

Supporting Older Adults to Age Well in Our Community

Ottawa Public Health Aging Well Plan
2020-2022

Acknowledgments

Ottawa Public Health honours the Algonquin Anishnaabeg people, on whose traditional unceded territory the City of Ottawa is located. OPH extends this respect to all First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples, their elders, their ancestors and their valuable past and present contributions to this land.

Santé publique Ottawa (SPO) aimerait commencer par rendre hommage aux Anishinabe, et souligner qu'Ottawa se situe sur leur territoire traditionnel non cédé. SPO tiens également à exprimer son respect à tous les peuples des Premières Nations, ainsi qu'aux peuples inuits et métis, à leurs aînés et à leurs ancêtres, pour la précieuse contribution qu'ils ont apportée et apportent encore à notre pays.

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A Message from our Medical Officer of Health

On behalf of Ottawa Public Health (OPH), I am pleased to present our Aging Well Plan, which outlines key areas to support older adults to age well in our community, on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabek people.

The Aging Well Plan aligns with OPH's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan: Protecting Our Community's Health and its strategic direction to influence the social and physical environments that support health and well-being. OPH is proud to work with community partners to build a stronger and more integrated health care and social service system that will improve care for older adults along the continuum of care need.

Ottawa's population continues to have a growing proportion of older adults. While older adults continue to enjoy life and contribute to society, the incidence of chronic disease, injury and disability becomes more prevalent with age. Frail individuals have a higher risk of poor health outcomes and an increased need for health care services.

OPH's Aging Well Plan builds on existing strategies and plans at the federal, provincial and local level, as well as on the existing and ongoing work of OPH to support healthy aging. In developing the plan, OPH engaged with partners and stakeholders, reviewed findings from local consultations with older adults, and analysed local health data to identify key healthy aging priorities. Using a population health approach to improve the health of Ottawa's older adult population and their caregivers, and to reduce health inequities among population groups, OPH identified four focus areas in the Aging Well Plan:

- 1) Build on existing efforts to make Ottawa an age-friendly and compassionate city;
- 2) Continue to engage older adults, ensuring their voices to be heard and valued;
- 3) Promote supports for caregivers of older adults and increase accessibility of the resources they need; and
- 4) Provide older adults with high-quality and evidence-based information, public health programs, and services that they need to maintain and improve their health.

We are excited about our plan to advance the health and well-being of older adults in Ottawa so that people in Ottawa can live longer, live healthier, and stay socially connected.

Dr. Vera Etches
Medical Officer of Health

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Executive Summary

Ottawa's older adult population is growing in size and as a proportion of the overall population. By 2035, over one third of Ottawa's population will be aged 55 and older, and 4% will be aged 85 and older. This population change is having a significant impact on the health care system. While older adults continue to enjoy life and contribute to society, the incidence of chronic disease, injury and disability becomes more prevalent with age. Promoting health earlier in the lifespan can delay and minimize the burdens of chronic disease and disabilities in later life and save health care costs. It can also contribute to prolonging quality of life for older adults and those who care for them.

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) envisions a city where all older adults and their caregivers are healthy, safe, valued and actively engaged in their well-being within a compassionate and inclusive environment.

OPH uses a population health approach; this means the health unit aims to improve the health of the entire older adult population and their caregivers, and to reduce health inequities among population groups. OPH delivers a wide range of actions that enable all residents and communities to improve their health. Interventions range from informing healthy public policies to working with our partners across sectors to support and promote health in our communities, at the health care system level through to individual-oriented education and support.

This document outlines OPH's Aging Well Plan for 2020-2022. In developing its Aging Well Plan, OPH relied heavily on the key themes that surfaced through community engagements in the development of the City of Ottawa's Older Adult Plan and Caregiver Strategy.

The four key strategic goals on which OPH will focus over the timeframe of this Plan are:

- Ottawa as an age-friendly and compassionate city.
- Older adults and caregivers are engaged, their voices are heard and valued.
- Caregivers of older adults are supported and have increased access to resources to care for themselves and others.
- Older adults receive high-quality information, public health programs and services that they need to maintain and improve their health.

Under each strategic goal, OPH has identified key focus areas, existing work of the organization, and areas for enhancement.

