

York Region

# Seniors Strategy

*Thinking Ahead*



November 2016

  
**York Region**



Mayor  
Frank Scarpitti  
City of Markham



Regional Councillor  
Jack Heath  
City of Markham



Regional Councillor  
Jim Jones  
City of Markham



Regional Councillor  
Joe Li  
City of Markham



Regional Councillor  
Nirmala Armstrong  
City of Markham



Mayor  
David Barrow  
Town of Richmond Hill



Mayor  
Maurizio Bevilacqua  
City of Vaughan



Chairman & CEO  
Wayne Emmerson



Regional Councillor  
Vito Spatafora  
Town of Richmond Hill



Regional Councillor  
Michael Di Biase  
City of Vaughan



Regional Councillor  
Mario Ferri  
City of Vaughan



Regional Councillor  
Gino Rosati  
City of Vaughan



Mayor  
Margaret Quirk  
Town of Georgina



Regional Councillor  
Danny Wheeler  
Town of Georgina



Mayor  
Geoffrey Dawe  
Town of Aurora



Mayor  
Virginia Hackson  
Town of East Gwillimbury



Mayor  
Steve Pellegrini  
Township of King



Mayor  
Justin Altmann  
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

## A Message from York Regional Council

The Regional Municipality of York is facing unprecedented growth, with seniors becoming the fastest growing segment of our population. Over the next 20 years, the number of seniors living in York Region is projected to grow from 162,780 to over 310,000. As our community continues to grow and change we need to start thinking about seniors differently.

The *York Region Seniors Strategy* looks at the changing senior population, defines our role in serving seniors and sets the course for action to best support the aging population. It guides our work with other levels of government and community partners to better target seniors programming and services where there is the greatest need.

York Regional Council supports a community of fostering healthy aging where our seniors can continue to live, work and age in place. This strategy will inform present and future planning and support York Region in effectively and efficiently serving all generations in the years to come.



Regional Councillor  
Brenda Hogg  
Town of Richmond Hill



Mayor  
Tony Van Bynen  
Town of Newmarket



Regional Councillor  
John Taylor  
Town of Newmarket

# York Region Seniors Strategy



*Thinking Ahead*



# Table of Contents

A Message from York Regional Council. . . . .	2
Seniors in York Region . . . . .	5
1. Why do we need a seniors strategy? . . . . .	6
2. Overview of the strategy. . . . .	10
Action and Advocacy Plan . . . . .	12
3. Broad Policy and Finances . . . . .	16
4. Health . . . . .	20
5. Aging in Place . . . . .	24
6. Staying Safe and Socially Connected . . . . .	28
7. Guiding Principles . . . . .	32
8. Turning the Strategy into action. . . . .	38

# Seniors in York Region

The seniors population is growing faster than any other age group.

1 in 5 people will be 65 years or older by 2031.



Seniors are living longer.

Three year average, 2007–2009.

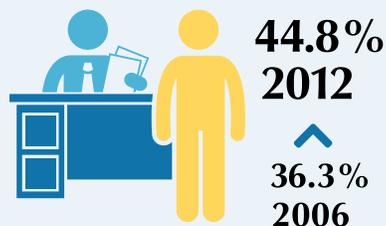
Average age

Canada	81.1
Ontario	81.5
York Region	84.1

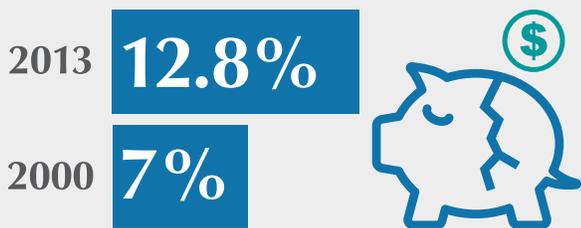


Many seniors are still working.

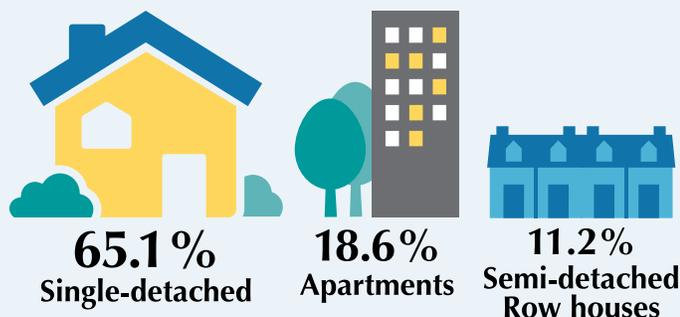
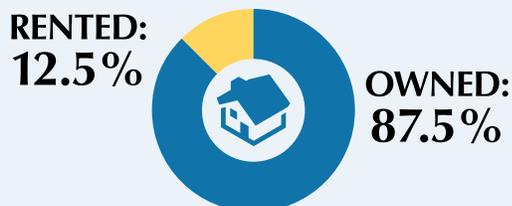
Labour force participation rates of those 55 years and older have increased.



Seniors make up a small portion of residents living with low income but their share has increased.



Most seniors in York Region are homeowners and living in single-detached homes. In 2011:



Seniors are not all the same.

Characteristics of younger seniors:

- ▶ Continuing to work
- ▶ Seeking ongoing education and personal development
- ▶ Healthier and wealthier
- ▶ Engaged in the community
- ▶ In a caregiving role

Characteristics of older seniors:

- ▶ Reliant on government sources of income
- ▶ Faced with housing challenges
- ▶ Experiencing declining health
- ▶ In a caregiving role
- ▶ Faced with mental health issues
- ▶ At an increased risk for falling





## 1. Why do we need a seniors strategy?

More people today are living into their senior years (broadly defined as after the age of 65) than at any other time in history. More than that, most are entering these years in good health and staying that way longer. Many are still working, either in paying jobs or as volunteers or mentors. They are also helping out their families, including caring for grandchildren, and are putting more time into pursuing lifelong interests like writing, painting, dance or music. In all of these roles, they contribute to the success and high quality of life in our communities. A growing senior population will add to the benefits that flow from their skills, knowledge and experience.

