

# YOUR GUIDE TO HEALTHY AGING IN THE COMMUNITY

Fall / Winter 2023



The material in this guide is based on the online *Guide to Healthy Aging in the Community*. The online guide contains many links and information not possible to share in the printed version.

Residents of Old Ottawa South, the Glebe, the Glebe Annex, Alta Vista, Heron Park and Old Ottawa East contributed to the online guide, which is available online at <https://oldottawasouth.ca/healthy-aging-guide> or by scanning this QR code:



Photography by Mark Fryars

# A PLACE TO LOVE, A PLACE TO STAY

People who live in our central Ottawa communities love it here and want to stay on as they age. But to make these into truly age-friendly communities, we have to plan for the future.

## Growing Old In An Age-Friendly Community

**Issues and Opportunities** There are many services and opportunities available for residents to live satisfying and independent lives in central Ottawa. *Your Guide to Healthy Aging in the Community* offers ideas, information and advice on how to do just that. It also points you in the direction of a more detailed online guide.

Despite the array of existing services, there is a growing gap between what is needed and what is available. With the proportion of older people in the community steadily increasing, service providers and caregivers are in danger of being overwhelmed.

**It's time for innovation!** We are proposing the incorporation of a Seniors Health Innovations Hub (SHIH, see page 15). Initiatives to support aging in the community, if they begin today, will benefit people for decades to come.

We invite you to look through this guide and take note of the questions posed in the **Community Feedback Questionnaire (CFQ)**. By answering the questions, you will help to provide the information needed to move forward as we continue to develop the SHIH.

## FEEDBACK Community Feedback Questionnaire



Respond to questions that interest you and come back as often as you wish. There are three ways to give feedback:



1. Scan the QR code (using a cell phone, and you may require an app) or type **<https://tinyurl.com/TheCFQ>** into your search engine to access the online CFQ.
2. At any time between November and January 2023, call us at **((613) 604-0030)** and leave a message. Someone will get back to you within seven days to help you on the phone to fill in the CFQ in French or English.
3. Or tear out pages 13-14 of this Guide, fill in the questionnaire and mail it in.

**This questionnaire will be open until January 31, 2024.**



# PRIMARY CARE

Primary care is vital to older adults who are facing a whole new set of health challenges. Unfortunately, thousands of seniors in central Ottawa lack access to physicians or nurse practitioners.

## A Crisis Situation

**Finding Primary Care** People in need of medical attention who lack access to primary care are forced to use walk-in clinics, hospital emergency rooms and private medical services. Or they may turn for help to the Ontario medical help line at 811. If you are searching for a primary care provider...

- Call Health Care Connect (Ontario Ministry of Health) at 1-800-445-1822.
- Consult the Ontario government website – Ontario.ca – under the heading of “Find a doctor or nurse practitioner” [<https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-family-doctor-or-nurse-practitioner>].
- Call the clinics in your neighbourhood to enquire about the availability of care.
- Consult the directory of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, with an advanced search that features geographic location [<https://doctors.cpsso.on.ca/>].
- Sign up with the Seniors Health Innovations Hub and provide contact information (see page 15).



“An estimated 7,701 seniors in Central Ottawa were without a primary care provider in 2022, according to the Primary Care Data Reports for Ontario Health Teams, and that number is likely to increase.”

Dr. Kamila Premji  
Ottawa Health Team

## FEEDBACK

*See page 2*

A proposal is in the works to establish a Nurse Practitioner Centre. You should get your name on the list if you are over 65 and...

- Are not on the roster of a regular primary care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner), OR
- You have a regular primary care provider who will retire in the next two to three years, OR
- You have a regular primary care provider but have difficulty getting service because of long wait times or travel issues...

# HOME CARE AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Staying home as you age depends on getting the help you need, whether that means help with household tasks or with medical and personal care.

## Getting the Help You Need

**211 Ontario** This is a helpline designed to connect you with a wide range of services. For City of Ottawa support, call 311. To talk to a nurse in Ontario, call the medical help line at 811.

**Home and Community Care Support Services (HCCSS)** Another good place to start is by asking your primary health provider to contact Ontario Health. If you don't have a doctor, you can call them yourself, toll-free 24 hours a day, at **310-2222** (no area code required). An assessment will be undertaken and, if you qualify for help, HCCSS will contract support workers on your behalf. A nurse or community health worker may also be assigned to visit on a regular basis and to evaluate your changing needs.



