



# The Toronto Seniors Strategy



Strategy Highlights



“ Design for the young  
and you exclude the old.  
Design for the old and you  
include everyone. ”

Bernard Issacs  
Geriatrician

# The Toronto Seniors Strategy

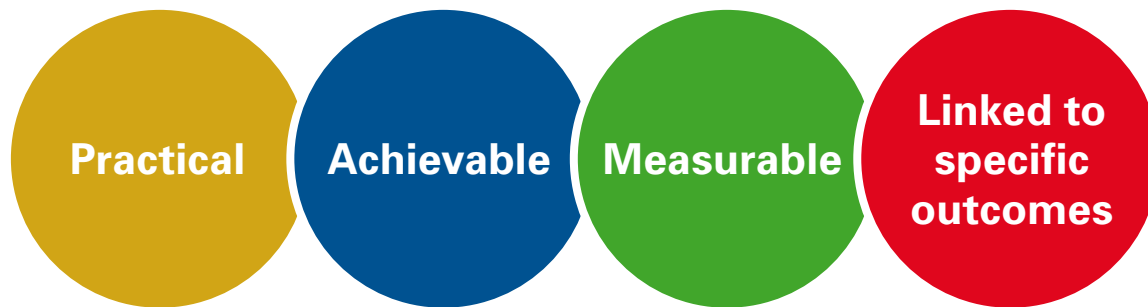


## Introduction

Over the next decade, the number of seniors living in Toronto will increase dramatically. It is important that the City of Toronto, and its Agencies, Boards, Corporations and Divisions (ABCDs) prepare for this demographic shift. This is necessary to help Toronto remain a safe, navigable, affordable, accessible and enjoyable city for everyone.

A social movement to prevent and discourage ageism and enhance respect for older persons is growing across Toronto and around the world. **The Toronto Seniors Strategy** is an active response to the movement to build and sustain an accessible, equitable and just society for all. The Strategy identifies the direction and recommendations that will address the diverse needs of its older residents. This highlights document provides a high-level overview of The Toronto Seniors Strategy.

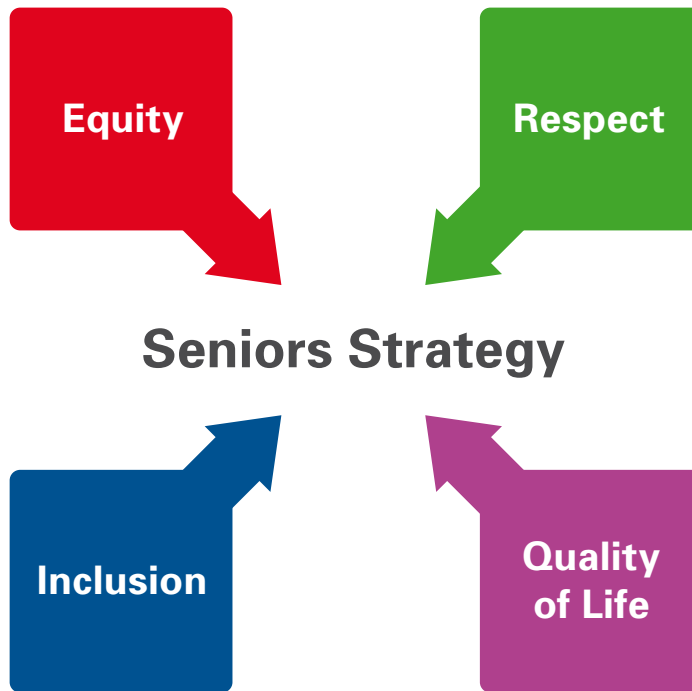
**The Toronto Seniors Strategy has been developed to identify recommendations for action that are:**



## **The City's Role**

Many of the services older Torontonians rely on are provided, directly or indirectly, by the provincial or federal governments and their agencies. Ultimately, decisions regarding these programs are made by the provincial and federal governments. The City of Toronto will continue to engage other orders of government on behalf of older Torontonians with regards to these services, but the primary focus of The Toronto Seniors Strategy will be on issues that fall within the City's authority to plan, manage, and deliver.

