

# BUILDING AN AGE FRIENDLY MISSISSAUGA

A Report from the  
Community Knowledge Forum  
June 07, 2011



Community Foundation of Mississauga  
1100 Central Parkway West, Unit 15, Lower Level, Mississauga, ON L5C 4E5  
p: 905-897-8880 f: 905-897-7509  
e: [emackenzie@CFofM.org](mailto:emackenzie@CFofM.org) w: [www.CFofM.org](http://www.CFofM.org)  
Registered charitable number: 892395112 RR0001

## Overview of the Foundation

The Community Foundation of Mississauga is part of one of the fastest growing charitable movements in Canada. The Foundation is a registered charitable public foundation that was launched in spring 2001. Since that time, it has grown rapidly and has over \$17 million in endowed assets (at June 2011) and cumulative grants of over \$3 million. Community foundations across Canada share three fundamental roles:

**One: endowment building**/personalized service. The Foundation builds endowed and other funds to provide lasting support for local priorities. It makes giving easy and effective, accepting a wide variety of gifts and providing donors with a number of charitable options. Donors can contribute cash, stocks, property and other assets. Donors may establish a fund in their name or in the name of a loved one. In most cases, a gift qualifies for maximum tax advantage under federal law.

**Two: local grantmaking** expertise. The Foundation's staff and volunteers have an in-depth understanding of the issues, opportunities, and resources that shape our community. It evaluates all aspects of community well being — including social services, education, the environment, health care, youth, seniors and the arts and make grants to support the broadest range of community needs. It can help donors learn more about local organizations and programs that make a difference in areas they care about most.

**Three: community leadership.** Because community foundations support all kinds of charities, it is well positioned to bring people and organizations together, convening diverse voices to address local issues and opportunities. The Foundation's business is building community.

## Capturing Community Knowledge

Bridging the needs of the community with philanthropy is at the heart of the Community Foundation of Mississauga. Part of that means building a base of knowledge about the issues affecting the

community, bringing together the people who live and work in the city to hear what they have to say, connecting organizations serving the community, sharing information, identifying gaps and opportunities and considering innovative ideas can be part of the solution to addressing community needs. Collaborating is one of the ways a community foundation stays connected to the purpose we serve. It helps keep vital knowledge and communication flowing.

## **Trends and Statistics**

Along with the rest of Canada, Mississauga's population is aging. Within two decades this city will undergo an unparalleled shift in demographics. For the first time in history, a full 38 percent of Mississauga's total population will be made up of adults over the age of 55, which is the equivalent of approximately 300,000 people. To prepare for this rapidly approaching change, many cities are exploring the concept of "age friendly" initiatives.

An "age friendly" city has been described as having environments, policies, structures and services which enhance the aging process by addressing the specific needs of older people. In other words, if people of all ages are considered when services are provided, spaces are designed and social programs are delivered, it helps foster healthy living and vibrant communities.

## **Sharing Knowledge and Expertise**

The Community Foundation of Mississauga conducted interviews with members of the community from March to May of 2011 in preparation for a three hour open-sourced forum held on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011. We were fortunate to hear from knowledgeable service providers, interest groups, residents and business owners, each speaking from a specific perspective related to older adults and aging.

**Melanie Cramp**, owner of Seniority Transitions and **Murray Etherington**, Canadian Association of Retired Persons, Mississauga Chapter Chair, provided insight into the transition from middle age to retirement, as well as the effects ageism has on older adults and the communities they live in. **Fiona Thivierge**, Peel Regional Police officer, **Karen Sibal** and **Nellie Sheppard** from the Peel Elder Abuse Prevention Network shared useful information on elder abuse awareness and prevention. **Jen Lalonde**, Volunteer Coordinator from Volunteer MBC, **Linda Wang**, HOST Program Coordinator from the Peel Multicultural Council and **Baldev Mutta**, Chief Executive Officer of Punjabi Community Health Services addressed many issues surrounding social inclusion as well as the

challenges faced by newly immigrated older adults. **Sue Hedjedahl** from Square One Older Adult Centre and **Joanne Shorey** from Peel Senior Link told the group about the importance and challenges of providing programs and services for older adults. We also heard from the City of Mississauga's **Jayne Culbert** who explained initiatives being undertaken in the City's Older Adult Plan. Several residents of Mississauga provided generous input to the session, sharing experiences of living as older adults in the city. The Community Foundation of Mississauga is grateful for the contribution of these participants. Their valuable input is the basis of this report.