Developing this strategy involved talking about the opportunities a growing seniors' population creates, as well as the challenges that arise if seniors are isolated or in poor health and not able to take part in their community as fully as they would like to. We also wanted to better understand the Region's role in serving seniors. This prompted us to think differently about seniors – to understand that most are both willing and able to remain healthy, active and connected, and that our role is to support that aim. We also learned that seniors and baby boomers will be, for the most part, the most affluent in history. With increasing concerns about low income among younger residents, we also thought about how to be fair to all residents.

Our discussions and research also caused us to rethink how we view and serve seniors and how we might change our approach to bring about similar changes in other levels of government. This will also help us to be ready to request additional resources when federal or provincial funding opportunities arise. We understand, that to make the most of limited resources we must be innovative, especially around preventing problems and promoting healthy lifestyles, and take into account the needs of residents across the age spectrum.



## York Region has a growing and aging population

As in many other jurisdictions, the population of York Region is increasingly made up of seniors. From 2011 to 2031, the population of people 65 and older in the Region will grow at a faster pace than any other age group. Out of a projected York Region population of 1.5 million in 2031, about one in five residents will be 65 or older, according to the Region's long-term planning projections.

Gains in life expectancy and the large population of baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1965) both contribute to this growing number. At the same time, the Region is experiencing growth in all other age groups, boosting the need for services across the age spectrum.

## It's never too late to do something amazing

- At 62, J.R.R. Tolkien published the first volume of his fantasy series, *"Lord of the Rings"*.
- At 69, Canadian Ed Whitlock of Milton, Ontario became the oldest person to run a standard marathon in under three hours.
- At 70, Canadian author Alan Bradley had his first novel published to international acclaim. Since then he has written ten more best-selling volumes in his Flavia de Luce mystery series.
- At 72, Margaret Ringenberg flew around the world.
- At 77, John Glenn became the oldest person to go into space.

## Seniors make efforts to stay healthy

- According to the *2009 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) – Healthy Aging*:
  - » 44 per cent of seniors perceived their health to be excellent or very good.
  - » In the same year, 37 per cent of seniors reported they had taken some action to improve their health, such as increasing their level of physical activity (71 per cent), losing weight (21 per cent) or changing their eating habits (13 per cent).



## Older seniors have more complex needs

Because people are living further beyond 65 than they did in the past, they are spending more years as seniors. As a result, not only will the number of people over 65 years in York Region soon be larger, but as time goes on it will be heavily weighted toward people over 75 years.

Seniors under 75 generally resemble younger residents, in that they are more likely to be working or seeking ongoing education and personal development. They are also generally healthier and wealthier. Older seniors tend to be more vulnerable. Beyond 75, seniors must put more effort into maintaining their health, they are at increased risk of falling and they often need additional supports, care and medication. Without the right action, the implications for Regional programs and services could be significant.

## An opportunity to respond with flexibility and adaptation

Under provincial legislation, the Region is required to deliver long-term care, paramedic services and social housing – three services that will be heavily affected by growth in the senior population. For example, based on current trends, the demand on paramedic services is expected to increase by 48 per cent from 2011 to 2021.

The impacts touch on services beyond those mandated by the province:

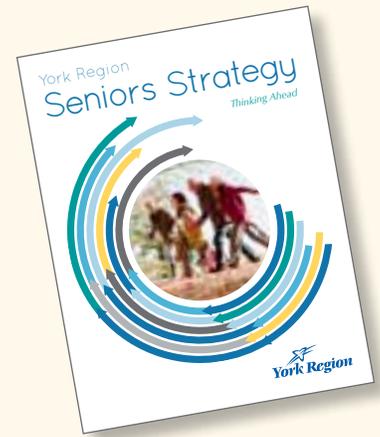
- Getting older in their own community and at home is likely to be an important goal for many seniors. We need to plan to ensure communities are designed with a variety of appropriate housing options.
- As well, seniors will need more accessible, convenient transportation to stay mobile and connected to the community.
- We will need to develop new ways of delivering services to meet seniors' expectations. In developing new options, the increased use of technology by seniors, especially baby boomers, will be helpful. According to Statistics Canada, since 2000, growth rates of Internet use have been highest among seniors.

The growing demand for services could put major pressure on the Region's budget, especially when we need to address the needs of other age groups as well. Fortunately, we have flexibility in the way services are delivered, and can plan and adapt to better meet seniors' needs and other priorities within available financial resources.

This is a major goal of the Seniors Strategy. Developing it opened the door to talking about challenges, opportunities and possible solutions. It led to a better understanding seniors' changing needs and to thinking about them differently, especially within our role as regional government.

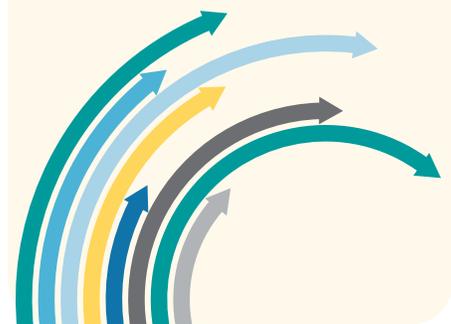
## The Strategy will help achieve goals of Vision 2051

Preparing for the growing seniors' population reflects the long-term goals of *Vision 2051* to create a place where everyone can thrive.



## The Strategy's purpose is to:

- Define York Region's appropriate role in serving seniors
- Respond to changing demand
- Establish a collaborative corporate strategic direction





## 2. Overview of the strategy

**The current system is under significant and growing pressure and York Region has considered how it serves seniors in four areas**

In each area we looked at the evidence and York Region's responsibilities and ability to act. This resulted in setting out four key roles for the Region.

### **Broad Policy and Finance**



**Region's role: Balance the needs of seniors with all residents**

---

### **Health**



**Region's role: Keep seniors healthier, longer**

---

### **Aging in Place**



**Region's role: Support age-friendly, complete communities**

---

### **Staying Safe and Connected**



**Region's role: Connect seniors and caregivers to the right programs and services at the right times**

## Guiding principles

Applying a set of guiding principles will help in achieving the Region's roles, and help us make consistent program and service decisions.