Key Concepts

Age-Friendly:

A city and/or community that enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age. A place that makes it easy for older people to stay connected to people that are important to them, helps people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages and provides appropriate support to those who can no longer look after themselves.¹

Aging-Well:

“An ongoing process of optimizing opportunities to maintain and enhance physical, social and mental health, as well as independence and quality of life over the life course”². Risk factors for chronic diseases begin earlier in life and their impact increases over the life course.³

Caregiver:

An unpaid relative or friend who cares for an older adult.⁴

Compassionate Community⁵:

A community that recognizes that cycles of sickness and health, birth and death, and love and loss occur every day within the orbits of its institutions and regular activities. Its residents recognize that care for one another at times of crisis and loss is not simply a task solely for health and social services but is everyone’s business.

Intermediaries:

Service providers and volunteers who work with older adults.

Older Adult:

Many health promotion interventions are designed to reach populations prior to the onset of age-related illnesses and diseases. Acknowledging that this age group spans three to four decades or more, the term older adult in this document refers to adults aged 55 and over.

Why an Aging Well Plan?

Ottawa's older adult population is growing. People are living longer.

In 2018, 28% of Ottawa residents were aged 55 and older and 2% were aged 85 and older⁶. By 2035, 33% of Ottawa's population will be aged 55 and older, an increase of 134,000 people, and 4% will be aged 85 and older⁷.

While older adults continue to enjoy life and contribute to society, the incidence of chronic disease, injury and disability becomes more prevalent with age. Injuries are the leading cause of emergency department visits in those aged 65 and older⁸ and ischemic heart disease, dementia and Alzheimer's, and lung cancer are the leading causes of death in those aged 65 and older.⁹

Frail individuals have a higher risk of poor health outcomes and an increased need for health care services.¹⁰ In Ottawa, approximately 19% of those aged 65 and older living in the community can be considered frail, with an additional 26% of those aged 65 to 74 being "pre-frail".¹¹ This highlights the importance of public health programs to support frail seniors in the community as well as to provide preventative interventions to those who are considered pre-frail.

With the increasing older adult population, there are increased pressures on the health care system. In Ontario, 10% of older adults who experience the most complex health issues account for 60% of annual health care spending. The healthiest 50% of older adults account for only 6% of overall annual spending on health care.¹² Older adults and their caregivers are having difficulty navigating the health care system and are waiting too long for care.¹³ Some older adult groups, such as women, LGBTQ2+, Indigenous, newcomers and older adults with disabilities, are more vulnerable to poor health outcomes.¹⁴ Different groups of vulnerable older adults are at higher risk of social isolation, which can have serious negative health effects and reduce quality of life.^{15 16}

Consideration is also needed for caregivers. At some point in their life, almost half of Canadians have provided some type of care to a family member or friend with a long-term health condition, disability or aging needs.¹⁷ An estimated 1 in 8 Canadian adults provided such care for a parent in the past year.¹⁸

In 2018, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) released the [Next Steps to Support Healthy Aging Ottawa](#) report, providing a snapshot of the health of Ottawa's older adult population. The report also highlighted key focus areas for consideration in the development of an Aging Well Plan to support existing local strategies. The focus areas in the Aging Well Plan are in line with OPH's core work to promote health, prevent or delay the onset of chronic diseases, injuries and disabilities, and focus on protective factors for healthy

aging that increase the likelihood of older adults living in security, good health and participating fully in society.

Emerging Trends

The OPH Aging Well Plan aligns with [OPH's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan](#), the City of Ottawa's [Older Adult Plan](#), the City of Ottawa's Strategic Initiative: Thriving Communities in the Term of Council Strategic Priorities (2019-2022), as well as other provincial and federal strategies. This Plan also contributes to work currently underway by partner organizations in the region towards [age-friendly](#) and compassionate communities.

