

Executive Summary

Housing Toronto Seniors—Planning for the Future

The Mayor's Roundtable on Seniors, which was established in January 2004, identified housing as a key issue facing Toronto seniors. The Roundtable, chaired by Councillor Gay Cowbourne set up a reference group on seniors' housing which was chaired by Councillor Mike Feldman. Following an extensive review of the housing issues and challenges facing seniors, the Roundtable released a report, *Housing Toronto's Seniors—Planning for the Future*, on September 7, 2006.

The report takes a comprehensive view of the seniors' housing environment in Toronto and focuses on the critical connection between affordable and appropriate housing, community supports and adequate income as the key to help seniors age in place and to remain active, independent and engaged in their communities. The report includes recent demographic trends and examines a range of issues, programs and challenges facing seniors. It proposes six key directions and outlines forty-one recommendations that form the basis for a plan of action.

Key Directions

1. All three orders of government and community partners must work together to plan for the needs of the population as it ages, and act in ways that make best use of resources.
2. Community supports that help seniors to live independently should be as high a priority for governments as hospital/acute care.
3. The right combination of community support services, home care and supportive housing is an effective strategy to allow seniors to live independently. This requires increased investment, particularly as changes are made in how health care is planned and delivered with the set-up of Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs).
4. The shift to Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) is a significant development. The City of Toronto should monitor progress and provide input to the planning process, to make sure there is consistent access and quality of health care services across the City.
5. Seniors need more affordable, accessible housing. All three orders of government are responsible for providing it.
6. Effective strategies are needed to communicate with seniors about the supports and services that are available to them and that they are entitled to.

Summary of Recommendations

Affordable Housing

1. This report should be forwarded to the City's Affordable Housing Office to inform the development of a City of Toronto Affordable Housing Plan.

2. Additional federal and provincial funding is needed for affordable housing with project allocations from the City of Toronto specifically for seniors, in accordance with the findings of the Affordable Housing Plan's determination of need.
3. The City's Affordable Housing Office should direct to seniors a share of new affordable housing units, proportionate to seniors' share of needs.
4. New seniors' buildings should be located in communities that are accessible to public transit and accessible to shopping, amenities and community supports.

Rent Supplements/ Housing Allowance

5. The Provincial government should honour their election campaign commitment to provide funding to municipalities in the last year of their current mandate. The rent supplements should fully fund the difference between market rent and rent-geared-to-income (RGI) rent. Municipalities should be given sufficient flexibility in the program design to provide rent supplements to seniors where they live ("in situ").
6. The Province should provide long term funding for rent supplement and housing allowance programs, including those programs already operating and any new programs.
7. The Province should remove the provision in the Affordable Housing Program – Housing Allowance component that requires participants to move to a vacant unit and ensure future provisions permit "in situ" arrangements to support the ability of seniors to age in place.

Social Housing and Toronto Community Housing

8. The Province should upload funding responsibility for social housing programs to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.
9. As a step towards the above recommendation, the Province should review uploading of costs for social housing including operating subsidies, rent subsidies, housing allowances and capital repair as part of the recently announced "Provincial- Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review."
10. The Province should increase funding to make necessary capital repairs and associated maintenance of social housing stock across the City of Toronto and should provide sufficient funding to administer and maintain the social housing stock in the City of Toronto over the long term.
11. Federal funding for social housing should continue beyond the maturity of current social housing debentures and mortgages.
12. The City of Toronto should investigate continuum of care options and build on existing partnerships between social housing providers, including Toronto Community Housing, Toronto Homes for the Aged and others on "aging in place initiatives" to offer 24 hour on site supportive housing in social housing seniors' buildings, where such services do not already exist.

13. This report should be forwarded to Toronto Community Housing Corporation to inform the development of their Seniors Strategy. Toronto Community Housing Corporation should consider a focus on increasing the number of “seniors only” buildings as a way to support the specific needs of its seniors’ residents. New seniors’ buildings should be located in communities that are accessible to public transit and accessible to shopping, amenities and community supports.

Community, Homeless and Tenant Protection Supports

14. The City of Toronto should communicate to the province the need to reinstate rent control on vacant rental units under the new *Residential Tenancies Act* to protect new tenants from unreasonable rent increases.
15. The City of Toronto should communicate to the Province the need to permit rents to be automatically frozen when a private market rental unit has outstanding municipal work orders, without requiring tenants to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board under the new Residential Tenancies Act.
16. The Province should provide ongoing funding for municipal rent banks to ensure long term support for tenants who experience occasional difficulties in paying their rent.
17. The Federal government should provide ongoing funding and leadership on housing and homelessness programs through the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative.

