



On the Road to Age-Friendly Communities



Canada

In Canada today, people are living longer, healthier lives than ever before. Cities, towns and villages—communities of all sizes—strive to meet the needs of their residents, including older adults. These communities recognize that seniors, and the community as a whole, benefit when healthy aging and “age-friendly” features become one of their trademarks.

Healthy aging is a lifelong process of optimizing opportunities for improving and preserving all aspects of health, promoting quality of life and enhancing successful life-course transitions.

—*Healthy Aging in Canada: A New Vision, A Vital Investment*

Age-friendly . . . a win-win formula

By creating environments that support healthy aging, seniors, elected officials, business leaders, service providers and community residents improve peoples’ lives and the quality of community life. This is in keeping with the World Health Organization (WHO) goal of active aging: “optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.”

There are good reasons why communities across Canada are going “age-friendly.” Such communities support better health, improved safety and greater participation of all members of the community. For older adults, it may make the difference between their social

isolation or their continued contributions to family, friends, neighbours and the economy well into old age. Age-friendly communities support seniors as community investors. On the face of it, the investment is in seniors. Look more closely, and see the benefits to the wider community.

Age-friendly policies and practices . . . a smart move

The evidence is in: health promotion and disease prevention strategies help seniors age well. Moreover, promoting healthy aging is part of a life-course approach aimed at reducing inequalities and supporting vulnerable people to improve well-being at all ages. Many of the policies and actions that promote an age-friendly community usually benefit both older and younger citizens at the same time. As our population ages, it makes more sense to create physical and social environments that support all citizens to be active and productive members of the community.

Canadians and aging

- As of 2006, seniors number over four million—that means that one in seven Canadians is age 65 or older. By 2036, seniors will account for one in four Canadians.
- Almost 75% of seniors live in Canada’s urban areas, while the remaining 25% reside in rural and remote areas.