Guiding Principle	How it is applied
Evidence-Based Decision-Making	Use strong data and research, not assumptions
Partnerships, Alignment and Collaboration	Look to work with others in the field
Prevention and Promotion	Keep problems from happening or mitigate them when they do
Education	Get the word out to seniors and those close to them
Fiscal Sustainability and Balance	Can we afford it? Watch program costs and acknowledge competing demands

## Implementation

We will start to put the Strategy into action in 2017, with the creation of a corporate implementation team whose work will be supported by a small project team.

One of the first tasks will be to identify the priorities, timelines and resources required to realize the Strategy's actions. Timelines for each of the actions will be identified and phased in over the next five years.

## Action and Advocacy Areas

### What we are planning on doing

Specific areas of action and advocacy will bring the Strategy to life.

The actions focus on areas where the Region has a role, or where its advocacy can influence the level of government that is responsible for needed actions.



# York Region Seniors Strategy Action and Advocacy Plan



## Balance the needs of seniors with all residents

### Action Areas

Develop a communication campaign related to preparing financially for retirement and to educate on eligibility options related to ability to pay

Develop options for eligibility for programs and services based on income levels, assets, user fees, loans vs. grants and private contributions (i.e. Home Repair Program)

Develop a decision making tool for applying the strategy to new programs and services

### Advocate for:

Seniors basic needs:

- Increased income supports
- Dental benefits
- Promote a holistic approach to healthcare including alternative therapies that may reduce need for medication



## Keep seniors healthier, longer

### Action Areas

At a system level, understand what programs and services are required to support seniors to age in place and the capacity needed to deliver them (capacity includes policies, programs and staffing)

Expand existing prevention programs and identify new programs needed, including alternative programs for those on waitlists

Work with the business/industry sector to identify innovative new business solutions for seniors (i.e. new technology; apps for wellness checks, data solutions)

### Advocate for:

Request the provincial government expand funding for prevention programs that improve and maintain seniors' health, including Public Health programs and Community Paramedicine. For example, consider the role Community Paramedicine plays in providing primary health care in the community

Request the provincial government work with the Region to improve policy planning and decision-making for long-term care beds by developing a forecast for York Region, including required number, type and location

Request the provincial government work with the Region to ensure the appropriate home and community care supports are available in the Region, including homecare, adult day programs and respite



## Support age-friendly, complete communities

### Action Areas

#### Better Integrated Services

Work with local municipalities, community agencies, private sector and Central Local Health Integration Network to design and implement a multi-service centre /hub model(s) that will co-locate services to respond to the needs of seniors

Initiate discussions with transit providers funded by various provincial ministries to look for ways to better coordinate services, look for innovative opportunities and enhance services and choice for seniors

Coordinate community outreach and communication activities internally and with York Regional Police

#### Age Friendly Communities

Establish an internal joint planning table to explore the age-friendly community concept

Establish an external joint planning table with the local municipalities on age friendly communities

Reduce complexities and costs associated with second suites

Leverage inclusionary zoning for needed housing options

Develop a variety of housing options including rental

Develop a variety of transportation options

Implement a communications campaign to raise awareness of the need for housing that is affordable, including rental for seniors

#### Advocate for:

As part of their capacity planning work, advocate to the provincial government for infrastructure funding for housing services and a variety of housing options, including rental, affordable retirement home, secondary suites and congregate living options

Increased funding from the Central Local Health Integration Network for home and community care services to support seniors in York Region Social Housing buildings and Homes with Support programs



## Connect seniors and caregivers to the right programs and services at the right times

### Action Areas

Evaluate options for single point of access for seniors to access information, including a self-service option (i.e. system navigation)

Explore how to guide seniors through the many services out there

#### Training

- Outside workers (local municipal, regional staff) to identify warning signs of senior distress
- Age sensitivity training
- Care for elderly with complex needs

### Advocate for:

Request funding and improved coordination and integrated service delivery from the provincial government to assist with system navigation to ensure seniors are connected to the right services at the right time



### 3. Broad Policy and Finances



#### **Balance the needs of seniors with all residents**

##### **What we heard:**

- Growth across all age groups
- Increased demand on services and infrastructure
- Limited resources available
- Help those who need it most
- Many seniors and baby boomers are financially stable
- Start early with education and training to increase financial literacy and money management for retirement
- Portion of seniors living on low income is increasing at fastest rate
- Working-age adults make up largest portion of low-income population
- Programs and services must be fiscally sustainable



## Why is it important?

Fairness to people in all age groups (sometimes called “inter-generational equity”) has been a critical consideration in developing this Strategy.

The number of low-income residents across all ages in York Region is growing faster than the population overall. Most of these low-income residents are not seniors. In fact, York Region seniors are, on average, among the most affluent in Canada.

Discounts and subsidies based solely on reaching a “senior” age, such as 60 or 65, are left over from a time when a very large share of seniors did need financial help.

Research has shown that investing in a child’s early years gives them a better life outcome and saves policing, social assistance, mental health and other costs later. There are similar social returns from investing in low-income, working-age people. Supporting every senior, regardless of their financial status, may make it harder to help the growing number of low-income seniors in York Region.

Providing subsidies to all seniors, no matter what their age, raises concerns about fairness and hampers program effectiveness.

But trying to do both is not possible either, given the Region’s limited financial resources. It will be important to strike the balance that helps those most in need.

- According to the *Environics Analytics, 2015, Wealthscape Database* the average liquid assets, per household led by seniors 65 years and older in York Region, was approximately \$760,000. Liquid assets excludes real estate and employer funded pension plans

- According to *Statistics Canada*:

- » Since 2011, the number of low-income residents has grown by 8.8 per cent, while the overall population has risen by 3.5 per cent
- » Adults between the ages of 18 and 64 years accounted for almost 65 per cent of the low-income population in 2013.