### Service Planning Principles



## Seniors Strategy

### Service Principles

This Strategy reflects four key service planning principles to guide City decision-making and priority-setting:

**Equity:** Older adults should have equitable access to services and programs.

**Respect:** The contribution of older adults to the life and vibrancy of Toronto should be valued and respected.

**Inclusion:** The social and physical connectedness of Toronto should be enriched by facilitating older adults' participation in city life.

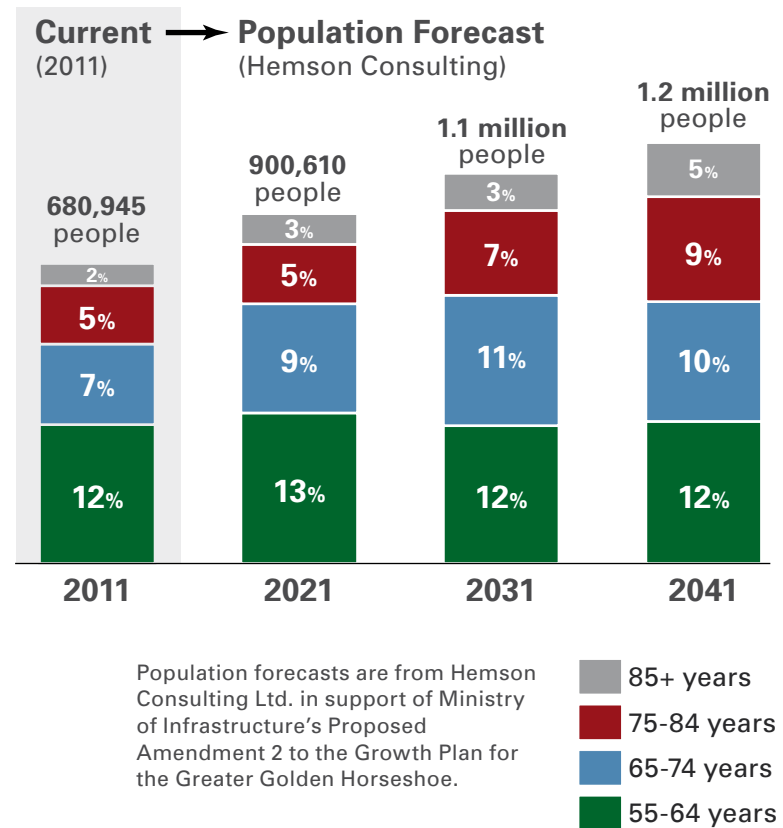
**Quality of Life:** Older adults in Toronto should be supported so that they may enjoy a higher level of health and wellbeing.

## The Demographic Imperative

According to the 2011 Census, there are over 680,000 adults over the age of 55 living in Toronto. This number is expected to grow in coming years. Estimates forecast that the number of older adults could increase by over 30% in the next 10 years. Similar to communities around the world, there is a clear demographic imperative in Toronto to address the needs of older adults.

Where Toronto's experience will be unique is in its high level of diversity. The City must recognize the increased vulnerability that exists when such factors as immigration, linguistic diversity, disability, and sexual orientation intersect with the challenges of aging.

