

## **Conference Summary and Key Recommendations**

***“Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario: Moving age-friendly insights, innovations and strategies into action”***

The Ontario Age-Friendly Communities Outreach Program

March 22<sup>nd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022

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# INTRODUCTION

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## Purpose

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“Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario: Moving age-friendly insights, innovations and strategies into action” was a virtual conference hosted by the Ontario Age-Friendly Communities (AFC) Outreach Program on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

This document is a summary of the Conference proceedings and seeks to (1) inform and support aging in place; (2) increase awareness of current age-friendly initiatives, policies, and practices within Ontario; and (3) provide key recommendations to propel the age-friendly movement forward.

## Background

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The Ontario AFC Outreach Program is a knowledge translation and exchange program designed to increase:

- **Awareness** of age-friendly planning principles
- **Access** to best-practice research and information
- **Connectivity** between age-friendly community initiatives to enable the spread of promising practices and collective response to emerging gaps
- **Capacity** of age-friendly community initiatives to plan, implement, evaluate, and sustain their age-friendly activities

The Ontario AFC Outreach Program is managed by the Centre for Studies in Aging and Health at Providence Care, and receives funds through the Government of Ontario’s Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility (MSAA).

## Conference Overview

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The theme of the Conference was ***moving age-friendly insights, innovation, and strategies into action***. With the age-friendly movement gaining momentum in Ontario for over a decade, the Conference aimed to bring together the perspectives of age-friendly community implementers, policy-makers, planners, and researchers to reflect upon:

Day 1: Inclusive Communities

- How do we broaden our work to be more inclusive?
- Who has been left out of the conversation?
- What partnerships are needed?
- What does the future look like for an age-friendly Ontario?

## Day 2: Community planning

- Highlight strategies to strengthen local planning, implementation, and sustainability.

## Day 3: Innovations in Action

- Showcase innovative age-friendly strategies.

The three-day event began with opening remarks from the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, Hon. Raymond Cho. The Conference covered a broad range of age-friendly topics, from ageism, intergenerational partnerships, and inclusive planning to the COVID-19 pandemic. Formats included presentations, panel discussions, and concurrent interactive breakout sessions using webinars and meeting platforms. Each day began with some reflections from older Ontarians on [how they like to spend their time](#), [what the key ingredient is to aging well](#), and [how their communities can support their efforts to remain healthy](#).

## AGE-FRIENDLY INSIGHTS, INNOVATIONS & STRATEGIES: PRESENTATION SUMMARIES

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### Keynote: Moving Age-Friendly Insights, Innovations, and Strategies into Action

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*Dr. Jane Barratt, Secretary General, International Federation on Ageing (IFA)*

Barratt, J. (2022, Mar 22) *Moving Age-Friendly Insights, Innovations, and Strategies into Action* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/Hl0fS1HohVY?t=1572>

Keynote speaker Dr. Jane Barratt, the Secretary General of the International Federation on Aging (IFA), discussed a framework for action, good practices, assumptions, and recommendations for creating age-friendly environments. The IFA's age-friendly work aims to create healthy environments for everyone, focusing on maintaining and improving functionality, where 'age' can be taken out of the equation.

#### *Framework for Action*

The interaction between the person and the environment is critical to healthy aging and is one of the four pillars of the Decade of Healthy Aging. The age-friendly communities (AFC) approach encompasses the eight structural domains, as well as the functional domains of the ability to meet basic needs, learn and grow, make decisions, build, and maintain relationships, be mobile and contribute. Enablers for the sustainability of AFC programs include using voice and engagement, leadership, and capacity building, connecting stakeholders, and strengthening research and data innovation.

#### *Good Practices*

Generating political will is a good practice that includes fostering collaboration, integrating age-friendly models, standardizing development, and age-friendly champions. Age-Friendly Ireland,

Age-Friendly Norway, and AARP are examples of starting local, thinking global, and constantly raising the bar of excellence. The Manchester Urban Ageing Research group, Conférence des Tables régionales de concertation des aînés, and HelpAge International are examples of utilizing good practices of voice and engagement.