## Strike the balance that helps those who need it the most

York Region seniors, and the boomers who will shortly become seniors, are relatively wealthy compared to others of the same age across Canada. Their affluence will likely continue to grow, because more people plan to work into their 70s and the equity in their homes will increase as prices rise.

Despite this general affluence, the share of seniors in the Region's low-income population increased from about 7 per cent in 2000 to 12.8 per cent in 2013 and is higher than the rate for the Greater Toronto Area and Canada. This will likely continue to increase as the senior population grows

### What does this mean?

We may need to develop specific programs and services to address the needs of low-income seniors, while remembering that the vast majority of low-income residents are not seniors.

Some seniors may meet a low-income threshold, but own a significant asset, such as their house, which gives them a high net worth without producing income. There are likely to be seniors in this position in the Region, given increases in home value over the last several years. Nonetheless, these households must still pay other shelter costs, such as electricity, heat, water and property tax, and these costs may be absorbing a large share of the homeowner's income.

Factoring the ownership of a home into the discussion of need is complex. It involves such considerations as a resident's preference to stay in their current home, especially where they have strong ties to a community and few other suitable places to live. These residents might be helped in a number of ways, including by making more housing options available and building awareness of ways to access home equity without selling, if that is their preference. More research will be critical in understanding how to balance the needs of seniors with all residents including exploring different eligibility models.

To ensure the best outcomes, we should base support on need, no matter the age of the resident. A needs-based approach captures low-income seniors in York Region, as well as residents across all age groups who are financially vulnerable.



# Balance the needs of seniors with all residents

## What we are planning on doing

Action Areas	Link to Primary Guiding Principle
Develop a communication campaign related to preparing financially for retirement and to educate on eligibility options related to ability to pay	Fiscal sustainability and balance
Develop options for eligibility for programs and services based on income levels, assets, user fees, loans vs. grants and private contributions (i.e. Home Repair Program)	
Develop a decision making tool for applying the strategy to new programs and services	Evidence-based decision-making

Advocate for:	Link to Primary Guiding Principle
Seniors basic needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased income supports</li> <li>• Dental benefits</li> <li>• Promote a holistic approach to healthcare including alternative therapies that may reduce need for medication</li> </ul>	Fiscal sustainability and balance



## 4. Health



### Keep seniors healthier, longer

#### What we heard:

- Age-related changes are normal but can be delayed by staying active physically and mentally
- Not all seniors are high users of healthcare services
- Falls are the leading cause of injuries for seniors
- Increased demands on paramedic services linked to growing number of older seniors
- Target prevention and promotion (encourage healthy choices, behaviours and self-care)
- Match response and resources to the situation
- Need to align with the broader system of care and bring in others including the private sector to be most effective (we are only one player)



## Why is it important?

Seniors 75 years and older must put more effort into delaying or avoiding such age-related problems as declining health, dementia and other mental health issues, and falls. With longer lifespans, there will be more people in this age group in the Region. While many seniors are making healthy choices, some engage in behaviours such as smoking, eating poorly or being inactive that increase their risk of chronic disease.

Seniors with three or more reported chronic conditions had nearly three times the number of health care visits than seniors of the same age group with no such conditions.

The increased number of seniors in the population, especially with complex conditions, is driving higher demand for paramedic services, but many calls do not require this level of emergency response.

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries among older adults. Seniors who fall are more likely to restrict their normal activities and become less confident, resulting in social isolation and loss of strength that may increase the possibility of another fall.

There are more residents over 80 in York Region's long-term care homes, more are being diagnosed with dementia and their medical needs are generally becoming more complex. This is increasing the need for more staff time and resources.

- In 2015, 35 per cent of all York Region residents transported by Paramedic Services were 75 years or older
- Since 2005, both the Newmarket Health Centre and Maple Health Centre have seen a 27 per cent increase in the number of residents 81 years and older
- Conversely, residents aged 60 years or younger decreased by 50 per cent, and those aged 61-80 years decreased by 33 per cent
- 40 per cent of long-term care residents have ten or more diagnoses, requiring more time and resources

- According to the *2013-2014 Canadian Community Health Survey*:

- » In 2013-14, 46 per cent of York Region seniors reported physical activity limitations as a result of a long-term physical condition, mental condition or health problem
- » 9 per cent of seniors smoked cigarettes
- » 18 per cent of seniors reported alcohol use above Canada's Low Risk Drinking Guidelines
- » Only 45 per cent of seniors consumed vegetables and fruits more than five times per day
- » Only 45 per cent of seniors were active or moderately active during leisure time

## What does this mean?

Planning and prevention are required to reduce and manage an aging population's health-related demands.

Continuing Regional education programs in the areas of fall prevention, food safety and immunization, as well as new ways of helping seniors to stay healthier longer, will be needed. An individual's ability to benefit, however, may be limited by their income, social status, education, employment, gender, culture and physical environment.

For paramedic services, the focus will be on preventing and diverting non-emergency 911 calls by educating seniors on how to take care of themselves, ensuring they and their caregivers are connected to the right services at the right time, and creating a single entry point to access information.

To continue providing high-quality care, more focus in long-term care has to be placed on effectively training staff to respond to residents' increasingly complex conditions.

Over the last few years, to get ready for the growth in the seniors' population, Paramedic Services have been exploring new clinical and community programs that get people help before health crises occur. These efforts, which are based on known risks that individual seniors face, include Expanding Community Paramedicine, broadening how referrals are handled, and connecting Paramedicine to Long-Term Care. More of this type of work is needed to meet future demands.



