, through a variety of media, of the services that they may be entitled to and how they are accessed.

A speaker series provides information to seniors on a range of health and wellness topics.