### *Assumptions*

Older adults are often left behind. Age-friendly environments enable older people to do what they have reason to value. Aligned work includes working toward a dementia-inclusive society. Professor Neville's work with the Māori people emphasized the lack of authentic engagement in diverse communities and highlighted that there is cultural incompatibility, at times, in the way we build our AFCs.

### *Recommendations*

Dr. Barratt spoke about sustained funding, paying attention to the cultural compatibility of age-friendly, a formal acknowledgement of national and provincial ambassadors, foundational resources, and a national roundtable for dementia inclusive and AFCs.

## **Addressing Age Equity**

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*Dr. Tamara Daly, Professor and Director, York University Centre for Aging Research and Education*

Daly, T. (2022, Mar 22). *Addressing Age Equity* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada.  
<https://youtu.be/11uL-EEUrAE?t=8>

Dr. Daly and colleagues have found strong evidence for the integral relationship between good care and decent working conditions across home care, community, and long-term care settings. They have also found indications of when government-level policies and regulations create conditions where equity diversity, inclusion, and healthy aging flourish. They also noted the opposite when policies reproduced inequities and disadvantages.

The most significant policy challenges within the senior care system include understaffing, underfunding, and poor working conditions. Their research proceeds from the assumption that ageism affects everyone, and that cumulative disadvantage can make aging particularly challenging for some.

Addressing equity is about (1) considering the specificity of needs compared with what services are available; (2) noting what is being addressed and how the needs of particular groups or individuals remain unaddressed; and (3) identifying how to wrap services around those persons or groups to improve health and lessen the impacts of cumulative disadvantage.

## **Aging in the community: A focus on older LGBTQ2S+ Canadians**

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*Dr. Arne Stinchcombe, Assistant Professor, School of Psychology, University of Ottawa; Investigator, Bruyère Research Institute*

Stinchcombe, A. (2022, Mar 22). *Aging in the community: A focus on older LGBTQ2S+ Canadians* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/11uL-EEUrAE?t=1079>

Age-friendliness is positively related to the quality of life among older adults. Yet, little work has been done to explore and promote age-friendliness in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S+) communities in Canada. LGBTQ2S+ older adults share many of the same aging experiences and concerns as all aging populations. However, they also have distinct needs and challenges stemming from their sexual and/ or gender identities, which are not often considered in the age-friendly domains.

Given the relationship between age-friendliness and quality of life, Dr. Stinchcombe and his colleagues examined (1) how existing Age-Friendly Community (AFC) initiatives ensure the inclusion of LGBTQ2S+ older adults; and (2) how does a community become both age and LGBTQ2S+ friendly? The study consisted of an environmental scan, an electronic survey, and semi-structured key-informant interviews. Key findings included survey participants identifying 77 organizations and programs across North America. Findings also point to five factors that make a community both age and LGBTQ2S+ friendly: 1) diverse and intergenerational, 2) free from harassment and discrimination, 3) has inclusive programs and services, 4) systemic inclusion and visibility of LGBTQ2S+ older adults, and 5) encompassing and compassionate. Implications were discussed, including bolstering age and LGBTQ2S+ friendly organizations and initiatives and reducing the redundancy in program development.

## **Building INCLUSIVE Age-Friendly Communities: Challenges and Opportunities in Mental Health Programs for Racial and ethnocultural Older Adults in Canadian Cities**

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*Randa Higazy, Researcher, University of Toronto*

Higazy, R. (2022, Mar 22). *Building INCLUSIVE Age-Friendly Communities: Challenges and Opportunities in Mental Health Programs for Racial and ethnocultural Older Adults in Canadian Cities* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/11uL-EEUrAE?t=1959>

Immigrant and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of colour) populations can face more health inequities due to inequalities in social determinants of health, including education, employment, and housing. These populations may also face barriers to accessing mental health programs and services. Barriers include stigma, language barriers, lack of culturally sensitive services and programs, and lack of BIPOC representation among Health Care decision-makers and practitioners.