## Keep seniors healthier, longer

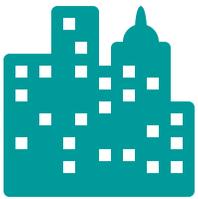
### What we are planning on doing

Action Areas	Link to Primary Guiding Principle
At a system level, understand what programs and services are required to support seniors to age in place and the capacity needed to deliver them (capacity includes policies, programs and staffing)	Evidence-based decision-making
Expand existing prevention programs and identify new programs needed, including alternative programs for those on waitlists	Prevention and promotion
Work with the business/industry sector to identify innovative new business solutions for seniors (i.e. new technology; apps for wellness checks, data solutions)	Partnerships, alignment and collaboration

Advocate for:	Link to Primary Guiding Principle
Request the provincial government expand funding for prevention programs that improve and maintain seniors' health, including Public Health programs and Community Paramedicine. For example, consider the role Community Paramedicine plays in providing primary health care in the community	Prevention and promotion
Request the provincial government work with the Region to improve policy planning and decision-making for long-term care beds by developing a forecast for York Region, including required number, type and location	Evidence-based decision-making
Request the provincial government work with the Region to ensure the appropriate home and community care supports are available in the Region, including homecare, adult day programs and respite	



## 5. Aging in Place



### Support age-friendly, complete communities

#### What we heard:

- There will be no funding for new institutional long-term care beds
- Future provincial funding will focus on home and community care models, beefed-up adult day programs, congregate living, and long-term care in the community
- Existing long-term care beds will be for the most complex cases
- Seniors prefer to age in place
- Need for affordable housing for seniors
- Need for a variety of housing options for seniors to age in place, including rental
- Need better integrated services to respond to seniors needs holistically



## Why is it important?

The majority of seniors prefer to age in place – that is, to stay in their own home as they grow older or, if they must move to a different home, stay in their community.

Their preference aligns with the province's: Ontario has announced that it is not planning to expand the number of long-term beds. Instead, it will direct funding toward such care models as living at home with supports and/or stronger adult day programs.

For seniors to age in place they need to remain relatively healthy. Even those with minor disabilities or limitations can stay in their homes with the right support, such as help with household chores or daily personal care.

Seniors also need housing options and communities that help them remain independent. Owning a house, especially a large one, is expensive and requires significant upkeep. Other housing options include smaller houses or condominiums, renting, applying for subsidized housing or living in a retirement home.

Not every option is available to every senior. Many, for example retirement homes, are costly. This may be one reason why seniors, at 56 per cent, account for the largest group waiting for subsidized housing. Often, however, the problem reflects the way our communities have been designed, with an emphasis on single detached houses, big lots and home ownership.

- In 2011, single detached houses were home to 65.1 per cent of seniors; 18.6 per cent lived in apartments and 11.2 per cent in semi-detached and row houses.
- According to a 2014 *Ipsos Reid Survey*, 94 per cent of retirees in York Region plan to continue to live here, with 60 per cent intending to stay in their current dwelling.
- In a 2015 *EnviroNics Research Survey*, “support services to remain in their home” was identified by the largest group of respondents (26 per cent) as the most important service or support required by seniors, followed by transportation services (17 per cent) and income support (16 per cent).

- Housing costs affect both seniors who own their homes and those who rent:
  - » In 2011, more senior homeowners and in York Region spent 30 per cent or more of their household income on shelter costs; and,
  - » 51.1 per cent of households led by senior tenants spent 30 per cent or more of their income on shelter costs

Beyond offering appropriate housing options, communities need to provide easy access to public transit, shops and restaurants, health and community services, recreation and leisure space. “Walkability” scores – a metric widely used to show how close the average home is to these amenities – indicate that York Region’s communities lag behind major cities like Mississauga and Toronto, and smaller places like Perth, Gananoque and Orangeville.

### What does this mean?

York Region needs to ensure age-friendly, complete communities that include innovative housing options, better ways of getting around and easily accessible support services.

Housing options might include new home designs that contemplate space for live-in caregivers, fewer barriers to adding second suites in existing houses, more opportunities for congregate living (retirement homes and similar options), using inclusionary zoning (which requires the addition of affordable units to new construction) and building more options such as rental.

To ensure seniors can get around easily, York Region must continue to invest in transit and in networks for walking and other forms of active transportation. The Region must also offer innovative options that respond cost-effectively to the needs of seniors with social, physical and accessibility challenges.

Partnerships will be crucial to making the appropriate home and community supports available and accessible. One approach would be to integrate seniors’ services into community hubs, a model being explored by the province to bring together services for a range of clients.

The collaboration among partners in a hub model, each bringing their expertise, funding, resources and services to the table, would allow York Region to respond to seniors and others holistically by providing programs and services, including housing, in one easily accessible location.

Another approach would be to create seniors’ hubs, with a tighter focus on supports specific to the senior population.

Approaches like this will require York Region to partner and collaborate with partners that might include local municipalities, provincial ministries, school boards, community organizations and the business community.



# Support age-friendly, complete communities

## What we are planning on doing

Action Areas	Link to Primary Guiding Principle
<b>Better Integrated Services</b>	
Work with local municipalities, community agencies, private sector and Central Local Health Integration Network to design and implement a multi -service centre /hub model(s) that will co-locate services to respond to the needs of seniors	Partnerships, alignment and collaboration
Initiate discussions with transit providers funded by various provincial ministries to look for ways to better coordinate services, look for innovative opportunities and enhance services and choice for seniors	
Coordinate community outreach and communication activities internally and with York Regional Police	
<b>Age Friendly Communities</b>	
Establish an internal joint planning table to explore the age-friendly community concept	Partnerships, alignment and collaboration
Establish an external joint planning table with the local municipalities on age friendly communities	
Reduce complexities and costs associated with second suites	
Leverage inclusionary zoning for needed housing options	
Develop a variety of housing options including rental	
Develop a variety of transportation options	
Implement a communications campaign to raise awareness of the need for housing that is affordable, including rental for seniors	
<b>Advocate for:</b>	
As part of their capacity planning work, advocate to the provincial government for infrastructure funding for housing services and a variety of housing options, including rental, affordable retirement home, secondary suites and congregate living options	Partnerships, alignment and collaboration
Increased funding from the Central Local Health Integration Network for home and community care services to support seniors in York Region Social Housing buildings and Homes with Support programs	



## 6. Staying Safe and Socially Connected



### **Connect seniors and caregivers to the right programs and services at the right times**

#### **What we heard:**

- Design communities that foster social and physical connectivity
- Reduce likelihood of social isolation
- Provide more convenient transportation options for seniors
- Staff, seniors and caregivers require guidance to connect to the right services
- Police are spending extensive resources and time assisting seniors and their caregivers with non-emergency/non-criminal 911 calls and making referrals
- Need joint planning to ensure the right programs are available at the right times
- Work together as a system to keep seniors connected to the programs and services they need



## Why is it important?

Social isolation – commonly defined as a low quantity and quality of contact with others – has serious implications for everyone’s mental and physical health, safety and overall well-being.

