

## **Voices of seniors: A report on how the City and County of Peterborough can create a more senior-friendly community.**

(for the complete report go to our website: [www.pspc.on.ca](http://www.pspc.on.ca))

### **Partners in the project:**



### **Background:**

This is the third report on seniors completed for the Peterborough community by the Peterborough Social Planning Council since 2008. This report “Voices of Seniors” was commissioned to discover what kind of issues seniors face in the Peterborough community so that policy and decision-makers can best plan for an aging community. The survey tool was developed by a committee of the Seniors’ Planning Table. It was piloted through Activity Haven. The survey was circulated and promoted widely.

There were 571 responses. Respondents chose not to answer some of the questions. As a result, the total number of responses for each question is noted in the results. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents were from the City, 54% from the County and 9% from other communities.

The results of the study will be discussed at the upcoming Seniors Summit sponsored by the Seniors’ Planning Table at Trent University on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

**What we found:**

Of those responding that they received services, the following is a breakdown of the types of services that were being provided to the respondents:

	Total	City	County
Assistance with outdoor home maintenance	34%	26%	43%
Assistance with housekeeping	44%	47%	50%
Assistance in meal preparation and/ or grocery shopping	26%	37%	23%
Assistance to get to appointments/ transportation	34%	37%	36%
Assistance with shopping, banking or other errands	26%	26%	27%
Assistance with bathing and dressing	30%	42%	27%
Assistance with medical care	21%	26%	16%
Total responses:	73	19	44

Overall, how satisfied are you with the (external home care) services with which you are being provided?

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Don't know	Total Responses
26 (22%)	35 (29%)	15 (13%)	*8 (7%)	*35 (29%)	119

Have you experienced difficulties in accessing care/support to live independently?

Yes	14%	43
No	86%	274
Total responses:		317

If participants answered yes, they were asked what is preventing them from accessing these services?

I do not know who to contact.	25%
I do not know what kinds of home support services are available.	29%
I do not think I could afford the cost of such assistance.	33%
I am uncomfortable with professional staff.	16%
I do not like to ask for assistance.	22%
I find it embarrassing or hard to ask for assistance.	17%
Other (please specify):	44%
Total: 63 respondents	

The research draws attention to the fact that there is a lack of affordable and accessible public care services for seniors in Peterborough. The survey conducted for this project showed, in particular, the need for enhanced public transportation, health care, nursing homes, and various types of programs for social participation that are available to all seniors, no matter what their financial situation or where they live.

These gaps in public support directly lead us to see another issue, the high dependency of care for aging citizens on their close relationships with family members and friends, which needs to be fostered and supplemented. These are the challenges Peterborough faces if it wants to be a more senior-friendly community. Enhancing easy access to public care services is the key in order to foster healthy aging. Our report evaluates this range of services and concludes that enhanced access is required to meet the challenge presented by Peterborough’s aging population and their family caregivers.

**Recommendations from the survey and the consultation process:**

1. **Improve Public Bus Service:** this is key to increase independence in the county because there is no public bus system there, except the Go Bus. Creating more options for public transportation can enhance the mobility of seniors and reduce the burden on their family and friends, especially those living in the county. Further, as the population in both the county and city continues to age, public transportation will be increasingly important for those who will no longer be able to drive or have access to automobile support.

2. **Increase Health Care Services to Support Seniors to Remain at Home and Improve Marketing of the Services:** this is an especially severe issue for those seniors living in the county who need medical care from professionals if they are to live longer at home. By having more support from outside their personal circle of friends and family, seniors can continue living at home and enjoy a better quality of life in their home community. Further, 54% of respondents who say they have difficulty accessing the services they need, cite lack of information: either they don't know who to contact, or they don't know what kinds of support are available, or whether they might be eligible for it.
3. **Develop more Long-term Care Accommodation:** seniors, especially those from the county, find it difficult to gain placement in long-term care facilities due to long waiting lists.
4. **Provide more Financial Aid:** cost is always a major problem for seniors and their family's ability to access "public" care services. Either the cost of these services should be reduced or additional financial supports should be provided.
5. **Rethink Neighborhood Planning:** Planning for the future should include the development of neighborhood hubs that will provide services such as health and social supports, access to food shopping and places to allow for more social engagement. More emphasis should be placed on neighborhoods that support aging in place.
6. **Increase Basic Home Care Services such as Housekeeping, Home Maintenance and Personal Support:** assistance in shopping, and other small errands is necessary. The survey showed that 79% of those respondents who were already receiving services, were receiving help with either outdoor home maintenance or housekeeping. These are exactly the two types of home care provided by the Veterans Independence Program (since 1981) which are most often not easily accessible by a wider aging and frailer community of seniors. Yet, as our survey shows, they are critical to 'aging in place'. Every frail senior should be treated as a VIP!

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