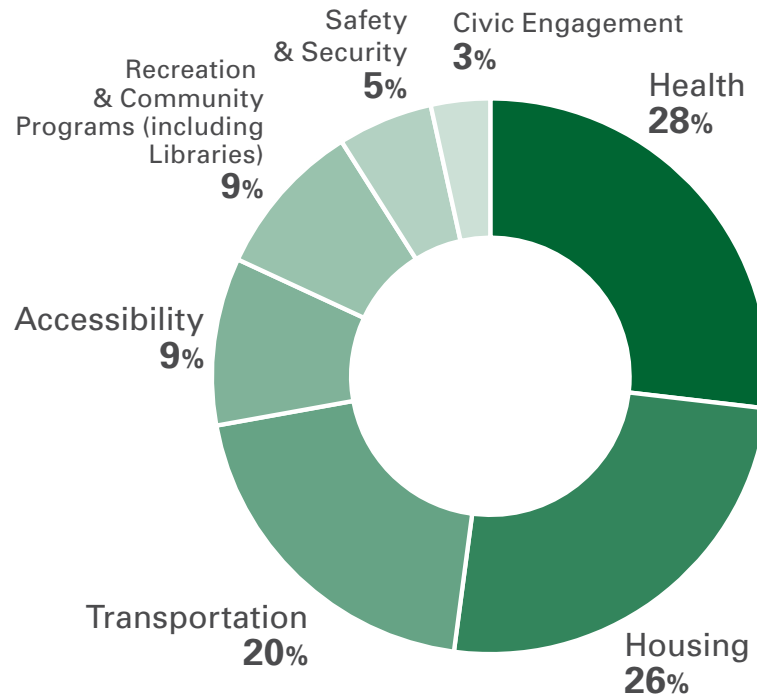
## Forecasted Percent of Total Population



Forecasts expect significant growth in Toronto's older adult population.

Source: Hemson Consulting Ltd. 2012

### Themes & Priorities



When asked to identify their priorities, respondents chose health, housing and transportation. However, many respondents also said that all of these issues were important in their daily lives.

### Public Consultations

The City held consultations throughout the development of the Strategy. Between May 24 and October 31, 2012, Toronto residents had the opportunity to submit their suggestions and concerns using a consultation workbook.

Participants called for an age-friendly approach to service delivery that supports people of all ages, including Toronto's older adults, to live active, socially engaged, healthy, and independent lives. Participants emphasized the need to include older Torontonians in the policy-making and service delivery processes. They also called for a collaborative approach among service providers and all governments.

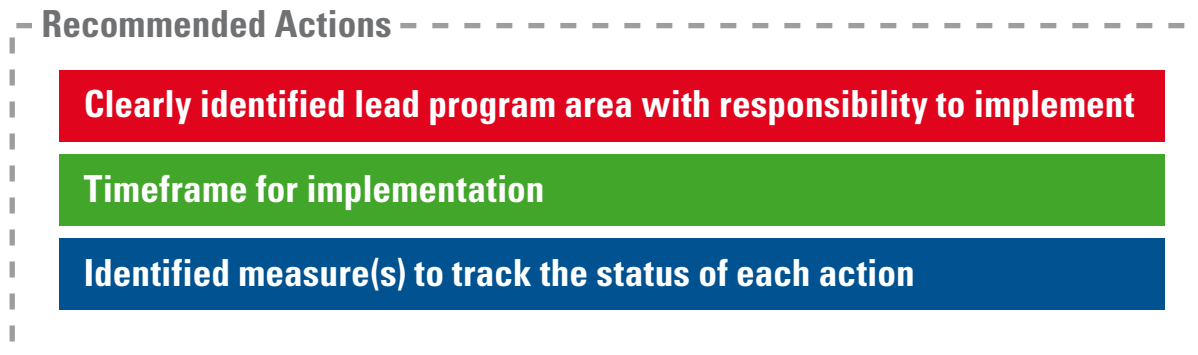
The City also consulted the Toronto Seniors' Forum and a panel of 33 leaders from organizations serving and advocating for older Torontonians.

## Recommendations

The recommendations in this Strategy are grouped into 8 themes that are aligned with the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Age-Friendly Cities and Communities initiative. The WHO framework is designed to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of cities for people of all ages.