According to a 2014 report by the National Seniors Council, some of the top environmental risk factors contributing to the social isolation of seniors include lack of access to transportation, living alone, lack of awareness of or access to community services and programs, a rural or remote location and loss of sense of community.

For seniors who do not drive, walkability and convenient public transit are critical. Close to 8,000 registered users of Mobility Plus, the YRT/Viva service for those with disabilities, are seniors. Only 2 per cent of YRT/Viva customers are 65 or older, however.

The most common call York Regional Police respond to when it comes to seniors is for motor vehicle collisions, followed by natural death, theft under \$5,000, fraud and domestic disputes (not necessarily criminal). Seniors are the least likely demographic to suffer violent crime, but the most likely to suffer violence at the hands of a family member or caregiver.

York Regional Police are increasingly responding to non-criminal 911 calls related to seniors. They are being called by family members or others to check in on an older person, often because of mental illness, wandering or hoarding concerns. In responding to these, police are increasingly involved in connecting seniors with community agencies. This takes time and resources, and police are not best positioned to handle these calls.

- According to the Statistics Canada Report “*Healthy People, Healthy Places*”, Seniors with a strong sense of community belonging have higher odds of having good health, even when socio-demographic factors, behavioural risk factors, chronic conditions and stress are taken into account
- According to Transportation Services, the top two reasons for Mobility Plus trips for seniors in 2015 was travel to and from day centres and medical appointments
- According to a 2015 *GTA-wide Survey by Environics Research*, the things respondents enjoyed most about the quality of life in York Region are the parks and green spaces, and being close to amenities and work.

## What does this mean?

Quality of life for seniors is about being connected, both physically and socially, to family, friends and community.

Communities need to be designed in ways that make seniors feel included and offer them places for social interaction.

York Region is already designing communities in this way, with greater emphasis on pleasant public spaces, street-scaping and accessibility. For example, York Region has two accessible forest trails that are welcoming to the growing seniors' population.

Transportation and mobility are key elements in helping seniors stay safe and connected. Mobility Plus has expanded its on-demand/dial-a-ride service, which is convenient for seniors going to day programs, medical appointments, and recreation, as well as shopping and other activities.

Seniors need to know what supports are available, where and how to access the information, and who to ask for help. In order to make navigating the support system easier, we need to develop various support options, including a self-serve one that lets seniors and caregivers find programs and services on their own and or with some degree of help.

Training for regional and local municipal staff who work outdoors or go into people's homes to deliver programs and services could help identify seniors in distress — for example, suffering from falls, wandering, neglect or hoarding. This way, we may be able to prevent problems before they become unmanageable and connect seniors to the right services at the right time.





# Connect seniors and caregivers to the right programs and services at the right times

## What we are planning on doing

Action Areas	Link to Primary Guiding Principle
Evaluate options for single point of access for seniors to access information, including a self-service option (i.e. system navigation)	Partnerships, alignment and collaboration
Explore how to guide seniors through the many services out there	
Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outside workers (local municipal, regional staff) to identify warning signs of senior distress</li> <li>• Age sensitivity training</li> <li>• Care for elderly with complex needs</li> </ul>	Education
Advocate for:	Link to Primary Guiding Principle
Request funding and improved coordination and integrated service delivery from the provincial government to assist with system navigation to ensure seniors are connected to the right services at the right time	Partnerships, alignment and collaboration



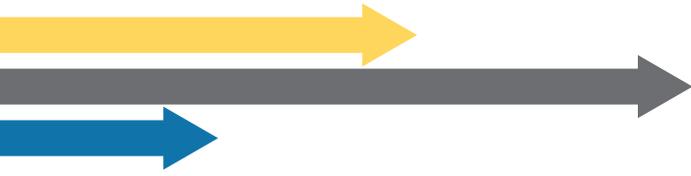
## 7. Guiding Principles

### Providing the direction for future decision-making

In order to create a strategy that will apply broadly across the corporation, guiding principles were established to encourage a consistent approach to the development of seniors programs and services.

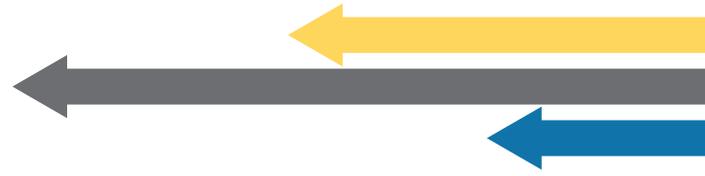
York Region staff will use these principles to make the most effective and efficient decisions about where to direct limited resources. Guided by them, we will build on what works where we have a role to play.