"We hope you find the help you are looking for in this guide. If you need help, please call us at 613-230-5730, and we will connect you!"

Karen Anne Blakely  
Director, Community Services  
Abbotsford Seniors Centre

## FEEDBACK

*See page 2*

If you have ideas about how these services can be improved, please get in touch. If there is sufficient interest from the community, we may form an advisory group.



# CAREGIVERS

As we age, many of us need more help with the basic activities of daily life. Usually, it is family and friends who come forward to act as caregivers.

## Family and Friends on the Front Line

The service system, while it is unable to provide professional support at the level of need, does have some resources to support over-burdened caregivers. Websites, helplines, webinars, peer support, counselling and health services, some targeted to the racialized and LGBTQIA+ communities. See the online guide for details.

### Getting a Break

- Federal government employees are offered a variety of caregiver and end of life care benefits. See online Guide for details.
- Employment Insurance offers a Family Caregiver Benefit to enable caregivers to take unpaid leave from work to care for a sick relative.
- Caregivers, regardless of employment status, are eligible for income tax breaks if you are caring for someone in need of assistance.

### Taking a Break

Respite care is available, either free or at cost. Start by calling the Home and Community Care Support Services at **310-2222** (no area code required).

"South East Ottawa Community Health Centre offers a variety of services for seniors and is happy to support caregivers or individuals in need. Contact: 1-844-726-5115 or [www.seochc.on.ca](http://www.seochc.on.ca)."



Cathie Racicot, Program Manager  
Seniors Services and Regional  
Integrated Care  
South East Ottawa Community  
Health Centre

## FEEDBACK

*See page 2*

If you have suggestions for supporting caregivers or if you would like to discuss options with interested community members, please provide feedback on this topic in the Community Feedback Questionnaire.



# HOUSING

If you decide to stay at home, you may need to modify the house. If you move, you want the next step to be a positive one. Either route takes planning.

## Stay or Go?

Older adults are living longer, healthier lives, and that takes planning. Some people are forming new organizations to support their ability to stay at home or in the community. For example, some may be attracted to the Abbeyfield model of small-scale retirement communities with private suites and common areas and shared support services. In any case, even if you are facing the need to move, you want to maintain control over your life and the decisions you make. The online version of *Your Guide to Healthy Aging in the Community* describes some of the considerations in deciding what to do and accessing the resources you need to support your decision. The guide will walk you through the process, present alternatives and help you to the best possible decision.

**Staying at home** You need to think about accessibility, stairs, bathrooms, overall safety and the ongoing financial impacts of maintenance versus the relative cost of living alternatives.

**Moving** Consider the availability of alternate housing, affordability, accessibility, the care you may need and the appropriateness of the new housing for you. Your choices are:

- **Independent Living** – or “downsizing” to make the housing more manageable
- **Residential Living** – accommodation with a range of support for those with moderate needs
- **Long-Term Care** – nursing care and a variety of therapies offered to patients

## FEEDBACK

*See page 2*

It's never too early to start planning. If you are interested in exploring new housing options, respond to the Community Feedback Questionnaire.



# TECHNOLOGY

Your goal is to remain safe, independent and healthy as you grow older. New technologies can help you to achieve that.

## Brave New World

This is the 21st century. Consider the range of new technology designed to promote your health and independence. For example...

**Safety** A simple but effective device is the “Personal Emergency Response System,” often in the form of a wearable pendant or bracelet with a button to press for help. In the online guide, you will find more information on how to select appropriate devices.

**Independence** You might also benefit from Smart Home Technology, designed to automate many of the tasks of daily life, such as locking the door, turning off the lights or providing medication reminders.

**Health and Fitness** There are all kinds of devices on the market today to motivate you and help you to monitor your health or level of fitness activity.

**Diagnostics** Many of the new devices will monitor your vital signs, movements and your sleep or other physical patterns. They alert you or a caregiver when something goes wrong.

**Staying Healthy at Home** Fitness or social activities can help you physically, mentally and emotionally. Consider joining a virtual exercise class or an online dance group. Get engaged in social media and join chat groups as a means to alleviate your sense of isolation. Explore online games. Challenges such as chess or sudoku can sharpen your cognitive abilities.

## FEEDBACK

*See page 2*

The Seniors Health Innovations Hub (SHIH) is working with experts to develop technologies to help you age in place. If you want to learn about that or participate in testing new products, fill in the Community Feedback Questionnaire.



# SAFETY

Remaining in the home depends largely on your ability to stay safe and that involves thinking about the hazards and taking action to deal with them.