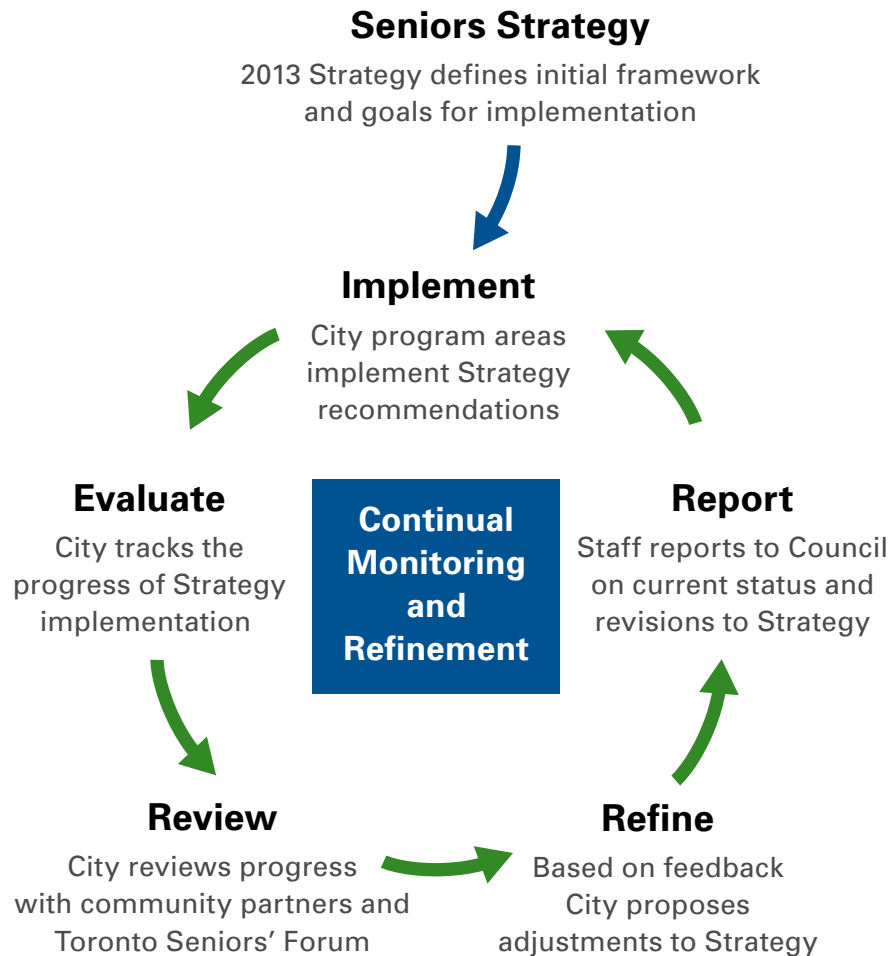
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|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Respect & Social Inclusion                  | <b>5</b> Housing                      |
| <b>2</b> Civic Engagement, Volunteering & Employment | <b>6</b> Transportation               |
| <b>3</b> Social Participation                        | <b>7</b> Outdoor Spaces & Buildings   |
| <b>4</b> Community Support & Health Services         | <b>8</b> Communications & Information |

Each recommendation is addressed with one or more actions. Each action contains three key elements for accountability and monitoring:





**Accountability Model**



**Accountability & Monitoring**

Continual monitoring and refinement is necessary to ensure the Toronto Seniors Strategy results in improvements in the lives of older Torontonians.

As part of a regular reporting process, staff from each of the City's participating Agencies, Boards, Corporations and Divisions will involve community partners to help evaluate, review, and refine the Strategy.

The first progress report to City Council will be presented in 2015.

Continual monitoring and evaluation by City staff and community partners will ensure the Toronto Seniors Strategy remains a living document, one which can adapt to the evolving needs of older adults in Toronto.

## Respect & Social Inclusion



### What the City Does Now

- Produced *A Guide to Good Practice: Providing Equitable Service to Individuals of All Abilities* to increase awareness that “abilities” come in all forms, to ensure equity of outcomes for all residents; and to provide an ethical foundation for the Toronto Public Service.

#### Issue

Toronto’s diverse older adults are a valued part of our community.



#### Recommendation

The City of Toronto will...

**1**

**...affirm its commitment to its diverse older adult population by meeting internationally recognized standards of age-friendliness.**

Toronto’s older adults can be vulnerable to neglect and physical, financial, and emotional abuse.