Guiding Principle	How it is applied
Evidence-Based Decision-Making	Use strong data and research, not assumptions
Partnerships, Alignment and Collaboration	Look to work with others in the field
Prevention and Promotion	Keep problems from happening or mitigate them when they do
Education	Get the word out to seniors and those close to them
Fiscal Sustainability and Balance	Can we afford it? Watch program costs and acknowledge competing demands



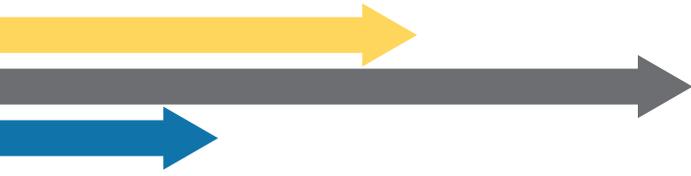
## Guiding Principle: Evidence-Based Decision-Making

<b>Use strong data and research, not assumptions</b>
<b>What does it look like in practice?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We are rigorous in finding and applying clear, unbiased evidence</li><li>• Our sources include academic literature and partners, the findings of other jurisdictions, associations, the private sector and think tanks, client experience and survey census and other data.</li><li>• We consider how well the evidence gathered elsewhere applies to the diverse needs of our seniors</li><li>• We also leverage existing data and research from within the corporation, including that gathered from pilot and demonstration projects</li><li>• We take part in and benefit from more, and expanded, avenues for information sharing through collaboration, data bases and other sources</li></ul>
<b>Desired Results</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regional decisions are more consistent and effective, and make resources go further</li><li>• We better understand seniors and what supports/impairs the success of initiatives. For example, in trying to boost seniors' use of transit, is the current low level because of inconvenience, lack of familiarity, cost, excessive walking distance to a stop, or some combination of these factors?</li><li>• We continuously adjust and improve programs and services as new evidence becomes available</li></ul>



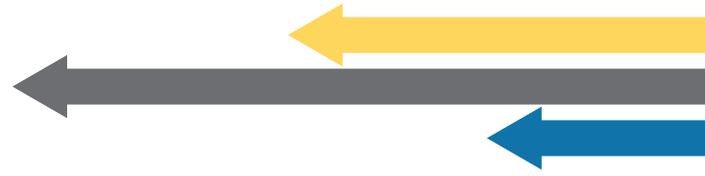
# Guiding Principle: Partnerships, Collaboration and Alignment

<b>Look to work with others in the field</b>
<b>What does it look like in practice?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We invest time and resources on relationships and partnerships, including building on existing links, to improve outcomes, information-sharing and knowledge transfer</li><li>• We know who is good at what, and who is already doing what, and bring the right people to the table early in the process</li><li>• By coordinating and leveraging internal partnerships, we reach out strategically together</li><li>• We look for ways of creating or identifying benefits for all parties</li><li>• We recognize that different insights, including those of faith-based communities, can allow for more opportunities and innovation</li><li>• We tap into the expertise and knowledge of seniors and seniors' groups, and provide volunteering and mentoring opportunities for those who are interested</li></ul>
<b>Desired Results</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A holistic approach with better integrated services, less duplication and less "silo" thinking</li><li>• Increased capacity within the system</li><li>• More sustainable outcomes, including improved client outcomes and satisfaction</li><li>• More opportunities for innovation resulting from more and varied perspectives</li></ul>



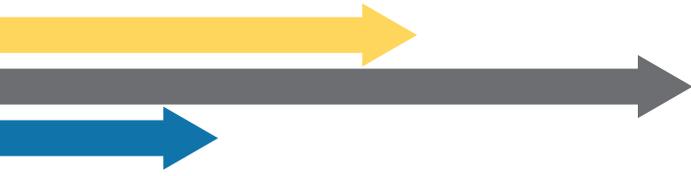
## Guiding Principle: Prevention and Promotion

<b>Keep problems from happening or mitigate them when they do</b>
<b>What does it look like in practice?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We focus our attention on prevention and start investments as early as possible</li><li>• We understand risks, such as social isolation, that go hand-in-hand with vulnerability</li><li>• When people are on waitlists, we craft strategies to help them in the meantime</li><li>• Recognizing that seniors are not all the same, we find innovative ways of reaching them</li><li>• We consider a senior's needs holistically, rather than trying to address each one in isolation</li><li>• We provide more options than calling police or paramedics in acute situations</li></ul>
<b>Desired Results</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All residents, including seniors, empowered to make choices to improve wellness and quality of life</li><li>• Healthy independent seniors who are better prepared to age in place</li><li>• Fewer preventable injuries and non-emergency calls; savings reinvested in more prevention efforts</li><li>• Creation of age-friendly complete communities</li></ul>



## Guiding Principle: Education

<b>Get the word out to seniors and those close to them</b>
<b>What does it look like in practice?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We support continuous and sustainable learning across the life span, taking a train-the-trainers approach to expand our reach</li><li>• We ask seniors what they want to know and deliver materials to match their preferences, including peer-to-peer education; where reaching them is a challenge, we turn to their families and caregivers</li><li>• We take education campaigns to libraries, doctor's offices, medical clinics, and employers, and make better use of social media to reach seniors</li><li>• We work together internally, form partnerships with academic institutions, and engage with external partners to develop stronger messages delivered in more ways</li></ul>
<b>Desired Results</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seniors, including the most vulnerable, and caregivers are empowered and can better navigate the system, and are more aware of and understand the available programs, services and supports</li></ul>



## Guiding Principle: Fiscal Sustainability and Balance

<b>Can we afford it?</b> <b>Watch program costs and acknowledge competing demands</b>
<b>What does it look like in practice?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We ensure that programs and services make the best use of limited resources and are sustainable over the long term, especially by targeting resources and subsidies to those who need them most</li><li>• We recognize the need to invest where the social and community outcomes justify it</li><li>• For some services, we consider additional revenue sources like private foundations and user fees from those who can afford them</li><li>• We look at innovative approaches like a revolving loan program for the Home Repair Program</li><li>• We explore ability-to-pay models with a sliding scale of discounts, rather than one low-income threshold, and a holistic approach to eligibility that includes income, assets, existing support from family and/or friends, and risk of isolation, and consider the impact on current supports</li><li>• We recognize and take into account differing cultural norms in such areas as families' financial support, discomfort with discussing finances, and tradition of multigenerational households</li></ul>
<b>Desired Results</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The needs of all residents are balanced by applying the ability-to-pay concept to all age groups</li><li>• Ability-to-pay eligibility criteria are holistic and respond to differing levels of need</li><li>• With adequate revenue to meet demand, waitlists are reduced or eliminated and programs enhanced to provide more help to financially vulnerable seniors</li></ul>



## 8. Turning the Strategy into action

**We will start to implement the Strategy in January 2017**

### **Implementation will begin by setting up:**

- A Seniors Strategy project support team
- A Cross-Departmental joint implementation team responsible for coordinating and leading implementation of the Strategy, including identifying priorities, project leads, timelines and resources required.

