

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Date: August 25, 2022

Re: 2023 - 2027 York Region Plan for Seniors Update

This memorandum provides an update on the activities to refresh the [2016 York Region Seniors Strategy](#) since the [June 2021](#) update, and next steps in the process.

The 2023 - 2027 York Region Plan for Seniors (the Plan) will be provided to Regional Council in spring 2023 for consideration. The June 2021 update noted the Plan would be completed for June 2022, however, additional engagements, research synthesis and analysis are needed to inform priority actions, outputs and outcomes. Further, the revised timing will align the Plan with the next Council term.

York Region's senior population continues to be the fastest growing age group

According to the Statistics Canada 2021 Census, for the first time the number of York Region residents aged 65+ exceeded the number of children younger than 15 years of age. By 2051, close to one in four (23%) York Region residents will be over age 65. The most significant growth is expected among aged 75 and older. In 2016 these older seniors accounted for 38% of the total seniors' population and this is expected increase to 62% by 2051.

With increasing numbers and increasing longevity, an aging population will require more senior-friendly supports and services. The [November 2020](#) Forecast for Long-Term Care and Seniors' Housing Implications report highlights the implications of this growth and the urgent need for more long-term care beds and senior friendly housing options. While many seniors are able to remain healthy, active and connected to their communities, there are those who may need help to do so and/or require higher levels of care and supportive care settings, particularly those over the age of 75. The growing needs of seniors, and those who partner in their care, are impacting Regional programs and services including residential long-term care, community supports, affordable housing, paramedic services and transportation.

The 2016 York Region Seniors Strategy defined the Region's role in serving seniors

In [November 2016](#), Regional Council approved the [York Region Seniors Strategy](#) (the 2016 Strategy) to guide collaborative corporate planning activities and better integrate programs and services under the direct control of York Region. In preparing for the growing and aging York Region population, the 2016 Strategy's vision aimed to support seniors to age in place, that is to live in the home or community of their choice for as long as they are able.

The 2016 Strategy positioned the Region to take action where it has responsibility, advocate and influence decision-making where others have a role to play and bring together key players across the sector to address issues related to the needs of seniors.

Integrated project teams have made progress implementing each of the four Result Areas of the 2016 Strategy over the past five years

Progress reports were provided to Council in [2018](#) and [2019](#). The 2020 and 2021 progress reports were not submitted as the Seniors Strategy Team was redeployed starting March 2020 to support York Region's long-term care homes in response to COVID-19. Over this time advancements were made on advocacy efforts to support long-term care, including the [York Region Submission to the Ontario Long Term Care COVID-19 Commission](#) in January 2021.

Among many accomplishments, a key highlight of the 2016 Strategy is the Region's work with Findhelp Information Services to create one source of information for human services in York Region. Our community-based data work laid the foundation for the Eastern York Region North Durham Ontario Health Team (one of three Ontario Health Teams in York Region), working in partnership with York Region and other community partners, to create a centralized [Health and Community Support Directory](#) that includes a section dedicated to services for older adults. This Directory has in turn laid the groundwork for developing a 24/7 navigation model to eventually be implemented by all Ontario Health Teams across the Province. This project supports and complements the work of Access York, the Region's corporate contact centre and primary information provider.

To help staff and community partners understand York Region seniors better, a toolkit has been developed to support service planning and will be shared in fall 2022 with service planners

Through a co-designed development process that included York Region staff and input from community partners, the Region developed seven target groups of York Region seniors based on common characteristics of demographics, psychographics, and behaviours. The target groups also highlighted key vulnerabilities including social isolation, financial considerations, mental health, chronic disease, physical limitations, and digital literacy. A toolkit is being developed for staff and contracted community partners that provides data and insights to help service planners better support seniors and their corresponding needs for programs and services to age in place. This data will increase engagement with senior residents and support a

more personalized approach to service and delivery planning. This toolkit will be shared with service planners in fall 2022.

Further details on actions, advocacy and related key accomplishments from the original 2016 Strategy are included in Attachment 1.

Updating the 2016 Strategy ensures directions reflect the current and future needs of seniors

As identified in the September 2019 progress report and the June 2021 memo to Council, the update to the 2016 Strategy is being done to review the current direction, identify what has changed, and where new actions are needed to support seniors to age in place in York Region. In addition, many changes have occurred since 2016, such as the establishment of Ontario Health Teams and the onset of the global pandemic.

COVID-19 has had, and will continue to have, implications for how we support seniors to age safely in our communities. Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic will be an overarching consideration in the Plan, including:

- The need for equity-based approaches in the design of programs for those experiencing language barriers, low-income, and other potential vulnerabilities
- The important role technology has played and will continue to play in keeping seniors connected and supported, including the need to address gaps in access to technology
- The long-standing concerns of social isolation and caregiver distress which have become more pronounced during the pandemic

Since June 2021, several initiatives have been undertaken to inform development of the 2023 - 2027 York Region Plan for Seniors Update

Since June 2021, staff have reviewed progress on actions and advocacy efforts in the 2016 Strategy to determine which were addressed and which should continue under the 2023 – 2027 York Region Plan for Seniors. Additional research, newly available data, and findings from a robust engagement process were reviewed to validate proposed directions and identify priorities and actions the Region could take to support seniors to age in place for the new 2023 - 2027 York Region Plan for Seniors.

From mid-November 2021 to February 2022, staff engaged with over 150 individuals including York Region staff, members of Regional Council, community stakeholders, seniors and caregivers. Engagement sessions included:

- Nine virtual workshops with staff, community organizations, the three York Region Ontario Health Teams, and caregivers and residents at the Region's two long-term care Homes

- Two virtual open houses for seniors and caregivers, with 35 participants
- Other engagements included the Newmarket Maple Leaf Women’s PROBUS (PROfessional BUSiness) Club in October 2021, the Committee for an Age-Friendly Markham, and a session with seniors through a York Regional Police event in May 2022

An online survey was conducted to seek feedback from pre-seniors, seniors and caregivers on issues like health status, support needs, information needs and pandemic impacts. A total of 1,315 completed responses were received.

