

City of Ottawa Older Adult Plan

Feedback from Chinese Seniors (Kanata Chinese Seniors Support Centre, KCSSC)

November 25, 2011

Outdoor spaces/buildings

Roads/sidewalks/parks:

- many Chinese seniors walk; road/sidewalk conditions are very important
- road conditions in Kanata Lakes area are fine.
- 'I walk a lot. Sometimes fear walking on street (from Jackman Terrace to the 97 bus stop) because there's no sidewalk. It's okay in summer, I can walk on the grass, but in winter, I have to walk on the street. Smaller streets like Jackman Terrace get snow cleared last; I can't get out if roads are not cleared.'
- Not enough sidewalks in that entire area (near Kanata Leisure Centre); huge safety issue for seniors
- 'I walk to the library every day but snow is not removed every day; hard to walk'
- 'I go to the library to learn English but the bridge between Food Basics and the other side is not cleaned well, not salted often and very slippery (on both sides)'
- 'Fear crossing streets – not all traffic lights have timers on the cross-walk so I don't know how long I have to cross'
- Since Sept. 4th bus changes, the posted schedules on bus stops were not updated so people were confused
- Parks are good, beautiful but not clean. Twice a year 'clean up the capital' is not enough. Lots of cigarette butts on ground. Should add more garbage cans in all parks.

Transportation/buses:

- Bus #168 does not have direction listed on front of bus ('B' or 'K') so we don't know where it's going... but the new 168 route is better than the old route (thank you!)
- Language barrier – we don't know where to get information; there should be different languages posted, especially with the high numbers of multicultural seniors in the Kanata Lakes community
- 'I take bus all the time, Mon/Wed/Fri, but need more free days on bus. Chinese seniors don't have incomes, live with their families, and need more opportunities to get out'

Housing:

- Seniors are old; do not have several years to wait for subsidized social housing. There is an immediate need in Kanata.

- Lots of Chinese seniors in Kanata, most live with their children – want to stay in Kanata as they age; need seniors housing

Social and Recreation Services:

- KCSSC uses SS#1 building on Goldridge Drive for organized social gatherings and recreation; far too small and cost for rental is a challenge since Chinese seniors don't have incomes
- At least 300 Chinese seniors from Kanata Lakes area participate regularly but many more are not participating yet; culturally, they need to be reached out to and invited/included, and their adult children need to know and trust the person/organization/program that the seniors are getting involved with
- There are high numbers of Chinese seniors in Kanata-South, Bridlewood area! Many more would participate if there was language support. It improves mental health of seniors to participate.
- At Kanata Seniors' Centre (KSS), there should be Chinese (Mandarin)-speaking staff because of the high number of Chinese seniors in Kanata; right now there are very few Chinese seniors participating in any KSS programs because of the language barrier. Many Chinese seniors rely solely on community volunteer (Wen Jean) for interpretation but that is not fair to her or sustainable
- Need to develop Kanata Chinese Seniors' Support Centre (KCSSC); there needs to be a paid, formalized position dedicated to Chinese seniors' needs
- In city parks, there are lots of activities for children but not for seniors; there is a cost associated when seniors gather and want to use space in parks, e.g. for self-organized Tai Chi.
- Barrier to participating in social/recreational activities is transportation. One woman spends her own money (but doesn't have an income) on picking up other Chinese seniors so they can participate
- Barrier to participating is cost: '99.9% of Chinese seniors in Kanata Lakes live with their children; and they have no incomes (rely totally on their adult children). Chinese seniors need to be physically active but there is a lack of services.'
- Barrier is cultural differences – very important for adult children to know/trust where their parents are going and who with. Seniors need to be invited and drawn out in a supportive way.

Community Supports and Health Services:

- Have to buy own health insurance while waiting for immigration status; this is slow process and sometimes takes 3-4 years
- Health costs are alleviated when seniors participate in society, in activities, in physical recreation, in community events
- There are a wide range of government services by various levels of government but language is a barrier in all of them; thus not available to Chinese seniors

- Want to see dedicated support for Kanata Chinese Seniors' Support Centre; it would solve lots of costs and problems for government and health services
- Language barrier – don't have information on health and services thus don't access them, thus health deteriorates
- Need consultation/counselling services, mental health services that are linguistically and culturally accessible
- Want to solve problems locally and not travel downtown to Chinese Community Support Centre
- Don't go to flu clinics because don't know about them; one Chinese info session had about 40 people participate but there are hundreds of other seniors who did not get the information and then they don't get the flu shot
- Home care, financial supports, food bank – cannot access these because there is no language support; don't even know about these services to begin with
- Paramedic service: one woman was hit by a car while crossing street with a stroller; scared and confused. Passer-by on bicycle spoke Chinese and helped with interpretation for Paramedics. Woman still not sure how ambulance bill was paid; worried about talking to her son about it, worried about the cost as she does not have an income
- Many hospitals provide language interpretation
- Professional credentials (health professionals) are not recognized in Canada; need better system to support turning foreign-trained workers getting high-skilled jobs in Canada