A scoping review was conducted of all major cities in Canada, using an Age-Friendly Cities Framework that focused on evaluating the mental health of immigrant and BIPOC populations. Current gaps were looked at, including a lack of culturally sensitive programs, systemic evaluation and active outreach, and inclusive marketing. Possible solutions were proposed, including gathering more robust data, ensuring consistent and frequent data collection, and working collaboratively with provinces to share a complete understanding of the scope of the problem.

## Fédération Des Aînés Et Des Retraités Francophones De L'Ontario (FARFO)

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**Michel Tremblay, Executive Director,**

Tremblay, M. (2022, Mar 22). *Fédération Des Aînés Et Des Retraités Francophones De L'Ontario (FAFO)* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/11uL-EEUrAE?t=2501>

La Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario (FARFO) is recognized as a key organization that highlights initiatives that affect Francophone seniors and retirees in Ontario. FARFO's strategic plan focuses on program development and continuity, collaboration and consultation, political action, and governance. Five White Paper recommendations were explored for increasing access to relevant and up-to-date data.

FARFO works in partnership and develops networks with decision-makers, older adults, communities, service providers, academic and research, and allied stakeholders. This is done to reduce loneliness and isolation, promote active living, well-being, health, and prevention. FARFO has four major platforms to provide workshops, information sessions, and encourage discussions. This allows participants to socialize, be entertained, be informed, share, and learn.

## Panel Discussion: How can older adults be included in the conversation?

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**Mirella Palermo, Senior Policy Planner, City of Brampton**

**Dr. John Puxty, Associate Professor and Chair of Division of Geriatric Medicine; Director of CSAH Department of Medicine at Queen's University and Centre for Studies in Aging and Health**

**Dr. Caroline Bergeron, Researcher, LIFE Research Institute; University of Ottawa; Center for Population Health and Aging, Texas A&M University**

**Laura Tamblyn Watts, President and CEO, CanAge**

Palermo, M., Puxty, J., Bergeron, C. & Tamblyn Watts, L. (2022, Mar 22). *How can older adults be included in the conversation?* [Panel Discussion]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/sDoUDxH6xPQ>

This panel was asked to discuss their perspective on the question, ‘How can older adults be included in the conversation?’

### **Opportunities for Inclusion**

To effectively meet the needs of older adults, the panelist members discussed practicing a stakeholder-inclusive model when designing programs and services. Panelist members found this approach establishes pathways for collaborative practices across the spectrum of care and provides a better understanding of the unmet needs of older adults.

### **Pre-Pandemic and Pandemic Age-Friendly Movement**

The panelist members highlighted how the pandemic created new and reinforced existing inequalities amongst older adults. Proposed solutions included:

- Moving towards age-friendly readiness and embedding ‘age-friendly’ principles within future work
- Recognizing the increasing gap in access and range of clinical care and support systems
- Creating innovative and accessible ways for how programs and services are delivered (i.e., virtually)

### **Person-centered Planning**

Person-centered planning was proposed to facilitate a co-construction and co-design approach to include older adults in the conversation. It serves as a proponent of inclusion and supports older adults in becoming more engaged in their communities and care plans.

## **National Age-Friendly Ireland Programme: A Shared Service Function of Local Government**

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*Louise Edmonds and Mairead Cranley, Age-Friendly Ireland*

Edmonds, L. & Cranley, M. (2022, Mar 23). *National Age-Friendly Ireland Programme: A Shared Service Function of Local Government* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada.