Results from the survey and engagements will be posted this fall in a “What You Said” report on the [Renewing Our Plan for Seniors](#) webpage.

Proposed directions for the Plan include the need for continued prioritization of three Result Areas from the 2016 Strategy and addition of a new Result Area

Similar to the 2016 Strategy, the intended approach for the update is to structure the Plan as follows:

- Guiding Principles: Applying a set of guiding principles will help in achieving the Region’s roles and making consistent program and services decisions. Principles include; Evidence-Based Decision-Making, Partnerships, Alignments and Collaboration, Prevention and Promotion, and Education. The guiding principle of Fiscal Sustainability and Balance will be broadened to include equity to better align with corporate plans
- Result Areas: These are the key areas where the Region has a role to play in improving how seniors are served
- Focus of Each Result Area: A specific theme was chosen to focus on within each Result Area to develop tangible actions over the next four years
- Actions and Advocacy: For each Result Area, actions and advocacy efforts will be developed that will lead towards improvements in each Result Area and will be included in a four-year workplan

Based on the research and engagement undertaken so far, three of the 2016 Strategy’s four Result Areas remain as priorities:

- Keeping Seniors Healthier, Longer
- Supporting Age Friendly, Complete Communities
- Connecting Seniors and Caregivers to the Right Programs and Services at the Right Time

The fourth Result Area in the original Strategy – Balancing the Needs of Seniors with All Residents – will not continue in the new Plan as the actions related to eligibility services based on income and assets are complete. Any outstanding actions will be addressed under one of the other Result Areas and have been identified in Attachment 1. Also, the new Plan will incorporate equity-based approaches in the design of programs for residents, including seniors experiencing language barriers, low-income, and other potential vulnerabilities.

A new Result Area – Improving the Coordination, Organization and Planning of Services for Seniors – has been added that is focused on the need for coordination, organization and planning for seniors’ services, including, importantly, areas beyond Regional programs and services. A consistent theme arising from the engagement work with stakeholders, seniors and caregivers and with Council in [January 2021](#), as part of discussing longstanding and significant issues in the long-term care sector, was that the Region can take a leadership role in urging the Province and others to build a more coordinated and integrated continuum of care for our aging population.

Table 1 summarizes the proposed directions for the 2023 - 2027 York Region Plan for Seniors.

Table 1
Proposed Directions for the 2023 - 2027 York Region Plan for Seniors

| Result Area | Result Area Focus |
|---|--|
| Keeping Seniors Healthier, Longer | To provide seniors information to help them improve physical activity and social connectedness and slow decline or prevent chronic disease |
| Supporting Seniors to Live in Age-Friendly Complete Communities | To better integrate services for seniors |
| Connecting Seniors and Caregivers to the Right Programs and Services at the Right Time | To improve system navigation for seniors |
| Improving the Coordination, Organization and Planning of Services for Seniors (new) | To better collaborate on and support strategic improvements for the overall system supporting seniors |

Current research from Queen’s University, “[Ageing Well](#)”, and the National Institute on Ageing, “[Enabling the Future Provision of Long-Term Care in Canada](#)”, supports feedback from the consultations reaffirming that people want to live in their current home or community as long as possible and want to be able to easily access the right supports at the right time to let them do that. The Plan seeks to address the gaps, challenges, and opportunities that seniors and

caregivers highlighted in accessing services by addressing the need for better communication, design and integration of services and navigation supports.

The proposed directions and actions will be developed over the next six months through additional engagements and consolidation of findings with current and emerging research

Over the next few months, staff will conduct additional engagements with seniors not reached in the initial consultations due to pandemic related restrictions (no in-person meetings). While virtual outreach captured responses from a broad range of seniors and caregivers, important perspectives from those without internet, electronic devices or technology 'know-how' are yet to be incorporated. Staff will also engage with additional equity deserving groups, such as newcomers who are seniors.

In addition, staff will assess and incorporate any new or emerging opportunities arising from the recent Provincial election and the upcoming 2022 municipal elections. For example, on August 9, 2022, the Provincial government announced in its [throne speech](#) a commitment to expand the scopes of practice for community paramedicine programs to allow paramedics to care for people at home, rather than in hospital or long-term care. In addition, on August 18, 2022, the Province announced its [Plan to Stay Open: Health System Stability and Recovery](#), a five-point plan to provide the best care possible to patients and residents which includes plans to expand other innovative models of care. Staff will also ensure alignment with directions outlined in recently approved corporate plans, including the [2022 Transportation Master Plan](#), the [Paramedic Services Master Plan 2021-2031](#), and the [2022 Proposed York Region Official Plan](#).

Through further consultations and consolidation of findings with current and emerging research, actions will be developed for each Result Area, as well as a draft four-year workplan.

Combined, these efforts will support further refinement of the 2023 - 2027 York Region Plan for Seniors with development of clear implementation plans and timelines, budget considerations, and indicators identified. The Plan will be presented to Council in spring 2023 for approval. Annual progress reports will be provided to Council on the Plan beginning in Q4 2024.

Collaborative and innovative ways of thinking will be key to keeping seniors safe and supported as they age

The 2023 - 2027 York Region Plan for Seniors remains committed to seniors in York Region and those that partner in their care. To support their growing and changing needs the Region looks forward to ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders and continued opportunities to innovate, collaborate and advocate with community partners and other levels of government towards a more coordinated and integrated continuum of care for our aging population.



Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Services



Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments (1)
eDOCS# 13991158