To support aging well in Canada and in the world, the following strategies and action plans have been developed:

- The World Health Organization (WHO) released a [Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health \(2016-2030\)](#) and is in the process of developing the [Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020-2030](#). The former provides the vision and objectives for 14 years and an Action Plan outlining actions that need to be taken between 2016 – 2020. The latter is proposed as a global collaboration that will work to improve the lives of older adults, their families and the communities in which they live. The WHO is expected to launch the *Decade of Healthy Aging* in 2020 after completing stakeholder consultations and engaging people from around the world.
- The [National Seniors Strategy](#) was released in 2016. It addresses twelve specific policy issues identified under four overarching themes: 1) independent, productive and engaged citizens; 2) healthy and active lives; 3) care closer to home; and 4) support for caregivers.
- Ontario released the [Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors in 2018](#), which outlines a plan to help Ontario seniors remain independent, healthy and socially connected at all stages of their lives. Ontario is currently developing a new government-wide [Senior Strategy](#).
- At the municipal level, the City of Ottawa developed its own Older Adult Plan (OAP) to make Ottawa age-friendlier by improving infrastructure, programs, and services for older adults. The third [OAP \(2020-2022\)](#) puts forward 24 actions organized around 4 main strategic areas that are consistent with the provision of City services for older adults: Aging with Choice; Transportation and Mobility; Wellbeing; and Communication. The OAP supports continued engagement with community stakeholders in responding to the complex and diverse needs of vulnerable members of the community.
- Key organizations across the region recently collaborated in the development of an Eastern Ontario Caregiver Strategy. Key themes in this strategy include: 1)

Reworking the system to build a system of care and support; 2) Providing education and training, continuous learning and outreach to support better practices and empower caregivers; 3) Promoting caregiver health and wellness by enabling caregivers to be resilient and engaged; and 4) Strengthening circles of support and community for caregivers by enabling and strengthening informal and formal supports.

What the Community Said

The focus of OPH's Aging Well Plan was informed by the key themes that emerged through a variety of engagement efforts.

In developing its [Older Adult Plan 2020-2022](#), the City of Ottawa consulted with 1,700 people to determine the needs and priorities of older adults in Ottawa. This included various subgroups of older adults, including francophone, rural, ethnocultural, isolated, LGBTQ2+, Indigenous Peoples and other older adults.

Key themes that emerged, relevant to the OPH mandate, include:

- aging well;
- accessible information; and
- respect and social inclusion.

Older adults are interested in developing and maintaining optimal physical, mental and social well-being. They would like preventative health programs for all segments of the aging population, including rural and non-English speaking older adults. They identified a need for services and education on physical activity, brain health and increased support for caregivers. Older adults want better access to information that is relevant and important to them. They want information on programs and services, available in multiple languages and through multiple channels, including through community organizations. Finally, older adults want to age without experiencing ageism and to enjoy services that meet their unique needs. They identified a need for support and services to be available to more disadvantaged older adults and to be tailored and available to the diverse group of older adults.

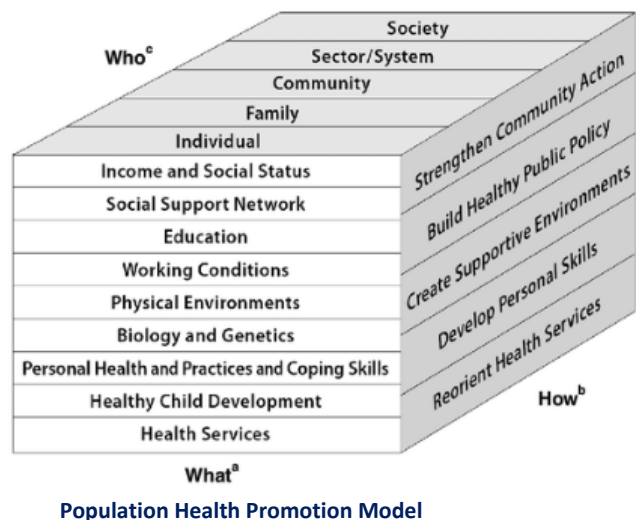
In early 2019, consultations with caregivers were undertaken as part of the development of an Eastern Ontario Caregiver Strategy. The consultations identified a need to transform the overall system to improve coordination between healthcare, social and community services. Caregivers expressed a need for more public awareness and systemic acknowledgement of the role informal caregivers play and their impact on people's lives. A desire was expressed for more education and training as well as tools and services that support the health and well-being of caregivers. The consultations

also identified a need for a stronger circle of support around caregivers to ensure they have the resources they need, when they need them.