<https://youtu.be/ce11asCzKY?t=696>

Age-Friendly Ireland is a local government shared service that provides guidance and support to 31 local authorities in developing their age-friendly programs. Age-Friendly Ireland works with the Irish government and the public and NGO sectors to prepare Ireland to address the aging population. The Age-Friendly Ireland program has been acknowledged by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the first age-friendly country in the world. An Age-Friendly Alliance is a high-level cross-sectoral group that comes together and works in partnership to develop and implement the local age-friendly strategy.

The program is supported by a strategic cross-governmental and a National Advisory Group (NAG). The program positioning and structures regarding the NAG were briefly touched on. A suite of nine housing policy documents focused on assisting individuals 55 and older in

rightsizing and moving to a different locality has been published. The Healthy Age-Friendly Homes Programme consists of housing specialists who take a meso-approach to assist individuals with their homes. In June 2021, Age-Friendly Business Programme was launched to create collaboration with their chambers of commerce and local enterprise offices across the country. 31 Local Work Plans are prepared on an annual basis to outline the work to be undertaken by each program across the country.

## Creating a More Inclusive Ontario: Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide for Municipalities and Community Organizations

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**Sarah Webster**, Manager, Centre for Studies in Aging and Health at Providence Care

Webster, S. (2022, Mar 23). *Creating a More Inclusive Ontario: Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide for Municipalities and Community Organizations* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/ce11asCzKY?t=2452>

The Ontario age-friendly planning and implementation framework is a cyclical process that helps communities continue to strengthen their work and respond to emerging needs. Communities start or re-start their process by defining local principles, forming a steering committee, and building a team. Communities then go through a process of assessing their needs to understand local strengths and gaps. These inform a community's action plan: a road map that matches community needs with proposed actions. Finally, communities implement and evaluate – seeking out new partnerships where needed and capitalizing on quick wins.

During consultations over several years, Age-Friendly Community Initiatives identified several challenges, including limited funding, time and expertise, difficulty sustaining the work, a desire to learn for others, engaging diverse population groups, and looking for tools and templates to support local work. As a result, the Ontario Age-Friendly Communities Outreach Program created a new version of the guide, which addresses these issues.

The new provincial planning guide draws on empowerment evaluation and embeds 12 AFC Planning Questions to align with the phases of planning and implementation. It also includes factors to support sustainability and tips from other communities. Two complementary resources were also created: a Diverse Population Addendum to provide a strategy for communities to reach out to their more marginalized groups and a Planning Toolkit with tools, worksheets, and templates to support each component of the AFC planning framework.

## Using Citizen Science to Improve Age-Friendly Worlds

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**Dr. Helen Barrie**, Senior Research Fellow, The University of South Australia, School of Business

Barrie, H. (2022, Mar 23). *Using Citizen Science to Improve Age-Friendly Worlds* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/ce11asCzKY?t=3406>

Citizen science involves public participation and collaboration in scientific research to increase scientific knowledge. Health and well-being can be determined by the physical and social environments we live in. For a community to truly be age-friendly, they need to look at sectors such as long-term care, transportation, housing, workforce participation, social protection, and information and communication.

Dr. Barrie and her colleague's study aimed to co-design, trial, and validate an audit tool used by older community members as trained citizen scientists to evaluate the age-friendliness or quality of their neighbourhoods. Through a series of workshops, they presented the citizens with the Age-Friendly Checklist for their neighbourhoods and asked them to critique it and make suggestions for the audit. The recruitment of citizen scientists was through their local governments and local authorities, as they understand the issues and have great connections to older people in their area. Reflecting on the data and being able to contribute to the data analysis is an important part of citizen science. Examples of the audit tool and platform called ESRI Survey 123 were provided.

## Panel Discussion: Partnerships and Strategic Alignment

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*Andrea Austen, Manager of Senior Services and Community Programs, City of Toronto*

*Bonnie Schroeder, Age-Friendly Ottawa Director, The Council on Aging of Ottawa*

*Rebecca Johnson, Councillor at Large, City of Thunder Bay*

*Lucy Marco, President, Grand River Council on Aging (Brantford)*

Austen, A., Schroeder, B., Johnson, R. & Marco, L (2022, Mar 23). *Partnerships & Strategic Alignment*. [Panel Discussion ]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/sswJlEx2GNo?t=97>

This panel was asked to explore how partnerships and strategic alignment can mobilize and strengthen age-friendly community initiatives.

