



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

and

Co-Chairs and Members of  
Integrated Community Planning and Public Works Committee

**SUBJECT:** Age-Friendly Communities Initiative

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

That these Committees recommend to Regional Council:

That staff promote the implementation of the Age-Friendly Community initiative across the Niagara region in accordance with a provincial framework that is based on the work of the World Health Organization (WHO).

That a partnership between the Niagara Region and the City of Welland, primarily through its Seniors Citizens Advisory Committee, be authorized in order to apply for a Trillium Foundation grant to support the implementation of Age-Friendly Community initiative across Niagara, beginning with the City of Welland.

That staff provide in-kind support to the funding application and to the initiative as described in this report.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Community Services staff has been involved in a provincial initiative with the University of Waterloo and the Alzheimer Society of Ontario to promote the development of age-friendly communities across Ontario. Staff is prepared to launch this initiative in Niagara in partnership with local municipalities and community groups.
- Integrated Community Planning staff has been tasked with revisiting Niagara's focus on overall community sustainability and social equity issues (including age friendly communities, is a key component of that).

- Niagara Region staff and City of Welland staff and volunteers are prepared to apply for a Trillium Foundation grant over three years to enable:
  - The Development of a Niagara Age-Friendly Community Steering Committee to facilitate Niagara-wide support through the various municipalities and local community and business sectors.
  - The hiring of a Trillium-funded Community Coordinator/Project Manager to initiate community consultations across Niagara, starting with the implementation in the City of Welland.
  - The implementation of a strategy involving the City of Welland as the pilot community, and approaching other Niagara communities to follow over the subsequent two years.
- Niagara Region and City of Welland staff and volunteers will collaborate with other community partners (e.g., Rose City Seniors Foundation and the Niagara Research and Planning Council) to launch this initiative and systematically engage other municipalities and community groups to promote an Age-Friendly Niagara.
- The dimensions of age-friendly communities developed by the WHO align with Niagara 2031 planning principles. Niagara has one of the highest concentrations of seniors in Canada, and would be a logical leader in promoting age-friendliness.
- Concurrently, the City of Welland's Senior Citizens Advisory Committee has expressed interest, and obtained approval from Welland City Council on the concept of promoting age-friendly principles in the Welland community.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The financial component of the Trillium grant is proposed to consist of two parts. First, the grant is to provide for the Community Coordinator/Project Manager, community outreach to obtain feedback, and the submission of a report to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the project stakeholders.

The second part will be the in-kind contributions from community stakeholders, provision of data sets along with GIS mapping configurations and input from staff of both the City of Welland and Niagara Region. This initiative also presents collaborative opportunities with the Niagara Research and Planning Council (authors of the 'Living in Niagara' Report to be supported by Regional Council) and the Niagara Community Observatory (at Brock University) to support the outcome and implementation of the Age-Friendly Communities initiative. In-kind contributions have been estimated at close to 40% of the Trillium application in the provision of staff time and resources.

The total proposed costs over three years will therefore be:

Trillium Application Funding	= \$ 225,000
In Kind Collaborative Contributions	= <u>\$ 90,000</u>
Total Contributions	= \$ 315,000

The results of the project may result in needs being identified that may have financial implications for participating organizations. Any such implications for Niagara Region would be brought forward to Council for consideration. The allocation of in-kind support is consistent with the work program report (and, by extension, the objectives) for the ICP Department (per Report ICP 1, 2009)

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council authorization for participation in an Age-Friendly Communities initiative in partnership with the City of Welland and the Rose City Seniors Foundation. In addition, the report provides background on the project and the anticipated benefits of Regional participation.

## **BACKGROUND**

The WHO has initiated the promotion of age-friendly communities world-wide and the development of a comprehensive self-reflection checklist of age-friendly components. The WHO's work has been applied to a Canadian framework, and is being promoted in Ontario by the Age-Friendly Communities Advisory Committee (of which the Niagara Region's Director, Seniors Services is a member). The University of Waterloo Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program and the Alzheimer Society of Ontario are leading this initiative in Ontario. The Steering Committee has developed a framework to help communities understand age-friendliness and will be launching a tool kit to help communities implement the framework.

