

Toronto Seniors Forum: Making Things Happen

Date: August 25, 2017

To: Community Development and Recreation

From: Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration

Wards: All

SUMMARY

To complement the City's commitment and recognition as an age-friendly City by the World Health Organization, this report recognizes the valuable contribution of the Toronto Seniors' Forum (TSF) in advocating for enhanced access to services for seniors, with a particular focus on vulnerable seniors.

This report also recognizes the TSF's integral role in engaging and consulting with seniors across the City to gather feedback on critical City priorities to ensure they reflect the needs of seniors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director of Social Development Finance and Administration recommends that:

1. City Council thank the Toronto Seniors' Forum members for their commitment and contribution to seniors issues for over the last 13 years.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact from the adoption of the recommendations included in this report. The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

On April 12, 2011, Council directed the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for seniors in consultation with other levels of government, school boards, relevant community organizations and individuals, businesses and academia that is adequately funded, financially feasible and able to be implemented. City Council also requested that the strategy include helping seniors remain in their own homes longer.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.CD2.4>

On May 12, 2011, Community Development and Recreation Committee received for information a staff report on the development progress and engagement plan that would be used to develop the Strategy.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.CD4.2>

On December 12, 2011, the Seniors Strategy Subcommittee of the Community Development and Recreation Committee received a staff presentation titled "Aging in a Liveable City" that included a work plan, time line and consultation plan for the Seniors Strategy.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.SS1.2>

On May 7, 8, 9, and 10, 2013, City Council endorsed the vision, service plan, guiding principles and accountability and monitoring framework of the Toronto Seniors Strategy. Council also endorsed the implementation of all short-term recommended actions, scheduled to begin in 2013 with regular updates on the status of the Strategy implementation plan.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD20.1>

On July 4, 5, 6 and 7, 2017, Council adopted the recommendation from a letter : *Planning an Age Friendly Toronto* by Toronto's Seniors Advocate, Councillor Matlow, that requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to include an item directly related to the Seniors Strategy in the Division's work program that focusses on ways for the City's Official Plan to reflect policies that support and complement the City's commitment to age-friendly principles consistent with Toronto's international recognition as a World Health Organization global age-friendly City when the next Official Plan process to review and renew begins.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.PG21.17>

COMMENTS

Since October 2004, the TSF was established with a mandate to "give a voice to seniors not often heard". Forum members work to ensure the City of Toronto meets its commitment to provide services equitably to all senior residents and fulfill its mandate as an age-friendly City for all. The TSF facilitates engagement between the City and older Torontonians and reflects the diverse geographic and socio-economic aspects of seniors in Toronto.

The Toronto Seniors Strategy (TSS) was developed in 2012-2013 with the support of two tables: (1) an internal staff steering committee of City program areas and agencies involved in managing and delivering services for older Torontonians; and (2) a senior's expert panel. Following the adoption of the Strategy, these tables were consolidated as the Seniors Accountability Table.

The Accountability Table is a multi-sectoral table of aging experts as well as senior management from participating City program areas. Its purpose is to work in partnership with the City to ensure the Toronto Seniors Strategy is fully implemented.

Representation includes community service providers, the TSF, academic institutions, hospitals, the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (TCLHIN), the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), the Toronto District Catholic School Board (TDCSB), community funders, seniors' advocacy organizations and others.

The TSF has played an integral role advising, consulting and engaging City divisions and City Councillors through SDFA staff. Over the years, the TSF has engaged and consulted with seniors across the City to gather feedback on critical City priorities to ensure they reflect the needs of seniors. The TSF has provided valuable input into the strategies including: Toronto Seniors Strategy; The City of Toronto Consultation on Long-Term Financial Plan-Investing in Toronto's Future (2017); Toronto Community Housing report, "Seniors Implementation Framework (2008-2010); Affordable Housing report, "Housing Opportunities Toronto" and Long Term Care and Housing Support report, "Age-Friendly Communities: A Toronto for All (2009); Mayor's Roundtable on Seniors report, "Housing Toronto Seniors" (2006); and Parks, Forestry and Recreation report, "Seniors Recreation Strategy" (2005).

In addition to advocacy, the TSF delivers the City's annual Seniors Month event which consist of launching of educational tool kits (Still Acting Out Guide and Advocacy Workbook), information fairs, All-Candidates and Mayoral Elections meetings, cultural celebrations and community consultations.

Currently, the TSF functions with support from a Community Development Officer in Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA) division. While the TSF does not have its own budget, meetings and activities are funded through SDFA and grants from other levels of government, such as New Horizons. The TSF shares an office with the Toronto Youth Cabinet on the 15th Floor of City Hall.

TSF Seniors Ambassadors to Toronto Seniors Strategy (TSS)

The TSS reflects four key service planning principles:

1. Older adults should have equitable access to services and programs
2. The contribution of older adults to the life and vibrancy of Toronto should be valued and respected
3. The social and physical connectedness of Toronto should be enriched by facilitating older adults' participation in city life
4. Older adults in Toronto should be supported so that they may enjoy a higher level of health and well-being.

The TSS Accountability Table currently has 2 representatives from the TSF. By accepting the recommendations of this report, the TSF will be recognized as the City's official seniors' advisory body which is in keeping with the second and third service planning principle of the TSS that is valuing and respecting the contribution of older adults. The TSF will continue to have 2 representative at the TSS Accountability Table to provide advice on the implementation of the strategy action plan. In addition, the TSF can add value to the work of the TSS Accountability Table by:

- collectively identifying items to be reviewed by the TSS Accountability Table where a senior perspective would be of interest
- provide Toronto's seniors with additional opportunities to be consulted on areas of interest and importance to them, with emphasis on the TSS
- bring new ideas from local Senior Groups and emerging issues
- inform and influence the City decisions to support services and improve social isolation to seniors and assist with addressing barriers to participation
- provide input to outreach and promotion strategies and initiatives at the City as appropriate.

TSF Seniors Ambassadors Membership Appointment Process:

An open call for new applications for (2018-2020 period) will be made available on the City of Toronto Public Appointments website and through SDFA website. Applicants will complete a short application identifying their interest and qualifications for the position, and the appointment process may include an interview. Appointments will be made by the Toronto Seniors' Forum in consultation with the designated staff.

Criteria for appointment will include:

- diversity of age, gender and cultural origin
- geographic diversity with representation across the City
- experience in community development
- aware of current Seniors' issues
- experience in advocacy
- some computer skills (email address)
- affiliated with local Seniors groups or organizations
- able to travel by TTC (including Wheel Trans) to locations across the city, or have a reliable mode of transportation
- demonstrated interest in City services and the needs of Toronto's diverse seniors
- ability to consult with seniors using a variety of channels
- strong listening and communication skills using and anti-oppression practices.

In consultation with the TSF, the Senior Ambassadors would consult with seniors on matters that are referred to them by the TSS Accountability Table, SDFA staff or on topics that they identify as being of interest. The TSF structure would be utilized as the primary consultation body with additional strategies to engage seniors across the City. After consultation TSF Senior Ambassadors will make periodic presentations to the Accountability Table on areas of interest to seniors.

Recognizing the TSF as the City's seniors' advisory body would bring an authentic seniors voice to City matters. The Toronto Seniors' Forum currently performs the function of the City's civic engagement group that consults with older adults across the city on City services, promoting open dialogue between organizations serving seniors and local government. It is recommended that this important work by TSF be officially recognized by the City.

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