### Program and Projects

Each panelist member highlighted a relevant program and or project implemented within their region:

- The Grand River Council on Aging developed a Community Impact Report.
- The City of Thunder Bay established an Age-Friendly Action Plan.
- The Council on Aging in Ottawa created a series of educational programming to help older adults navigate the transition in later life called the SMART Aging Program.
- The City of Toronto created a framework of consulting, co-creating, and co-evaluating with older adults called the Toronto Senior Strategy.

### Partnerships

The panelist members agreed that strengthening connections and partnerships with service groups and government agencies that support age-friendly initiatives provides a means to address the changing needs of older adults. Community partnerships also encourage communication and the distribution of shared resources and create unique collaborations.

### **Future Considerations**

- Everyone has the capacity to be an age-friendly champion.
- Document the data gathered, testimonials, and partnerships for future reflection on how to mobilize and strengthen age-friendly community initiatives.
- Engage youths within intergenerational programs to bridge the gap between generations.

## **Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities**

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*Dr. Catharine Donnelly, Director, Health Services and Policy Research Institute and Associate Professor, Queen's University*

Donnelly, C. (2022, Mar 24). *Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/aKjXEkm3-ig?t=724>

Naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs) are housing developments that were not planned or designed for older people but have become home to a high density of older adults. NORCs are a network of like-minded individuals and organizations with the intent to share experiences, knowledge, resources, and best practices for optimal aging, aging in place, and NORC-based programs.

A scoping review found that NORCs facilitate activities to build social relations, engage and empower, and services to enhance and navigate resources. NORCs with intentional programming leverage communal spaces and community partnerships to support social engagement and participation among older adults. The Oasis program aims to provide an alternative for older adults to live independently with proper support. The three Oasis pillars focus on nutrition, physical activity, and socialization. Over the next four years, Dr. Donnelly and her team will be conducting a rigorous evaluation looking at and comparing the Oasis program to non-Oasis NORCs.

## **Canada HomeShare: Intergenerational Social Work Facilitated HomeSharing**

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*Jackie Tanner, National Manager, Clinical Lead of Canada HomeShare*

Tanner, J. (2022, Mar 24). *Canada HomeShare: Intergenerational Social Work Facilitated HomeSharing* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/aKjXEkm3-ig?t=1354>

Canada HomeShare is an intergenerational housing solution that matches older adult home providers and post-secondary students. They aim to support aging in place for older adults while

providing post-secondary students with safe and affordable housing solutions. The HomeSharing movement allows us to rethink how we use our homes, what aging in place looks like and how generations interact with each other. HomeSharing offers a sustainable and cost-effective way to keep people in their homes and connected to their community. Canada HomeShare has been operating successfully for several years and has found that Canadians want to remain in their home as they age and building bridges between generations reduces the risk of social isolation and provides additional support with day-to-day activities.

## **F.A.S.T Track Canada: A National Snapshot of Age-Friendly Transportation**

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*Jana Ray, Chief Operating Officer, CanAge*

Ray, J. (2022, Mar 24). *F.A.S.T Track Canada: A National Snapshot of Age-Friendly Transportation* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/aKjXEkm3-ig?t=1938>

F.A.S.T. (funding accelerator for senior's transportation) Track is a national initiative supporting transportation innovation. They harness the collaboration of national thought-leaders, experts in aging, and transportation and community consultation to accelerate the development of innovative transportation solutions for older Canadians. Their goal is to (1) identify the barriers and gaps of senior's transportation across Canada; (2) identify solutions that can be replicated and scaled; and (3) propose recommendations across the sector for future use.

