

Mission: To facilitate healthy aging by providing leadership and encouraging collaboration in creating age-friendly places (communities) that optimize the ability of all older Manitobans to do the things they feel are important.



LETTER FROM MINISTER SCOTT JOHNSTON

Dear friends,

For several months the Manitoba government has been connecting with 10,000 seniors, family members, and people who work with seniors to gain their perspectives towards the development of a seniors strategy that we will deliver to Manitobans this winter.

There are 229,050 Manitobans aged 65 or older living in the province, representing 17.1 per cent of the total population. Of that group, 29,255 are aged 85 or older. The proportion of women outnumbers the population as age increases.

Manitoba has a rapidly aging population and in the coming years, there will be a much greater need and demand for specialized services and supports for older Manitobans, in the community, within healthcare facilities, and in long-term care.

Sadly, research tells us that approximately one quarter (24.4 per cent) of Manitobans over 65 often feel isolated from others. Indigenous seniors are considered at high risk of experiencing social isolation due to factors such as racism, marginalized language, culture, poverty and historic negative experiences.

Our government is looking to create a seniors strategy where older Manitobans are valued and empowered to live healthy and productive lives in their homes and communities as long as it is safely possible.

As the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care I have engaged in extensive dialogue with Manitobans to inform the development of the Seniors Strategy. The

following is some of the input we have heard from Manitobans through the consultation process:

- As Manitobans age, we may experience increasingly complex care and support needs related to dementia, mental health and other chronic conditions.
- Manitobans want to live independent, vibrant, and fulfilling lives in their own homes and communities, for as long as possible. Each individual and family's needs are specific; some want to stay in their home, others with family, and for some it's about staying connected to a larger community.
- Life is getting more expensive for seniors who are dealing with issues of inflation, fixed incomes and affordability of services and supports.
- There are gaps in the continuum of services and supports for Manitobans as we age, especially in rural, northern and Indigenous communities.
- Despite the commitment and best efforts of seniors serving organizations, services and supports are challenging to access and navigate and can operate in silos.
- While many seniors talk about how they are valued, ageism and ableism exist and should be reduced.

The Seniors Strategy is a highly, anticipated, sophisticated and living document that plans to address the difficulties that effect all seniors in Manitoba.

Thank you for your interest in the seniors strategy, I am looking forward to announcing the strategy in the near future.

After all, we are all aging, and every Manitoban deserves to age with dignity, with wellbeing, and with purpose.

Scott Johnston,
Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care

Jan. 18, 2023



AGING IN PLACE - CAN THIS BE DONE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Communities in MB are feeling the pinch. Financial insecurity is at an all time high. Times are changing and individuals and groups within communities must support each other to make it through these tough times.

In 2008, World Health Organization told the globe to get ready for the demographic shift. In 2015, the Province of MB saw for the first time that there are more adults over the age of 65 years than 18 year old's – think about the impact on the workforce.

Along with the demographic swing the family unit has changed from 20 years ago – our children tend to live in other communities - sometimes far away. Who supports aging parents if and when needed? The community!

Social participation & social connection are determinants of one's own health. Active living centres provide social opportunities. Senior Resource Coordinators provide individual support to the older adult to remain in community. For our aging population increased support to both is absolutely essential.

With increased supports at the community level, it will keep the older adult out of the health care system longer. We all want to keep well and make our own decisions for as long as possible.

The Regional Health Authorities support the older adult through funding to some senior centres/ community centres and to senior resource

coordinators (community connectors). Many communities are offering meal programs. These programs must be supported. In some communities, the older adult has to drive some distance to get food. What happens when one can no longer drive? There are handivans that are being used however, often older adults cannot afford the cost of the van to take them for medical appointments, buy food, banking.....

Older adults must be encouraged to plan for Aging in Place. Homes may need adjustments to allow for them to remain in their own community. Does your community have a business that does home modifications? A business opportunity, perhaps?...

Within our province there are supports out there for older adults –Senior Resource Coordinators & Senior Centres. Are members in your community aware of them? Do you promote 211 by web and by phone. It is a start.

Home care has the potential to keep us in our community for a long time – out of the institutional system (hospitals, longterm care which are very costly). Family managed care and its many options must be advertised and promoted – there are businesses out there that must be a part of this connecting.

As we age, our abilities to stay independent are challenged. Older adults want to stay in their own community, in their own home. Is your community planning for the aging population?

Connie Newman,
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