Supportive Housing

18. The Province should increase resources for supportive housing, including provisions for older persons with serious mental illness and health addictions.
19. The City of Toronto should partner with the Province on flexible options to turn existing housing for seniors into supportive housing for seniors to allow aging in place. More affordable housing with supportive services is needed whether in new or existing buildings.

Retirement Homes

20. The Province should provide provincial regulations that would set standards of care for retirement homes and consult widely with seniors, agencies, and stakeholders including the City of Toronto, as part of its review on retirement homes.

Long Term Care

21. The Province should appoint an Ombudsperson for Long Term Care Home residents and people receiving home care services.
22. The City of Toronto should consult with seniors and make a submission to the provincial hearings on the upcoming *Long Term Care Homes Act*.

Community Supports

23. Local Health Integration Networks' (LHIN's) decision-making should be guided by a seniors/elder health strategy or framework.
24. All LHINs should create a Seniors Advisory Committee in order to build in the input of seniors to the planning for health care in Toronto.
25. The City of Toronto should monitor progress on implementation of LHINs in Toronto and provide input to the planning process to ensure consistent access and quality of health care services across the City of Toronto.
26. Under LHINs there should be increased investment in a comprehensive range of community support services, supportive housing and home care as a priority.
27. The Province should provide adequate funding for community transportation services delivered by the community-based sector and new partnerships should be explored between government, community and business to create more transportation options for seniors.
28. The Province should review and update the *Elderly Persons Centres Act* and increase funding.
29. The Province should explore an integrated model of community- based elder care such as the Coordinated, Accessible Community Healthcare for Elders (CACHET) model in Toronto, through the implementation of LHINs.

Home Care

30. The Province should provide adequate funding to the Community Care Access Centres and community support service agencies to help seniors to age in place.
31. The Province should broaden the definition of “activities of daily living” for Home Care for frail seniors to widen their eligibility for personal support.

Public Health Issues – Falls Prevention, Nutrition, Mental Health

32. The Province and the City Of Toronto, in partnership with other health care providers and community groups, should support policies and expand programs and services including educational activities for older adults to prevent fall-related injuries.
33. The Province, under the new Ministry of Health Promotion, should initiate nutrition screening for seniors to increase the awareness of nutrition-related problems of seniors living in the community that can be delivered at Recreation centres, clinics and other community health care facilities.

34. This report should be forwarded to mental health partners to inform their work with regard to provision of supports to seniors – Canadian Mental Health Association; Canadian Coalition for Seniors’ Mental Health; Ontario Persons with Mental Health Addictions Network of Ontario; Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs; Ontario Community Support Services Association; Ontario Association of Help Services; Community Outreach Programs in Addictions; Leap of Faith Together (LOFT) Community Services; ReConnect Mental Health Services (Etobicoke); Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors.

Income and Financial Supports

35. The Province should increase the maximum shelter component for social assistance recipients to the median market rent for each local housing market, based on annual surveys conducted by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
36. The Province should increase the basic needs component maximum for Ontario Works by 40% and thereafter adjust it annually to reflect the findings of nutritious food basket surveys conducted by local Boards of Health based on protocols established by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, as well as annual changes in Statistics Canada’s Low Income Cut-Offs and the Market Basket Measure.
37. The Province should increase access to the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) for persons aged 60-64 in need of financial assistance by recognizing age as a qualifying reason for ODSP and improve the provincial level of services to seniors, low income and working poor families including coverage of the cost of prescription drugs and medical items.
38. The federal government should review the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) levels to ensure that seniors receive income benefits that are at least consistent with the low-income cut off (LICO).
39. The City of Toronto should continue to advocate for the renewal of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program to provide funding for residential repairs and disability modifications which is crucial given the City's aging housing stock and population.

Communication and Partnerships

40. The City of Toronto should establish a working group, with representatives from the City of Toronto, the Ontario Seniors Secretariat and Service Canada, and key community partners to explore options that would streamline and coordinate communication efforts regarding the provision of services for seniors. Outreach and communication options could include a series of information fairs in different City of Toronto neighbourhoods, as well as the use of public venues such as libraries, schools, and recreation centres as a way to better reach seniors.
41. This report should be forwarded to Service Canada, Service Ontario, 211 Toronto and the City’s 3-1-1 Project Management Office to support efforts in providing information to seniors in the City of Toronto.