## **Adopt-a-Driveway**

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*Amy Weiler, Community Engagement Specialist, Lambton Elderly Outreach*

Weiler, A. (2022, Mar 24). *Adopt-a-Driveway* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/aKjXEkm3-ig?t=2776>

Adopt-a-Driveway is a volunteer-based snow removal program where older adults and people with disabilities are matched with a volunteer to shovel their driveway and other areas around their home. Adopt-a-Driveway created a partnership with their municipality to overcome challenges such as securing insurance and increasing sustainability. The main key to their success includes partnerships, funding, and donations, year-round recruitment, meaningful connections, and dedicated staff.

## **Evaluation and Communication in Age-Friendly Hamilton: A Suite of Practical Approaches and Tools in the Implementation Plan**

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*Tracy Gibbs, Project Manager, Hamilton Council on Aging*

Gibbs, T. (2022, Mar 24). *Evaluation and Communication in Age-Friendly Hamilton: A Suite of Practical Approaches and Tools in the Implementation Plan* [Conference

Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/aKjXEkm3-ig?t=3974>

Hamilton's Plan for an Age-Friendly Community (2021 - 2026) serves as a guide for municipal decision-makers and community stakeholders in addressing the current needs and priorities of older adults living in Hamilton. During the implementation of the plan, a governance review was completed and found that city of Hamilton would benefit from engaging a broader community representation/involvement to build shared ownership of the plan. This led to research on the kinds of organization models that would facilitate this approach.

An online collaboration tool was created to track the monthly progress of goal champions, which identifies local opportunities and implements actions to advance age-friendly recommendations as they move through the various phases of their action plan. To facilitate ongoing improvement and development, members of the collaborative were encouraged to conduct a meeting feedback survey and a retrospective activity at key milestones.

## **Be Prepared Project: Organize for the future you want for yourself**

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*Jayne Culbert, Age-Friendly Coordinator, City of Peterborough*

Culbert, J. (2022, Mar 24). *Be Prepared Project: Organize for the future you want for yourself* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/aKjXEkm3-ig?t=4712>

Age-friendly Peterborough received funding from the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility to develop the Be Prepared Project. The Be Prepared workbook has five chapters: emergency preparedness, personal safety planning, next step housing, advanced planning, and final wishes. The workbook contains checklists, discussion starters, reflective questions, additional resources and is a place to store information that is useful in the case of an emergency. It prompts an individual to think about potential life changes and helps them plan.

Participants at the Be Prepared workshops receive the workbook in a zipped binder, and they learn how to use the information. Lessons learned about the project include defining a project's scope, having the right team to ensure you get the information you need, and conducting an environmental scan to know what similar projects exist. The Summit on Aging – Be Prepared is scheduled in October, where panels of representatives from each chapter will share their expertise.

## **GrandPals**

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*Jenna Wickens, Mature Minds Coordinator, Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County*

Wickens, J. (2022, Mar 24). *GrandPals* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. [https://youtu.be/\\_7OPMolxISU?t=68](https://youtu.be/_7OPMolxISU?t=68)

GrandPals aims to connect older adults and youth to build a world of deeper intergenerational learning, storytelling, and friendship. GrandPals recognizes that older adults are a great

untapped source of living history, with lots to contribute to the next generation through story sharing. This is done through three pillars:

- Learning – education, wisdom, and process
- Storytelling – grows empathy and develops an understanding of the past, present, and future
- Friendship – fosters friendships virtually and in-person

## Putting food on the table: Addressing food security among isolated older adults during COVID-19

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*Heather Thompson, Director of Age-Friendly Initiatives, Community Development Halton*

Thompson, H. (2022, Mar 24). *Putting food on the table: Addressing food security among isolated older adults during COVID-19* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada.