OPH has consulted with various key partners throughout the development of the Aging Well Plan. Partners acknowledged that the four areas of focus identified in the Aging Well Plan reflect the needs of the community, are important and worth the public health investment. Partners also expressed that they view public health as a connector organization. Working closely with local organizations, OPH is in a unique position to bring a multisectoral and population health lens to the work being done locally.

Public Health’s Role

OPH uses a population health approach¹⁹; this means the health unit aims to improve the health of the entire older adult population and their caregivers, and to reduce health inequities among population groups. OPH works with community partners and [intermediaries](#) to integrate and deliver a wide range of interventions that enable all residents and communities to improve their health.



OPH uses targeted interventions to reduce inequities among older adult groups that are at greater risk for poor health outcomes. The health unit also considers societal factors that influence health and the differences in health among and between groups.

The key focus areas in the Aging Well Plan are in line with core strategies for health promotion action, as per the [Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion](#). OPH works towards creating supportive environments and building healthy public policy that make healthier options more available across the entire lifespan²⁰. The health unit strives to strengthen community action by working collaboratively with partners to build on existing work underway in the community. OPH encourages and facilitates the development of personal skills by providing information and education to older adults and caregivers so that they can develop the skills they need to engage in healthy behaviours. The health unit also works with partners to reorient health care services and facilitate access to health care for individuals in need of support when they need it.

The delivery of OPH programs and services is based on the best available information, including population health data, research evidence and local context.

Our Vision

OPH envisions a city where all older adults and their caregivers are healthy, safe, valued and actively engaged in their well-being within a compassionate and inclusive environment.

Focus Areas: Aging Well Plan 2020-2022

OPH’s Aging Well Plan provides strategic direction for public health programs and services for older adults in Ottawa. The target population for this Plan includes both older adults aged 55 years or older, and their caregivers who live in Ottawa.

Four focus areas have been identified for 2020-2022 that outline what role OPH expects to play in contributing to healthy aging in Ottawa, in line with the Population Health Promotion Model interventions. (See Figure 1)

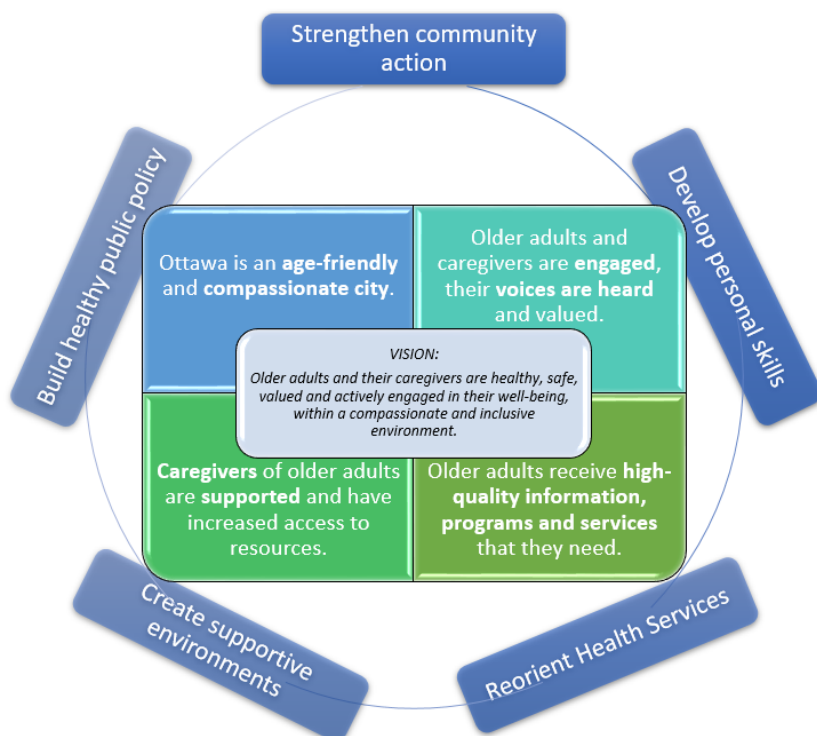


Figure 1 Aging Well Plan Focus Areas and Population Health Promotion Interventions

Each focus areas is supported by a number of key actions, including core work in which OPH is currently engaged, as well as new initiatives and areas for enhancement over the timeframe of this Plan.