The approval of the Trillium grant, combined with the in-kind support from community partners in Niagara, including the Niagara Region and the City of Welland, and the anticipated launch of the Age-Friendly Communities tool kit provincially will be aligned to allow the launch of this initiative in Niagara.

The OPPI has also recently focused on Age-Friendly Communities as a key priority for the planning professional and municipalities across Ontario.

## **REPORT**

### Age-Friendly Communities

A significant body of research on the essential features of an age-friendly community already exists. As a result, the proposed approach in this partnership is to develop a plan for the practical application of this research.

The WHO has developed a checklist of age-friendly community features which is based on consultations undertaken in thirty-three cities across twenty-two countries. The checklist (see Appendix 1) includes eight dimensions: outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, and community support and health services.

Many of the dimensions addressed in the WHO checklist specific to age-friendly communities are consistent with overall planning objectives as outlined in the Niagara 2031 Growth Management initiative and are complimentary to the related Regional Policy Plan amendment being drafted to support these objectives. Given these linkages, it is expected that the results of this initiative can be used to help guide some of the long term discussions on how to ensure that Age-Friendly Communities recommendations can be made part of the overall planning processes (for land use, service delivery, programming etc), for both the Region and local municipalities.

Perhaps a restatement that social inclusion direction, such as is intended with “Age Friendly” is a key aspect of updating overall sustainability as well. Manitoba has been a leader in implementing Age-Friendly community initiatives over the past few years through the application of dedicated staff resources to guide local communities. In Ontario, the City of Hamilton is working to become one of the first Age-Friendly Communities in Ontario. With one of the highest concentration of seniors in Canada, Niagara is a logical leader in implementing the age-friendly initiative.

### The Niagara Approach

The Trillium application process provides an opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of community partnerships and collaborative engagements in supporting a project that will enhance the health and well being of the community generally and in particular older adults.

Staff has consulted a similar application successfully made by the Hamilton Council on Aging, which provided helpful background material and research to assist in the overall approach for the Trillium application. A conscious effort will be made to demonstrate the capacity of the collaborative to engage, initiate, plan and scope the eight dimensions outlined in the WHO report.

The main thrust of the proposed application is to obtain the services of a Community Coordinator/Project Manager to assist in community engagement and action strategies related to meeting Age-Friendly Communities criteria.

The Niagara approach will involve a Niagara Age-Friendly Community Steering Committee with local Action Committees for each local community engaged to implement the initiative, where community capacity concerns are identified, options for pooling resources across communities will be exposed. The Steering Committee would include expert resource persons in the needs of seniors and planning of age-friendly communities. The proposed coordinator/Project Manager would act as the administrator for the steering committee model. The respective local Action Committees would include local champions of age-friendly communities to engage their community organizations, to apply the tool kit and improve the age-friendliness of their broader community.

The City of Welland has responded favourably to the initiative of its Senior Citizens Advisory Committee and is committed to be the first local community to pilot this Niagara approach on age-friendliness.

The City of Welland is poised to begin work immediately, subject to securing funding. The Trillium application is structured in such a way that efforts in the first year would be focussed on establishing the City of Welland as a pilot community. The second and third years of the project would build on the success of the first year by bringing age-friendly practices to communities throughout the region.

Submitted by:

Submitted by:

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Patrick Robson  
Commissioner  
Integrated Community Planning

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Brian Hutchings  
Commissioner, Community Services

Approved by:

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Mike Trojan  
Chief Administrative Officer

*This report was prepared by Rick Tarajos, Community Planner, Social Issues, Kirk Weaver (A) Director Community and Corporate Planning, and Dominic Ventresca, Director, Seniors Services.*

Appendix I    Check List of Age-Friendly City Features



World Health  
Organization



- Vehicles are clean, well-maintained, accessible, not overcrowded and have priority seating that is respected.
- Specialized transportation is available for disabled people.
- Drivers stop at designated stops and beside the curb to facilitate boarding and wait for passengers to be seated before driving off.
- Transport stops and stations are conveniently located, accessible, safe, clean, well-lit and well-marked, with adequate seating and shelter.
- Complete and accessible information is provided to users about routes, schedules and special needs facilities.
- A voluntary transport service is available where public transportation is too limited.
- Taxis are accessible and affordable, and drivers are courteous and helpful.
- Roads are well-maintained, with covered drains and good lighting.
- Traffic flow is well-regulated.
- Roadways are free of obstructions that block drivers' vision.
- Traffic signs and intersections are visible and well-placed.
- Driver education and refresher courses are promoted for all drivers.
- Parking and drop-off areas are safe, sufficient in number and conveniently located.
- Priority parking and drop-off spots for people with special needs are available and respected.

