Oasis:
One Model of a
Naturally Occurring
Retirement Community

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Kingston, Ontario
May 25th, 2018
The Kingston Solution: Oasis Senior Supportive Living Inc.

Oasis was started seven years ago: provincially funded pilot project led by the Frontenac-Kingston Council on Aging Inc.

Oasis is as small as a volunteer organization can get and still function:
- Seven-member volunteer board of directors from the broader community
- An annual grant from the South East LHIN of $130,000 managed by a contracted agency
- A full-time program coordinator, qualified personal support worker (PSW), employed by the contracted agency
- Two communal spaces, including a lounge & a larger common room (with small kitchen), are provided by a private residential landlord – Homestead Land Holdings
- A cadre of approximately sixteen (16) volunteers assist with various programs & meals
The Kingston Solution: Oasis Senior Supportive Living Inc.

Oasis is a “Participant centred bridging program to support seniors at risk to live independently”

• Oasis members: seniors living in an apartment building, Bowling Green 2 [BG2]
• majority are women in their 80s or 90s living on their own; some have family in the vicinity, others do not
• Membership is voluntary and free
• Members run their own monthly meeting to advocate for programming and to listen to guest speakers on topical issues such as medication, exercise and falls prevention
• There is subsidized communal dining three days a week
• Members also serve as volunteers for tasks such as meal set up and service, as well as other activities
• Many members also receive individual home care through visiting PSWs
Oasis, from its inception, has the following goals:

• Maintaining or improving physical fitness and well being
• Improving nutrition
• Reducing isolation
• Enhancing health system & community services navigation

• The Oasis Board adheres to the principle of making decisions with the Oasis members, not for them:
  • Oasis members appoint a member to represent them to the Board
  • Oasis Board meetings are open for the members to observe (except for in camera items), with a Q&A session at the end of the meeting
  • Oasis members initiate recommendations to the Board for their programming preferences
  • The Board takes decision items to the Oasis members’ monthly meetings for member input
Effectiveness of Oasis

Anecdotal Evidence:

• The landlord wants to expand the program into other similar buildings:
  • The tenant turnover rate is lower than in other buildings in the same “enclave” with the same or different tenant profile
  • There are fewer complaints by tenants to the building management
  • Prospective tenants specify a preference for BG2 because of Oasis, hence, a waiting list for that building
  • Senior tenants in adjacent buildings have petitioned to have an Oasis
• Many tenants who joined at the beginning when in their 80s are still enthusiastic participants in their 90s
• Many tenants have now established their own ‘buddy systems’
Effectiveness of Oasis

Further Anecdotal Evidence:

• An Oasis program has been established in 2018 in two adjacent apartment buildings in central Toronto with support from:
  • The Toronto Community Foundation (www.tcf.ca)
  • OpenLab at the University Health Network (http://www.uhn.ca/corporate/AboutUHN/General_Services/OpenLab)
  • Toronto Central LHIN (http://www.torontocentrallhin.on.ca/)
Effectiveness of Oasis

Objective Evidence:

• In January 2014 the VON conducted assessments of Oasis members to determine eligibility for long-term care [LTC]:
  • Out of 57 members, 11 qualified for LTC but declined because of the supports (home care and Oasis) they were receiving at BG2
  • With LTC estimated at $130/day, operating savings to Ontario LTC in 2013 were $391,950 (less the costs of home care to individual Oasis members)
  • With the average cost of LTC now at $150-$160/day and the budget of Oasis remaining at $130,000, operating savings would be at least $472,250 (less individual home care costs) in 2017.
The Future of Oasis

Oasis is at a crossroads:

- The current core membership is changing:
  - The expectations of the long-time older members and newer younger members have to both be taken into account
  - Some new tenants have requested apartments in this building because they are in a very early stage of dementia and they want to stave off moving to LTC as long as possible or better still, not at all
  - Recent research grants will put Oasis in a spotlight, risking overuse of members as information sources
The Future of Oasis

There is demand for a similar program in other buildings owned by this landlord (and potentially other landlords as well):

• With expansion, the program is not sustainable under the current model:
  • At the least, it would require administrative staff and a new accountability reporting procedure based on the rigorous service contracts the Ontario government maintains with the not-for-profit health care and community services sector agencies and institutions
  • The Board has to implement safeguards to expansion so that Oasis does not lose sight of its original goals, primarily continuing with a substantive role for the members in determining their programs and services
The Future of Oasis

• In 2018, Oasis has formed a collaborative partnership with two faculty members of the Queen’s School of Rehabilitation Therapy, Dr Catherine Donnelly and Dr Vincent DePaul

• Together we have been awarded a Seniors Community Grant for $100K by the Ministry of Seniors Affairs, Ontario, a $500K grant from Health & Long Term Care, & a $600K grant from the Baycrest Research Foundation – the latter two in collaboration with Western and McMaster Universities.

• The goal of these projects over the next two years is to develop a plan for Oasis expansion to seven more sites, which will include:
  • Active and frequent consultation with current Oasis members
  • A shared care plan with community service agencies
  • More extensive volunteer recruitment
  • An implementation guide
  • A sustainability framework
  • Follow-up data collection on social connectedness and participation patterns
  • An evaluation of the effectiveness & cost efficiency of the program
Outstanding Issues

• Governance: multiple sites

• Financial basis for operating costs

• Maintain seniors’ decision-making role

• Clarifying expectations