Focus Area 1: Ottawa as an [age-friendly](#) and compassionate city.

The built and social environment has the potential to enable older people to live healthier lives, by making the healthy choice the easier choice. OPH will continue to collaborate with partners to foster and strengthen cross-sector partnerships to create [age-friendly](#) environments and a [compassionate community](#). Striving for a city where policies, services and structures are designed to help older adults live safely, enjoy good health, stay involved and feel supported during grief, serious illness and end of life.

Key Actions

Core Work

- Collaborate with partners to implement actions from the City of Ottawa [Older Adult](#) Plan.
- Provide education to build [intermediaries'](#) capacity to prevent falls in [older adults](#).
- Provide an [age-friendly](#) lens to policies, services and structures that impact the physical and social environments of [older adults](#).

Areas for enhancement

- Improve the coordination, public awareness and promotion of Advanced Care Planning with community partners.
- Increase awareness and provide education to target societal attitudes and beliefs behind ageism.
- Collect and use socio-demographic data to inform healthy public policies and to reduce health inequities.

Focus Area 2: Older adults and caregivers are engaged, their voices are heard and valued.

OPH will engage older adults in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of programs and policies that affect their health. The health unit will seek to better understand their interests, needs and issues as these relate to their overall health and wellbeing, and work towards a community in which older adults and their caregivers are respected, included and empowered.

Key Actions

Core work

- Develop programs, services and interventions based on client feedback.
- Ongoing surveillance and assessment of older adult population data.

Areas for enhancement

- Enhance processes to engage older adults in the planning of programs and services, including more disadvantaged populations.

Focus Area 3: Caregivers of older adults are supported and have increased access to resources to care for themselves and others.

OPH recognizes that the health system can be difficult to navigate and will apply a ‘caregiver’ lens to information and resources developed by OPH. The health unit will collaborate with partners to increase coordination and integration of services for caregivers and to influence health care and social service systems.

Key Actions

Core Work

- Work with partners to increase awareness of programs and services for caregivers offered in the community.
- Promote online resources, such the [Mental Health Caregiver Guide](#), with links to services and supports for caregivers.

Areas for enhancement

- Work with partners to enhance services for caregivers of older adults so that they have access to supports and resources such as:
 - Phone lines and online support, including health system navigation and information on community services.
 - Social media to engage caregivers and direct them to local resources and health information.
- Collaborate with community partners on the Eastern Ontario Caregiver Strategy to address the challenges faced by caregivers in our region.
- Collaborate with community partners within the Ontario Health Teams to increase coordination and integration of services for caregivers.

Focus Area 4: Older adults receive high-quality, evidence-based information, programs and services that they need to maintain and improve their health.

OPH will promote health and wellbeing among older adults and caregivers in the community. We will use a client-centred approach, recognizing the diverse needs of older adults and addressing health equity. We will increase access to information on community supports and services for older adults. We will collaborate with partners and engage older adults to plan and implement programs and services that address older adults’ health and well-being.

Key Actions

Core Work

- Educate and raise awareness through various channels on key healthy aging topics such as brain health, fall prevention, healthy eating, active living, mental health, substance use and sexual health.
- Provide dental and immunization services.

- Increase awareness of programs and services for older adults through online, printed and in-person communications.
- Collaborate with community partners to increase coordination and integration of services.

Areas for enhancement

- Collaborate with the City's Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services department to increase access to Better Strength Better Balance fall prevention program for older adults.
- Increase awareness of immunizations recommended for older adults and increase access to influenza immunization.
- Increase access to dental services for older adults.
- Deliver health education to older adults on cannabis use, brain health and mental health.
- Enhance telephone and online supports for older adults and their caregivers, providing assistance with health system navigation, information on community services and health information.
- Collaborate with community partners within the Ontario Health Teams to increase coordination and integration of services for older adults.
- Collect and use socio-demographic data to identify and monitor gaps in access to services, modify services to address unique population needs and provide more tailored and culturally sensitive care to clients.

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