

Challenges of Aging Report

The final report of the Challenges of Aging project will be presented to the City of Greater Sudbury on Wednesday March 4th 2009 and will be sent to provincial and federal representatives at the same time as well as other interested groups and individuals.

The project was made possible through a government of Canada New Horizons Grant and conducted by Friendly to Seniors – Sudbury. It consisted of a comprehensive telephone survey and focus groups representing a cross-section of Greater Sudbury seniors and older adults plus additional feedback and comment over a two year period during 2007 and 2008. The Social Planning Council of Sudbury was also involved as well as the United Way and a number of seniors groups in the area.

It was older adults and seniors themselves who contributed to this project and it was their input, suggestions and opinions that make up this report. Seniors, those over 65, are the fastest growing segment of our population and “older adults” those 50 to 65 are the second fastest growing population group. The first wave of the “baby boomers” turns 65 in just two years (2011). Average life expectancy is now 82 for men and 85 for women.

There is a growing appreciation of the impact that an aging population will have on many aspects of our society. Everyone, every concerned citizen, all levels of government, all involved agencies and groups etc. need to become involved in creating solution to the problems we face as our population ages.

Housing and health care were identified as two major areas of concern in the report among others such as transportation, taxation, recreation social contacts etc. Most felt they did not have a voice in influencing any level of government with respect to these subject areas and recommended the establishment of a Seniors Action Group involving all those concerned to positively address these issues, possibly an expanded city seniors’ advisory panel.

Also recommended was an improved senior’s information telephone line and an enhanced leisure guide to include more civic information related to seniors’ services and community events such as an arts calendar and tourist information as many seniors have friends and relatives who visit the city – a sample of what this guide might include is part of the report. Other recommendations were membership sharing between seniors groups and clubs throughout the city including the Parkside Older Adult Centre.

Free bus service for seniors during off peak service hours was suggested to encourage more ridership plus free sampling of city run activities to encourage increased participation. The removal of parking meters from street-side downtown and improved snow removal, sanding and salting of sidewalks and parking lots was recommended. Graffiti removal, more police presence, cleaner environment and public health inspection notices in restaurants were additional suggestions.

Besides improved home care to assist seniors to stay in their homes longer to reduce institutional care costs there was a strong recommendation for transitional accommodation for those not wishing to stay in their present home and based on recommendations as to what this type of residence might look like two plans were drawn up which make up part of the report. Additional recommendations were put forward with respect to tax relief and other considerations that would assist seniors with limited incomes. All suggestions are presented in detail in the printed report and on the internet at www.friendlytoseniors.ca.

Further information: John Lindsay, Chair Friendly to Seniors – Sudbury – 525-7526