[https://youtu.be/\\_7OPMolxISU?t=620](https://youtu.be/_7OPMolxISU?t=620)

The Putting Food on the Table Project aimed to better understand the food security and nutritional needs of older adults receiving healthy food packages from Food for Life during the pandemic. To help improve the well-being of older adults living in Halton, teams from Sheridan Centre for Elder Research (Lead), Food for Life, and Heather’s team from Community Development Halton (Age-Friendly Initiatives) conducted a survey to see feedback from older adults about the “older adult food package.” The goal was to improve the overall experience and provide additional resources to support older adults. A follow-up survey was then conducted to learn how the changes that were implemented impacted their well-being and what else could be done. Expanding the possibilities of this project created the potential and capacity to provide an essential food service and use it as a communicative tool to send information and resources to people who are isolated and otherwise hard to reach.

## Getting to know Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario (EAPO): Informed collaborative approaches to serving our communities

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*Sheila Schuehle, Prevention Consultant, North, Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario*

Schuehle, S. (2022, Mar 24). *Getting to know Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario (EAPO): Informed collaborative approaches to serving our communities* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. [https://youtu.be/\\_7OPMolxISU?t=1243](https://youtu.be/_7OPMolxISU?t=1243)

Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario (EAPO) strives to create an Ontario where all older adults are free from abuse, have a strong voice, feel safe, and respected. They do so by raising awareness, delivering education and training, working collaboratively with other organizations, and assisting with service coordination and advocacy. Ontario’s strategy to combat elder abuse is based on three pillars: (1) public education and awareness; (2) training of front-line staff; and (3) coordination of community services. The pandemic has highlighted many issues that the

organization has been addressing for years. By collaborating with like-minded, dedicated community groups, older adults, service professionals, and agencies throughout Ontario, their goal is to safeguard and help protect older adults.

## Men's Sheds helping to build Ontario Age-Friendly Communities

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*Darrel O'Shaughnessy, Chair, Greater Arnprior Senior's Council*

O'Shaughnessy, D. (2022, Mar 24). *Men's Sheds helping to build Ontario Age-Friendly Communities* [Conference Presentation]. Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/7OPMolxISU?t=1877>

Men's Sheds is considered a Social Health Care Innovation. It provides a space to meet, make friends, socialize, and help each other combat loneliness, isolation, and depression. It strives to bring Senior Men together to give back more than they receive. The program provides an opportunity to contribute to and help build their community and allows participants to remain productive, healthy, active, and engaged.

## Panel Discussion: What's next for Ontario's AFC Movement

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*Dr. Raza Mizra, Assistant Professor (Status), University of Toronto, Institute for Life Course and Aging; Network Manager, National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE)*

*Wendy Carew, Population Health Lead, Ontario Health North*

*Jayne Culbert, Age-Friendly Coordinator, City of Peterborough*

*Heather Thompson, Director of Age-Friendly Initiatives, Community Development Halton*

Mirza, R., Carew, W., Culbert, J. & Thompson, H. (2022, Mar 24). *What's next for Ontario's AFC Movement?* [Panel Discussion] Inspiring Inclusive Communities in Ontario Conference, Kingston, ON, Canada. <https://youtu.be/LnQ6ggO0Zv4?t=39>

This panel was asked to showcase age-friendly strategies that target the social environment and to discuss 'what's next for Ontario's AFC movement?'

### The Pandemic and the Age-Friendly Movement

The panelist members spoke about the pandemic restrictions and emergency measures that left many older adults feeling isolated and disconnected from the outside world. Fostering a sense of community in a virtual world was proposed as a long-term solution for older adults to create strong and accessible connections and partnerships.

### Sustainability

To address 'what's next for Ontario's AFC movement?', the panel participants examined the topic of sustainability and proposed:

- Securing leadership and commitment from municipal governments
- Viewing AFCs from a macro perspective
- Evaluating and aligning projects

- Facilitating communication and collaboration amongst all stakeholders
- Celebrating success stories

### **Future Considerations**

- Sharing and reflecting on age-friendly strategies to motivate others to join the movement.
- Applying an age-friendly lens to a diversity of settings by considering equity, diversity, and inclusion in all future policies and projects.