## An Ounce of Prevention

**Falls** Talk to your doctor about how to stay healthy and, in particular, how to improve your balance and improve your coordination and strength. Then take a good look at your house to identify various hazards that could trip you up!

**Elder Abuse** No one wants to talk about abuse – whether it be physical, psychological, emotional, sexual or financial – especially if it comes at the hands of someone you love or trust. Anyone who is the target of abuse should reach out for help, by contacting the Seniors 24/7 Safety Line at **1-866-229-1011**. Alternatively, you can call **911** (emergency services) or **211** (Ontario Help Line).

**Fraud and Scams** It seems that everyone in today's digital world is plagued by a steadily increasing flood of fraudulent messages on the phone or computer. Older people are a main target. The RCMP offers a *Seniors Guidebook to Safety and Security* that includes a section on frauds and scams. The guidebook is offered free online or by calling 1-888-562-5561 to buy it.

**Fighting Cognitive Decline** While it is normal to forget things, if you notice changes or a new level of forgetfulness – for example, forgetting recent events, losing things, getting lost or becoming confused – please consult a medical professional. See the online guide for information on measures proposed by the World Health Organization to decrease your risk of cognitive decline.



# HEALTHY LIVING

Fitness, nutrition and social connection are vital to living a long and happy life, but all of these may be harder to manage as we age.

## Fit and Happy

As we age, it takes effort and determination to stay fit, but eating well, staying active and making an effort to stay socially connected pay off in maintaining your independence and sense of well-being. The online guide will give you many links and options to assist you in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

## 3 TIPS TO STAYING HEALTHY, HAPPY AND FIT

1. Join a fitness program, even a virtual one, with a focus on strength and balance, and stay active by walking the dog, working in the garden or doing household tasks.
2. Drink lots of water, avoid excessive salt in your diet, limit carbohydrates in favour of whole-grain and fibre-rich foods and eat lots of fruit, lean protein and low-fat yoghurt and milk.
3. Consult a medical practitioner regularly for advice about exercise and nutrition, including dietary supplements.

## Not So Fun Fact!

Did you know that your desire to drink fluids decreases as you age? Dehydration can be a serious issue in older adults. As a general rule, you should calculate one-third of your body weight in pounds, convert it to ounces and drink that amount of fluid every day.



# TRANSPORTATION

If you have been driving a car your whole life, the loss of a licence can look like the end of your independence. It is not.

## Getting Around

Every driver over the age of 80 in Ontario must take a written test every two years, along with a vision test, in order to renew a licence. Eventually you may be forced to give up driving. Relax and embrace the change.

**Taxis and Ubers** The cost of a taxi, even if you call on it frequently, does not begin to approach the cost of owning a car, considering the purchase price and the cost of gas, maintenance and insurance.

**Walking and Cycling** If you are physically able, consider getting to your destination on foot or by bicycle or, for increased safety and fun, by tricycle! This combines the benefits of exercise, recreation and transportation. Ottawa is blessed with many bicycle lanes on major streets throughout the city. There are also recreational pathways built and maintained by the National Capital Commission that parallel most of the city's waterways.

**Public Transportation** The City of Ottawa has buses and trains going to every part of the city, with 190 routes and service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Special book-in-advance and other services exist for those with mobility issues, as follows:

1. All buses and light rail trains are accessible to wheelchairs and walkers, and they have slip-resistant ramps with raised edges to prevent your assistive device (wheelchair, walker or scooter) from rolling off.
2. Cooperative (priority) seating is reserved near the front of the bus for customers who have difficulty standing on a moving bus.
3. ParaTranspo offers a shared-ride, book-in-advance service that helps with pick-ups in specialized vans with helpful drivers and an online system of pre-payment.
4. If, because of mobility issues, you need to take a taxi, OCTranspo can help with a coupon program that gives you a 45% discount on fares.
5. For persons 65+ the special per-ride fare is \$2.85 or \$47.75 for a monthly pass, and all buses and trains are free on Wednesdays and Sundays.
6. All bus and train stops are automatically announced.





# FINANCES

**Good financial management is key to maintaining your independence. It is also vital to managing end-of-life on your own terms.**

## Managing Your Money

You need to think not only about making your money last your lifetime, but also how to manage your finances if you become unable to do so. It is never too early to start planning, so find someone you trust to help you. You may want to take a workshop or do some reading on how to deal with common financial concerns. See the online guide for more ideas.