**2**

**...address elder abuse.**

**Issue****Recommendation**

The City of Toronto will...

A courteous, non-judgemental, responsive approach to service is vital to ensuring equitable access to service.

**3**

**...train its staff to effectively serve all older adults, including those who are vulnerable or have special needs.**

Intergenerational programming provides an opportunity to build respect and understanding across age groups.

**4**

**...facilitate and promote intergenerational programming.**

“ Seniors do not want to be segregated. We want to be included as an important part of the city. We want to contribute making this a better city. ”

- Response from public consultation

## Civic Engagement, Volunteering & Employment



### What the City Does Now

- Provides staff support to the Toronto Seniors' Forum, which works to engage seniors in the workings of municipal government and to advocate for fair and quality services for seniors in Toronto.
- Provides a wide range of volunteer opportunities for older adults.
- Plans and supports public consultations and focus groups that seek input on services for older adults.
- Operates Employment Centres at locations across the city where staff provides free help to all city residents, including older adults, to reach their education and employment goals.

“ [It's] important not to forget that a large majority of older adults are capable, active, independent and a resource to the community. We are part of the solution as well as the 'problem.' ”

- Response from public consultation

**Issue****Recommendation**

The City of Toronto will...

Toronto's diverse older adults want and deserve to be better included in public consultations and planning.

**5**

**...include and ensure diverse older adults are fully involved in the design and development of programming, and are engaged in consultations on all City of Toronto initiatives.**

Toronto's diverse older adults have wisdom and experience to share, and want a variety of volunteering opportunities, but need adequate training and compensation for their costs.

**6**

**...facilitate meaningful volunteering opportunities for older adults.**

Toronto's diverse older adults are increasingly looking for employment opportunities, some out of desire, some out of necessity.

**7**

**...facilitate employment opportunities for its diverse older adult residents.**

## Social Participation



### What the City Does Now

- Offers networking opportunities, recreational programs and services, and activities such as discussion groups and book talks to promote social participation and reduce social isolation. Offers presentations, health information programs, computer and electronic information skills building workshops to increase lifelong learning.
- Promotes financial independence through workshops on retirement planning and money management.
- Partners with community-based agencies to fund a network of services which support the City's social, cultural, housing, health, employment, recreation, economic and neighbourhood improvement goals.
- Operates Adult Day Programs offering a variety of quality activities and services in a safe, supportive environment for people who are physically frail, have a cognitive impairment or who are socially isolated.
- Supports Community Service Hubs to deliver community services and programs more efficiently and effectively. Multiple programs operate within the same "hub" location, which benefits older adults.

**Issue****Recommendation**

The City of Toronto will...

Diverse older adults need opportunities and spaces to socialize and network in order to enjoy a higher quality of life.

**8**

**...increase opportunities and spaces for social participation by diverse older adults.**

For some older adults the cost of programming presents a significant barrier to participating in organized activities.

**9**

**...reduce financial barriers to its programming for older adults.**

Toronto's diverse older adult population requires a wide variety of social and recreational activities.

**10**

**...ensure older Torontonians have equitable access to social and cultural programming.**

“Community centres provide a vital range of services to seniors from exercise classes to information sessions on diabetes, nutrition, Alzheimer's, etc. Please maintain these facilities for seniors.”

- Response from public consultation

## Community Support & Health Services



### What the City Does Now

- Empowers paramedics to connect vulnerable older adults to the health services of their local Community Care Access Centre (CCAC).
- Allows a Community Paramedic to visit vulnerable older adults and provide assessment and support for their care needs while reducing the use of 911 for non-acute health care issues.
- Offers Homemakers and Nurses Services to provide light housekeeping, laundry, shopping and meal preparation to approximately 2,500 qualified individuals to remain in their own homes and part of the community.
- Offers the Hardship Fund to help low-income residents, including older adults, not in receipt of Social Assistance afford the cost of special health-related items.
- Toronto Public Health (TPH) provides chronic disease and injury prevention programs such as healthy eating, physical activity promotion, falls prevention, and promotion of cancer screening, as well as coordinating a hot weather response.
- TPH provides dental services in public health clinics and in certain Long-Term Care homes for eligible seniors.