### Housing

- Sufficient, affordable housing is available in areas that are safe and close to services and the rest of the community.
- Sufficient and affordable home maintenance and support services are available.
- Housing is well-constructed and provides safe and comfortable shelter from the weather.
- Interior spaces and level surfaces allow freedom of movement in all rooms and passageways.
- Home modification options and supplies are available and affordable, and providers understand the needs of older people.
- Public and commercial rental housing is clean, well-maintained and safe.
- Sufficient and affordable housing for frail and disabled older people, with appropriate services, is provided locally.

### Social participation

- Venues for events and activities are conveniently located, accessible, well-lit and easily reached by public transport.
- Events are held at times convenient for older people.
- Activities and events can be attended alone or with a companion.
- Activities and attractions are affordable, with no hidden or additional participation costs.

- Good information about activities and events is provided, including details about accessibility of facilities and transportation options for older people.
- A wide variety of activities is offered to appeal to a diverse population of older people.
- Gatherings including older people are held in various local community spots, such as recreation centres, schools, libraries, community centres and parks.
- There is consistent outreach to include people at risk of social isolation.

#### **Respect and social inclusion**

- Older people are regularly consulted by public, voluntary and commercial services on how to serve them better.
- Services and products to suit varying needs and preferences are provided by public and commercial services.
- Service staff are courteous and helpful.
- Older people are visible in the media, and are depicted positively and without stereotyping.
- Community-wide settings, activities and events attract all generations by accommodating age-specific needs and preferences.
- Older people are specifically included in community activities for “families”.
- Schools provide opportunities to learn about ageing and older people, and involve older people in school activities.

- Older people are recognized by the community for their past as well as their present contributions.
- Older people who are less well-off have good access to public, voluntary and private services.

#### **Civic participation and employment**

- A range of flexible options for older volunteers is available, with training, recognition, guidance and compensation for personal costs.
- The qualities of older employees are well-promoted.
- A range of flexible and appropriately paid opportunities for older people to work is promoted.
- Discrimination on the basis of age alone is forbidden in the hiring, retention, promotion and training of employees.
- Workplaces are adapted to meet the needs of disabled people.
- Self-employment options for older people are promoted and supported.
- Training in post-retirement options is provided for older workers.
- Decision-making bodies in public, private and voluntary sectors encourage and facilitate membership of older people.

#### **Communication and information**

- A basic, effective communication system reaches community residents of all ages.
- Regular and widespread distribution of information is assured and a coordinated, centralized access is provided.





- Regular information and broadcasts of interest to older people are offered.
- Oral communication accessible to older people is promoted.
- People at risk of social isolation get one-to-one information from trusted individuals.
- Public and commercial services provide friendly, person-to-person service on request.
- Printed information – including official forms, television captions and text on visual displays – has large lettering and the main ideas are shown by clear headings and bold-face type.
- Print and spoken communication uses simple, familiar words in short, straightforward sentences.
- Telephone answering services give instructions slowly and clearly and tell callers how to repeat the message at any time.
- Electronic equipment, such as mobile telephones, radios, televisions, and bank and ticket machines, has large buttons and big lettering.
- There is wide public access to computers and the Internet, at no or minimal charge, in public places such as government offices, community centres and libraries.

#### **Community and health services**

- An adequate range of health and community support services is offered for promoting, maintaining and restoring health.
- Home care services include health and personal care and housekeeping.
- Health and social services are conveniently located and accessible by all means of transport.
- Residential care facilities and designated older people's housing are located close to services and the rest of the community.
- Health and community service facilities are safely constructed and fully accessible.
- Clear and accessible information is provided about health and social services for older people.
- Delivery of services is coordinated and administratively simple.
- All staff are respectful, helpful and trained to serve older people.
- Economic barriers impeding access to health and community support services are minimized.
- Voluntary services by people of all ages are encouraged and supported.
- There are sufficient and accessible burial sites.
- Community emergency planning takes into account the vulnerabilities and capacities of older people.