**Wills and Powers of Attorney** You should draw up a will and powers of attorney for finances and personal care. You should also talk to your family about how you have decided to leave your estate. Prepare an information package for your executor or family members or for anyone who holds a power of attorney.

**Talking to Family and Friends** It may be a difficult conversation, but it is an important one. Identify resources that will help prepare you to talk to your family or others who care for you.

1. Explain powers of attorney and legal assignments for health decisions and financial decisions.
2. Make sure that family and friends know where documents can be found.
3. Decide on the distribution of belongings not mentioned in your will.
4. Make arrangements for any pet you may have.

**Getting a Break** If you become unable to care for yourself, the Canada Revenue Agency allows a tax credit to help pay for personal support care, transportation and certain kinds of equipment, such as wheelchairs. Similarly, if your income declines in old age, you may be eligible for payment deferral or for emergency relief on gas or electricity bills.



## END OF LIFE

Eventually, we all come to the end of the road. Fortunately, in our community, we have resources to help us navigate end-of-life choices with dignity and freedom.

### Dignity and Choice

**Palliative care** This may be delivered at a hospice, a hospital or at home – and it describes services designed not to prolong life, but rather to minimize pain in the final stages and to provide practical help and support to those who are nearing the end of their lives and to those who are caring for them. These services can be arranged at a hospital, by your primary care provider, or through Home Care and Community Supports Services (HCCSS). Palliative care is delivered without charge through Hospice Care Ottawa, which liaises with hospices in the city or helps to arrange for home care.

**Talking to the family** Explain your wishes to those who may be responsible for decisions around the ending of your life and afterwards. Talk to them about:

1. End-of-life care, where and how you want to be cared for.
2. Whether, if your heart stops, you want to be resuscitated.
3. The funeral you want and whether you want to be buried or cremated.

**MAID** Canadians who are suffering or who are approaching the end of life without hope of recovery are now permitted to opt for Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID). The federal criminal code of Canada was altered in June 2016 to allow a physician either to administer a life-ending drug or make it available for the patient to self-administer. MAID is delivered under a very strict set of regulations and conditions that include the applicants:

- being at least 18 years old and mentally competent
- having a grievous and irremediable medical condition, not necessarily fatal but irreversible and involving a high degree of suffering;
- making a voluntary request for medical assistance in dying; and
- giving informed consent at the time of the initial request and immediately before receiving medical assistance in dying (exceptions can be pre-arranged).

**Information** Call 1-866-286-4023 (7 days a week, 24 hours a day). TTY at 1-844-953-3350. Or consult the online guide.



## MAIL-IN COMMUNITY FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

If you want to mail in your feedback, respond below in English or French, tear out this page and send it to:

### **New Horizons Community Feedback Questionnaire**

Ottawa South Community Association  
The Old Firehall, 260 Sunnyside Avenue  
Ottawa ON K1S 0R7

**This questionnaire will be open for response until January 31, 2024.**

*We respect your privacy. Personal information will only be used for the purposes stated.*

*OPTIONAL: Provide your postal code to help us track areas associated with feedback. Consolidated postal code information may be shared with community organizations. Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_*

#### **1. Primary Care**

See "Feedback" (page 3) to see if you qualify to be put on a list for the proposed NP-led clinic. If so, add your contact information below:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ and/or  
EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

#### **2. Home Care and Supportive Services**

If there is sufficient interest from the community, a group may be formed to address this need. If you would you like to discuss ideas for improvement of home care services with others, please add your contact information below:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ and/or  
EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

#### **3. Family and Friends as Caregivers**

As a caregiver, what additional supports would you like to see offered? (Please use separate sheet.)

Would you be interested in talking informally to other caregivers about additional supports? If so, please add your contact information below:

**3.cont'd** NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ and/or  
EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Housing**

(i) Would you like your name added to the distribution list for Abbeyfield-Riverside?  
Or would you like to turn your house into an Abbeyfield residence? Email: riverside@  
abbeyfield.ca

(ii) Are you interested in exploring other housing options for older adults? Give us your  
contact information:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ and/or  
EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) **Blue Sky Question** What would be the ideal housing arrangement for your next  
move? Think of where you would like to move, ideal ownership arrangement, space  
needed, number of other residents, amenities, supports and price range. (Please use a  
separate sheet.)

**5. Technology**

(i) Would you like to learn about or participate in testing new products that assist with  
healthy aging in place: sensors, alarms, communications devices, wellness apps, etc.? If so,  
please add your contact information below:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ and/or  
EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) **Blue Sky Question** This one is just for fun! Tell us how technology might make your life  
easier as you get older. (Please use a separate sheet.)