## **Key Findings**

### **Communication**

This session highlighted how open dialogues and clear communication might help to dispel many of the misconceptions which exist around aging. Being well prepared might be made easier if people understand conditions which can arise as they age and the options available for how to deal with them. For example, space in a long term care or retirement facility can take up to five years to materialize and often responsibility for an older adult's care falls upon their immediate family. Additionally, it is possible that for many people government provisions will not meet their needs in their later years. What became clear is it may be easier for families to make choices about how to care for older adults if they have a single point of contact to obtain information and help with how to make realistic financial assessments around living arrangements and long term care.

### **Social Inclusion and Staying Connected**

The discussion illuminated how for many older adults, computer technology remains a mystery. Obtaining information from the internet or using a computer for tasks such as banking or registering for services and programs might prove difficult for many older adults who are not familiar with this type of technology. It was suggested that creating relationships by linking older adults with community hubs such as libraries and/or schools with volunteer students who assist with computer training could help to bridge the gap and has the added benefit of establishing a community within which otherwise isolated older adults can be monitored for signs of deteriorating physical or mental health.

Negative effects of seclusion and age based prejudice on older adults were also discussed during the forum. The idea that people over a certain age are incompetent or less deserving of opportunity might

propel some older adults into a negative spiral of isolation and inactivity, sometimes preventing their connection with organizations or people who might benefit from their talent and experience. It could also impact their ability to find paid employment to supplement their living expenses. There was general agreement that support for groups and organizations which link older adults to volunteer, mentorship and employment opportunities may provide pathways to social participation for those who otherwise feel isolated or forgotten. It was suggested that educating and informing professionals about opportunities to engage older adults in the community might help to bridge the gap. Doctors, physiotherapists, denturists and hearing aid specialists who are in regular contact with older adults may be a source for those wishing to connect to their community.

### **Housing and Transportation**

An age conscious approach to social planning issues can be essential to a healthy community. The challenges some older adults face in activities of daily living were uncovered when the topics of housing and transportation were discussed. For example, getting into a bathtub without physical support may be difficult for some older adults, who would find it much easier to use a walk-in shower stall. We were told of the barriers to public transportation which exist for those who may be unable to withstand long periods of standing waiting for buses, or lengthy distances between transit stops. Many older adults indicated the costs of public transportation and privately run transportation services are unaffordable for those on fixed incomes. The shared opinion of the group was an “age friendly” city provides residents with access to and control of their environments, allowing them to feel confident as they navigate city streets and the buildings they live in. It became clear, input from older adults in social planning might help alleviate some of the difficulties they face.

### **Elder Abuse**

Those who work in the areas of abuse prevention and awareness reported financial abuse is the most common form of exploitation effecting older adults in our community. According to their experience, if an older adult is living alone, in poor health or suffering diminished physical or mental capacity they are left particularly vulnerable to abuse. There appears to be a need for education and knowledge around such issues as potential complicity of appointed legal guardians, on line/mail scams and what exactly constitutes abuse.

### **Multiculturalism**

It was recommended that assistance and information produced in multiple languages, protective laws

involvement, awareness campaigns as well as funding for the expansion of programs and services were leading themes in the safeguarding of older adult's personal security.

Multiculturalism and integration were identified as fundamental to an "age friendly" Mississauga. Population statistics show 41.8 percent of residents in Mississauga do not speak French or English as their first language. Newly immigrated older adults who face particular challenges discussed the language barriers which make navigating the city, both physically and socially, difficult for them.

Accessible spaces where multicultural older adults can socialize while they adjust to the community were revealed as an effective way to help people get established in Mississauga. The need for funding for older adult centres and instructional language programs was made known. It was reported that these programs have proven to greatly enhance the engagement of newly immigrated older adults into the community.

## **Conclusion**

The common ground found at this forum revealed the benefits of living in a society which is inclusive of everyone, regardless of age. There are many issues to respond to when exploring what makes an "age friendly" city, not all of which were addressed at this meeting. However, this initiative was one step in the direction of creating a community where residents of all ages can participate in all that Mississauga has to offer.

## **References**

World Health Organization, Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide, 2007. Accessed at [http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf)

City of Mississauga. 2005 Growth Forecasts & City of Mississauga 2003 Growth Forecasts