



REPORT TO: Co-Chairs and Members of
Public Health and Social Services Committee

SUBJECT: “Active Living” – Exciting Possibilities
for Older Adults in Niagara

RECOMMENDATION

That this Committee recommends to Regional Council:

That staff be authorized to participate in the development of a formal Niagara-wide initiative to engage vibrant older adults in intellectually stimulating and physically beneficial activity for both personal and community benefit.

That staff be authorized to support the “Active Living 50⁺” volunteer leadership group in developing an application for a Trillium Foundation grant to support the implementation of “active living for older adults” concept.

That staff be authorized to provide in-kind support to the volunteers with the funding application and with the implementation of the “active living’ concept.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Seniors Services staff were approached earlier this year by a group of older adults interested in advancing the idea of a redefined retirement – a period in one’s life following full-time employment that enables creativity and stimulating, intellectual and physical activity, for both personal and community benefit.
- Seniors Services staff hosted a focus group meeting of key community leaders for a presentation of the concept of a formal Niagara-wide initiative to promote “creative retirement” and “active living” for Niagara’s active older adults.

- The focus group validated and enthusiastically embraced the concept and promoted the idea of holding a stakeholders forum to generate a Niagara steering committee to seek Trillium Foundation funding and to implement the initiative across Niagara.
- Periodic updates will be provided for Committee and Council on the progress of this initiative.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications for the Region as the intent is to explore funding from the Trillium Foundation. In-kind contributions from the Region would include limited staff support (e.g., the Director of Seniors Services advisory time, required administrative support for meetings and the volunteers' effort in completing any funding applications and technological support for web and portal maintenance).

PURPOSE

This report introduces the concept of a redefined retirement phase for older adults, outlines the concept of a "creative retirement" or "active living" for older adults in Niagara and seeks authorization for staff to support the development of this initiative.

BACKGROUND

Redefined Retirement

Unprecedented increased longevity and prolonged physical and intellectual vibrancy among many more older adults, coupled with the aging of the dominant baby boomer generation, has led to the evolution of a more active lifestyle for many older adults. Terms such as "protirement" and "zoomers" have been coined in recent years to begin to identify the new phenomenon of active living and upbeat semi-retirement, which is sometimes characterized by entrepreneurial work, continued professional involvement and philanthropic or voluntary community development work.

REPORT

Creative Retirement/Active Living Initiatives

There are many examples in other communities where formal opportunities exist to engage active older adults, in education, travel, philanthropy entrepreneurial mentorship and community development activities. For example, there are Universities of the Third Age", elder hostel, creative Retirement Manitoba and the World Senior Games.

Niagara appeals to many older adults from across Canada as an adult lifestyle destination and is an area with one of the highest concentrations of older adults in Canada. Accordingly, in recognition of this strength, an excellent opportunity exists for Niagara to capitalize on this phenomenon and harness the talent and skills of this growing demographic for the benefit of the Niagara community and the individuals themselves.

A small group of older adults, which included newly retired or semi-retired executives who have recently moved to Niagara, approached Seniors Services to advance the idea of a redefined retirement, and related mechanisms to involve them in contributing to the development of the Niagara community. Seniors Services staff hosted a focus group of community leaders, who validated and enthusiastically embraced the concept and encouraged the implementation of a “creative retirement” or “active living” initiative for Niagara. The focus group encouraged the small leadership group to expand its membership to become a broader Niagara-wide group and to apply for a Trillium Foundation grant. Accordingly, stakeholders from across Niagara with a probable interest in this initiative are being invited to a session on May 29, 2009, at the Niagara Region’s Learning Centre.

The expected outcome from this stakeholders session is a commitment from a larger Niagara-wide group to form a volunteer Steering Committee to guide the development of an “active living 50+” initiative, including a grant application. Subject to Committee and Council approval, staff plan to offer guidance and support to launch this initiative and build the capacity of the group to sustain this initiative over time. This staff involvement will serve as an investment in older adult volunteers who are prepared to contribute to the development of the Niagara community in many ways.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Brian Hutchings
Commissioner, Community Services

Mike Trojan
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared by Dominic Ventresca, Director, Seniors Services.