If you are not mailing in your response, you can fill it in online or phone:  
Scan the QR code or type <https://tinyurl.com/TheCFQ> or call us at  
(613) 604-0030 and leave a message.





# INNOVATION

There's a new organization in town, one dedicated to finding new ways to address the issues associated with aging in the community.



## Seniors Health Innovations Hub

As mentioned in the introduction, the Seniors Health Innovations Hub (SHIH) is under development as a non-profit organization in central Ottawa. Working with the support of politicians, businesses, university experts and community agencies, the Board of SHIH will explore new and innovative approaches to several of the issues addressed in this guide. It will seek grants and use them to fund the development and implementation of real solutions to the problems that older adults face in our community.

### Emerging Programs at SHIH

**Nurse Practitioner-led Clinic** In partnership with Perley Health and the Centretown Community Health Centre, SHIH has applied for funding to establish a nurse practitioner-led (NP-led) clinic in central Ottawa as a means to serve older adults who lack primary care. The approach will be team-based.

**Non-Profit Home Care** SHIH is looking for ways to provide more efficient home care through partnerships with non-profit care providers, at the same time providing more caregiver supports, such as respite care. The idea is that more home care and related services can be organized and coordinated through a community nursing clinic.

**Testing and Improvement of New Technology** Working in cooperation with research experts and innovative industries and organizations, SHIH will help to test, improve and deliver new technologies to the people who need them. Experts have identified a range of innovations that will help older adults to stay in the community for longer – for example, a Wellness App and other technological tools to assist healthy, safe aging at home.

**Housing** A person's living situation is also a determinant of health. The SHIH will explore innovative housing options such as non-profit communal or cooperative housing. This will include working with housing organizations such as Abbeyfield Houses Society.

### WE NEED YOUR HELP!

If you can help or want to find out more – either as an individual or through an organization – please use the link at <https://tinyurl.com/TheSHIH> or scan the QR code to give us your contact information.



## THANK YOU!

Neighbourhood volunteers from allied central Ottawa communities have a vision – and that is to make central Ottawa an even more pleasant, fulfilling, and meaningful place to live, especially for those who want to age within the community. We hope that you will join us in making that vision a reality.

The material in this printed guide is based on the online version of *Your Guide to Healthy Aging in the Community*. We would like to thank these individuals who made this printed guide possible, notably: Alixe Ménard (research assistant) and the staff of Old Ottawa South Community Association (OSCA), Janet Uren (writer), Bess Fraser (graphic design and layout) and Mike Fryars (photography).

The online version of *Your Guide to Healthy Aging in the Community* was realized with contributions from many volunteers and service providers in central Ottawa, notably by members of Seniors Watch Old Ottawa South (SWOOS) and the Old Ottawa South Community Association: Anna Cuyllits and Terrance Hunsley (co-chairs), Maura Giuliani, Patricia Eakins, Carolyn Inch, Peter Heyck and Barbara Brown.

### **We also gratefully acknowledge the support of the following:**

Glebe Annex Community Association and Funeral Cooperative  
Ottawa – Beverlee McIntosh

Glebe Centre, Community Service – Karen Anne Blakely and Kirsten O'Brien

Heron Park Community Association – Linda Gama-Pinto, Susan Carbone and Rosella MacNeil

Old Ottawa East Community Association -- Dianne Breton and Georgia Blondon

Senior Watch Alta Vista (SWAV) and the Alta Vista Community Association – Lynne Davidson-Fournier, Francine Beaupré, Adrienne Stevenson, Debra Lowe, Rick Strong, Suzanne Friedlaender and Maureen Drouin

South East Ottawa Community Health Centre, Community Services – Cathie Racicot

Southminster United Church – Nancy E. Watters

The Council on Aging of Ottawa – Peggy Edwards and Bonnie Schroeder

Trinity Anglican Church – Heather Maclachlan

Scan the QR code  
to access the online guide  
or see guide online at the following url  
**<https://oldottawasouth.ca/healthy-aging-guide>**



"I am thrilled that our government has funded this Guide through the New Horizons for Seniors Program. Thanks to active community partners like Seniors Watch of Old Ottawa South (SWOOS) and other central Ottawa communities, seniors will have more opportunities to access the services required to be able to age in their homes and in our community."

Yasir Naqvi  
Member of Parliament,  
Ottawa Centre