- TPH provides short-term nursing case-management, education and advocacy to people in vulnerable situations, including those who have bedbugs and exhibit hoarding behaviour.
- TPH offers a Universal Influenza Immunization Program at locations that are accessible to seniors. The City also provides influenza and pneumococcal vaccination for seniors at homeless shelters and drop-in centres.
- The Toronto Police Service, in partnership with local hospitals, offers the Mobile Crisis Intervention Team to support people experiencing a mental health crisis in the community.

**Issue**

**Recommendation**

The City of Toronto will...

Living healthy lifestyles and avoiding illness and injuries will allow many older adults to enjoy a higher quality of life.



**11** ...promote healthy lifestyles and reduce major illness and injury among older Torontonians.

Economic barriers can impede access to equitable health, social and community support services.



**12** ...take steps to eliminate economic barriers for diverse older adults to health, social and community support services.

Vulnerable older adults have specific care needs that must be addressed to ensure equitable service.



**13** ...address the specific needs of vulnerable older adults.

## Housing



### What the City Does Now

- Ensures that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have a range of shelter and affordable housing options through the direct operation, funding and administration of programs and services including street outreach, emergency shelters, drop-ins, housing help centres, social housing and a mass care response in case of a public emergency. These programs and services include facilities, programs and supports specifically for older adults.
- Increasing and maintaining the availability of affordable housing with support services for lower-income older adults. These homes integrate housing with local agency support services.
- Delivers the Toronto Renovates program with federal-provincial funding to provide assistance to lower-income homeowners with essential housing repairs and modifications supporting aging in place and greater accessibility.
- Works with Engineers Canada to identify how to better design buildings to adapt to the new realities of climate change such as extreme hot weather, power outages and elevator failure.

- Works to preserve, and where appropriate, replace rental housing to protect and re-house tenants through the Official Plan policies and Rental Housing Demolition and Conversion By-law. Many tenants affected by redevelopment proposals are older adults.
- New city-wide zoning by-law makes provisions for certain types of seniors accommodation including seniors community houses.
- Offers tax and utility rate relief programs, such as the Property Tax Increase Deferral Program, the Property Tax Increase Cancellation Program and the Water Rebate Program for eligible home owners.
- Operates ten Long-Term Care Homes across the city.
- Offers a Supportive Housing Program, providing 24 hour assistance with personal care, light housekeeping and laundry, medication reminders, security checks and light meal preparation to eligible clients at these locations.

“My biggest concern is to be able to stay in my home as long as possible. If and when I will have to go to a Nursing Home I wish it would be a decent one.”

- Response from public consultation

## Issue

The cost of housing in Toronto is expensive for many older adults and has a significant impact on quality of life.



**14**

**...take steps to increase older Torontonians' access to affordable housing.**

Older Torontonians wish to be able to live independently in their homes and to live in communities of their choosing. To do so, some older adults require assistance to ensure barrier-free homes and in-home care and support services.



**15**

**...enable older Torontonians to live independently in their own homes by helping them to make necessary repairs, alterations and barrier-free modifications and to access in-home care and support services.**

Torontonians want to be assured of access to a range of long-term care homes and services for those who need them.