## **MOVING TO ACTION: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

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This section offers **five key recommendations** that emerged during the conference and highlight strategies to strengthen local age-friendly planning, implementation, and sustainability within Ontario.

### **Recommendation 1: Include and collaborate with older adults in research, policy making and local planning**

The number of older adults with unmet care and support needs is increasing due to challenges facing the formal and informal care system. Much of the planning to-date has focused on doing ‘for’ instead of doing ‘with’ this population. It is important to appreciate that older adults are a resource and that aging of the population can be a “good-news story”.

To better understand and address the needs of an aging population:

1. Utilize a collaborative stakeholder approach where older adults are involved in co-designing, co-constructing, and co-evaluating research, policy making and local planning.
2. Offer opportunities to target groups/organizations to collaborate in early planning to help build shared ownership

### **Recommendation 2: Leverage strategic partnerships with diverse stakeholders**

With the aging population expected to double in the coming decade, communities are unprepared to meet these shifts. Strategic partnerships with diverse local and provincial organizations can help raise awareness of aging issues and mobilize the intersectoral action required to address complex challenges. To leverage strategic partnerships:

1. Build a bridge across community agencies and departments to support cross-sector planning and implementation
2. Connect with existing organizations that foster healthy aging to promote the development of age-friendly communities
3. Start local, think global - Leverage and align with global movements such as the UN Decade of Healthy Aging, Global Report on Ageism and the Sustainable Development Goals to add credibility and context to your work
4. Engage politicians to trumpet your cause and generate political will

5. Leverage passionate people at local, regional and provincial levels to act as age-friendly champions, promoting and spreading key messages
6. Work with diverse stakeholders to collaboratively respond to large grants and long-term funding opportunities
7. Document data gathered, testimonials, and partnerships for future reflection on how to mobilize and strengthen age-friendly community initiatives

### **Recommendation 3: Build upon success to plan for post-COVID transformation**

The COVID-19 pandemic not only magnified existing systemic issues, but also created several short- and potentially long-term negative impacts on the well-being of older adults. Physical distancing recommendations to reduce transmission of the virus increased the risk of social isolation and loneliness, which were associated with adverse outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and decreased overall quality of life and well-being. Post-COVID planning must seek to transform community structures and supports, not merely return to status quo. Many interventions were implemented to reduce the negative impacts of COVID-19, including, virtual delivery of programming which enabled connections. To successfully plan for post-COVID transformation:

1. Adapt and continue to implement promising interventions, encourage intergenerational connections, and support partnership development to support isolated older adults
2. Address the sources of marginalization, vulnerability, and exclusion of older adults, by bridging the digital divide, tailoring interventions to meet the needs of specific older adult populations, and addressing the root causes of ageism
3. Incorporate an age-friendly lens to guide the development of new programs, services, and policies and to build a shared understanding of older adults' values and concerns
4. Consider, where appropriate, virtual delivery of programming (i.e., Senior Centre Without Walls and Telephone Outreach Programs) alongside in-person delivery options
5. Identify innovative solutions that can be replicated, adapted and scaled

### **Recommendation 4: Apply an equity lens to planning**

The older adult population is a diverse group, and intersecting identities contribute to unique experiences and needs. Policies, programs, and services must be developed in partnership with- and respond to the needs of- population groups most impacted by systemic inequalities. To help ensure equity is considered at each step of the planning process:

1. Include an equity lens to surveys and focus groups to enable inequities to surface
2. Review population demographics to understand local populations
3. Create and/or provide resources and services that are appropriately tailored to the local needs (e.g. different languages, culturally sensitive language and images)
4. Openly recognize and celebrate local diversity (e.g. celebration of holidays, posters and documents to raise awareness, educate and communicate safe and welcoming spaces)
5. Offer intergenerational programming to decrease ageism and social isolation, and increase older adults' sense of belonging.