Civic Participation and Volunteering/Employment

- Lots of positive comments by all Chinese participants, e.g. 'feel good about it, feel like government cares (in this consultation)'
- One Chinese seniors composed this poem to express gratitude:

“Seniors in western and eastern are getting together from all walks of society; united; happy. For the benefit of seniors. Working together to contribute, to give ideas, to express their thinking, and their feelings and to give opinions and suggestions. Contributing is unlimited; I'm contributing all that I know to raise the issues and find solutions to benefit senior citizens. We hope the government will provide full support for this initiative and continue to care for senior citizens and about the happiness of seniors to enjoy their senior years.”
- Volunteer at Food Bank, happy to contribute to society and at City Councillor's picnic; feels good about today and about political participation
- Plant trees at library, clean up capital events, help children, help others with groceries (seniors get much benefit from participating)
- 'spiritually important to help others; seems like in helping others, good things come my way'

- With support from volunteer (Wen Jean), coming out of lonely home more often and participating; 'I feel like I'm getting younger and younger, like mental health is improving'
- 'Happy that society values my opinion and holds events like this; listens to me. Otherwise, I would be home doing chores'
- 'very good meeting; appreciate Canadian society and valuing of opinions of ordinary citizens'
- 'want to give to society, want to contribute and will participate in ALL volunteer activities when they are available and organized and seniors know about the opportunities'
- 'thank government and councillors for inviting minorities to this event; appreciate the democracy'
- Want to participate more in social activities and volunteering
- Want to see mentoring of Chinese seniors living here for a long time matched with newer newcomers to Kanata/Canada
- Some government and Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre (WOCRC) services provide supports for Chinese seniors to get involved but it's not enough and it's not formalized (e.g. at today's consultation, language interpretation is by community volunteer and note-taking is by WOCRC staff, taking the day to support the inclusion of Chinese seniors)
- Chinese seniors want to participate, want to contribute to society, want to volunteer, are eager to give but cannot because lacking language supports
- 'hope government pays more attention to Chinese seniors who need resources in order to give back to society'
- There's no opportunity to participate in this consultation if not for volunteer language interpretation!
- Very willing and eager to participate but need the information in order to participate (if not for volunteer, would not have known about today's consultation)
- Cannot drive/don't have licences. Need transportation to get to volunteering/civic events
- By participating, gain so many benefits and want to participate more and more
- Yes, efforts are recognized, feel appreciated for volunteer efforts
- Felt good / recognized for spring clean up event and want to do it more often
- Need information about opportunities to volunteer
- There is a fear about volunteering because Chinese seniors don't know what the expectations are and don't know if they are capable. It's very important to have the opportunities to try volunteering and to try participating to see if they can do it. Then, seniors want to volunteer more and more.

- Chinese Community Service Centre is downtown and focused on immediate integration of newcomers to Canada; these are not the needs in Kanata. Here, we need more health promotion and community development to increase health and participation of Chinese seniors
- Honorariums are greatly appreciated especially as Chinese seniors do not have incomes; they take every penny of any honorariums earned and give it back to the Kanata Chinese Seniors' Support Centre, to help its development

Communication and Information:

- No use for 2-1-1 or 3-1-1 or 9-1-1 if language services are not available. Seniors may not even know about these services/numbers
- Total reliance on adult children for information (question from note-taker: what about violence in the home, elder abuse, violence against older women, etc?). 'We just live with it'. Suggest focus group to discuss this important issue (WOCRC will facilitate this with Chinese seniors).
- Even more isolating is the trend of increasingly alone Chinese seniors – their adult children have lost high-tech or other jobs and moved to USA or back to China, leaving their parents behind in Kanata. The seniors' only access to information/communication is gone.
- Don't access services because don't know about them
- None of the information (t.v., radio, newsprint, in-person) gets to Chinese seniors because they only read Chinese newspapers. Local free papers are only in English! Suggest running ads/info in Chinese media.
- There's lots of effort from government to communicate but none of it is accessible for Chinese seniors

Other comments:

- Hope to see meetings like this once a year or more, with increased participation by many minority groups
- Kanata Chinese Seniors Support Centre is in development phase; needs support to become a sustainable, formalized agency to support all these topics as discussed today

Thank you!