**16**

**...provide a continuum of high quality long-term care services to eligible older Torontonians in both long-term care homes and the community and will advocate for necessary funding from the Province of Ontario.**

Strategy Recommendations

## Transportation



### What the City Does Now

- Working to improve the safety of streets and sidewalks by providing safe, visible and accessible pedestrian crossings, with visible zebra pavement markings for crosswalks, and enhanced pedestrian crosswalks at mid-block crossings.
- Updating pedestrian signals to include countdown timers and installing accessible audible crossing signals at all new intersections across Toronto and on a request basis.
- Implementing traffic calming measures in local communities to improve the quality of life for residents and increase the safety of non-motorized users of the street.
- Toronto Transit Commission offers a discounted fare to riders aged 65 and older.
- All TTC buses and subway trains are accessible.
- Conducts annual sidewalk inspections to identify and correct safety issues.
- Provides a sidewalk snow clearing program for older adults (on an application basis) where sidewalk snow clearing is not a regular City service.
- Ensures snow is cleared from inside and around transit shelters.
- Residents may access information and report concerns with road and sidewalk maintenance and snow clearing by calling 311 Toronto.

## Issue

## Recommendation

The City of Toronto will...

Many older Torontonians have difficulty finding affordable transportation to get where they need to go.



**17** ...increase affordable transportation options for older Torontonians.

Some conditions in the public transportation system can present barriers that prevent older adults from accessing vehicles and finding accessible routes to get to their destination.



**18** ...improve the accessibility of the public transportation network.

Some conditions on sidewalks and street crossings can present barriers to pedestrians with mobility limitations.



**19** ...improve the accessibility of its sidewalks and crossings.

Older adults account for a disproportionate share of pedestrian fatalities and injuries in Toronto.



**20** ...to improve the safety of pedestrians and take steps to reduce the number of pedestrian and vehicular collisions.

Strategy Recommendations

## Outdoor Spaces & Buildings



### What the City Does Now

- Preparing all City buildings and public spaces to comply with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

#### Issue

#### Recommendation

The City of Toronto will...

Some conditions can present barriers that prevent older adults from accessing outdoor spaces and buildings.



**21** ...make it easier for older Torontonians to find their way around and access its public spaces and buildings.

Toronto's diverse older adults do not always feel safe and secure in their communities.



**22** ...help its diverse older adult residents feel safe and secure by improving the safety of its facilities and public spaces.

## Communications & Information



### What the City Does Now

- Uses accessible language to provide information to residents in a manner in which they can easily understand.
- 311 is a simple three-digit phone number to call for information about City of Toronto services and programs, or to make a request for service. Residents, visitors and businesses no longer have to try to find the right division or individual at the City to get information or help. Callers can get information about everything from Toronto Public Library hours of operation, to reporting a missed garbage pick-up, to finding out where the closest flu clinic is located.
- 311 customer service representatives have instant access to interpreters who speak more than 180 languages.



**Issue****Recommendation**

The City of Toronto will...

Many of Toronto's diverse older adults are not fully aware of the range of programs available to them.



**23** ...better promote its programs and services to diverse older adults.

Toronto's diverse older adult population has varied information needs. City of Toronto communications can be difficult for older Torontonians to understand.



**24** ...ensure that as wide an audience as possible has a clear understanding of its communications.

Some older adults experience technological barriers to accessing information.



**25** ...reduce technological barriers to information.

“Who can seniors contact if they need help? Is there someone in charge of ‘Senior’s Affairs?’”

- Response from public consultation

## Next Steps

### **This Strategy will deliver its first progress report in 2015.**

As part of a regular reporting process, staff from each of the City's participating divisions, agencies, boards, and commissions will meet with leaders from community, academic, medical, and seniors' advocacy organizations. Together, they will review the results of the progress report and then propose any refinements, additional actions, or opportunities for partnerships for the ongoing implementation of the strategy. City staff will also present the results of the monitoring report to the Toronto Seniors' Forum and seek their suggestions for improvements to the Strategy.

Continual monitoring and evaluation by City staff and community partners will ensure that the Toronto Seniors Strategy remains a living document, one which can adapt to the evolving needs of older Torontonians.

**For more information on this Strategy and  
ways that you can get involved, contact:**

Andrea Austen

Policy Development Officer

Social Development, Finance & Administration Division, City of Toronto

14th Floor East Tower, Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

416-392-5397    [aausten@toronto.ca](mailto:aausten@toronto.ca)    [www.toronto.ca/seniors](http://www.toronto.ca/seniors)



Call **3-1-1**