### **Implementation of the actions will consider opportunities for:**

- Pilots and demonstrations
- Identifying and addressing training needs
- Collective communication campaigns



We will be more successful when we leverage opportunities to work better together through partnerships, alignment and collaboration with other players.

This includes working closely with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), which released a policy discussion paper in September 2016.

Many of the recommendations in the paper, *Strengthening Age-Friendly Communities and Seniors' Services for 21st Century Ontario: A New Conversation about the Municipal Role*, support the direction of the York Region Seniors Strategy, and set the stage to work more closely together.

## Implementation of the actions requires further research, policy development and possible collaboration in five areas:

### Ability to Pay Eligibility Model(s)

- » Developing fair eligibility models based on need and ability to pay, for all age groups

### Capacity Planning

- » Identifying the services and programs seniors may need by making the right investments in the right services and working in partnership with the community to fill the gaps.

### Creating Age-Friendly, Complete Communities

- » Supporting people to age actively in a socially inclusive and physically accessible environment

### Better Connecting Seniors and Caregivers to Services

- » Connecting seniors and caregivers to services by improving awareness and making connections to the right services at the right time

### Integrating the Delivery of Services

- » Delivering services using models such as hubs that respond to community needs



## Successful implementation means:

- Program decisions made based on multiple sources of evidence (best practices, senior/caregiver experience, data)
- More places for seniors to access integrated services
- Greater focus on prevention to mitigate some of the risks associated with aging
- Seniors and caregivers are supported to navigate and access the system
- Decrease in non-emergency calls to 911 by seniors
- Resources and subsidies are targeted to those that need it the most, regardless of age.

## We are in a good position to support the growing, aging population

The implementation of the Strategy will build on existing efforts. York Region is already well positioned to support the growing and aging population through efforts such as, building complete, vibrant, walkable communities; connecting seniors through a suite of transportation options including accessible conventional and Viva services, Mobility Plus, Community Bus and Dial-a-Ride; community paramedicine; strong long-term care and seniors' community programs; accessible trails; and keeping seniors safe through the work of York Regional Police, Senior Safety Officers and social workers.

## Moving forward requires alignment and collaboration

Many organizations and individuals are preparing for an aging population. This is a reminder that the Region is just one of many players in the complex system of programs that serve seniors. Others include local municipalities, other levels of government, community organizations and the private sector. Developing this Strategy has clarified where the Region has control and can take action and where we can influence change through advocacy efforts.

Going forward, our actions, advocacy and work with our partners will ensure seniors in York Region receive the best possible support and services, while supporting a Region where everyone can thrive.



## Sources:

Business Insider, *This List Proves You're Never Too Old To Do Something Amazing*, March 2014  
[edited excerpt from "Edgy Conversations: How Ordinary People Can Achieve Outrageous Success" by Daniel E. Waldschmidt]

<http://www.businessinsider.com/100-amazing-accomplishments-achieved-at-every-age-2014-3>

Canadian Institute for Health Information (2011). *Seniors and the Health Care System: What is the Impact of Multiple Chronic Conditions?* Retrieved from

[https://secure.cihi.ca/free\\_products/air-chronic\\_disease\\_aib\\_en.pdf](https://secure.cihi.ca/free_products/air-chronic_disease_aib_en.pdf)

Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2013-2014

Environics Analytics, GTA-wide Survey, Fall 2015

Environics Analytics, 2015 Wealthscape Database

Ipsos Reid Survey, Financial Security and Future Service Needs of Baby Boomers and Seniors in York Region, 2014

National Seniors Council, *Report on the Social Isolation of Seniors*, 2013-2014

<http://www.nationalseniorsstrategy.ca/the-four-pillars/pillar-1/addressing-ageism-elder-abuse-and-social-isolation/>

Ontario Injury Prevention Resource Centre. *Ontario injury data report*.

Toronto, ON: SMARTRISK; 2012 [cited 2014 Jan 15]. Available from:

<http://www.oninjuryresources.ca/downloads/publications/OIDR-Summary.pdf>

Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2000, 2003, 2007

Statistics Canada, *Healthy People, Healthy Places*, 2008-2009

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-229-x/2009001/envir/cob-eng.htm>

Statistics Canada, National Household Survey (NHS), 2011

Statistics Canada, Small Area and Administrative Data Division, *2000-2013 Annual Estimates for Census Families and Individuals* 13C0016

The Regional Municipality of York, Community and Health Services Department, Housing and Long-Term Care Branch, 2014

The Regional Municipality of York, Community and Health Services Department, Housing Services Branch, *Subsidized Housing Waiting List Records* as of December 31, 2015

<https://www.walkscore.com/CA-ON>

York Region Emergency Medical Services 10-year Resources and Facilities Master Plan, September 2012

York Regional Police Call Data, 2015

# Acknowledgements



Many people were involved in the development of this Strategy. Their contributions and expertise helped to shape the actions and advocacy areas that will be implemented moving forward. Thank you to the Seniors Strategy Advisory Task Force, all of the seniors groups, seniors organizations, partners and agencies as well as staff from all departments who supported and provided information for this Strategy. Development of the Strategy was led by the Strategies and Partnerships Branch in the Community and Health Services Department.

Organizations wishing to cite any portion of the *York Region Seniors Strategy: Thinking Ahead* are requested to use the following citation when referencing this document:

The Regional Municipality of York (2016). *York Region Seniors Strategy: Thinking Ahead*. Newmarket, Ontario.

The Regional Municipality of York  
Community and Health Services  
Administrative Centre  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, Ontario  
L3Y 6Z1

**Email:** [CHS-info@york.ca](mailto:CHS-info@york.ca)

**Phone:** 1-877-464-9675

**TTY:** 1-866-512-6228 or 905-895-4293  
(for those with hearing disabilities)

**[www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)**

