

Seniors Quality of Life: The Regina Project – October 2000 Update

We have completed Phase 1 of the Regina Seniors' Quality of Life Project. We have recently applied to Health Canada for funding to implement Phase 2 which will be called *Quality of Life: Information and Action for Health Aging*.

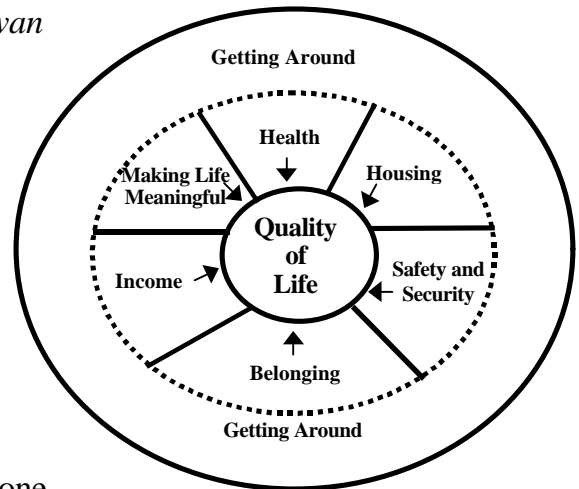
Taking action to enhance Saskatchewan seniors' quality of life is the focus of *Quality of Life: Information and Action for Healthy Aging*.

BACKGROUND

This project is phase 2 of *Improving the Quality of Life of Saskatchewan Seniors*. *Improving the Quality of Life of Saskatchewan Seniors* is part of a Canada-wide activity administered by the Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto (with funding from Health Canada). The project operates in eight centres across Canada. In Saskatchewan, the project is managed by the Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina.

Phase 1 of *Improving the Quality of Life of Saskatchewan Seniors* was completed during Spring 2000. During Phase 1, the following was accomplished:

- The factors that affect seniors' quality of life were identified. These are illustrated in the diagram on the right. These factors are:
 - **Health** – refers to physical and mental health. Health has two dimensions – maintaining good health and appropriate treatment for illness and poor health.
 - **Income** – refers to having enough money so that one doesn't go without necessities or worry excessively about the future.
 - **Belonging** – refers to relationships with family and friends and to feeling part of a community (community of interest or geographic community).
 - **Making life meaningful** – refers to finding meaningful ways to use one's time and to feeling that one is making a contribution.



- **Housing** – refers to the availability of appropriate, affordable housing.
- **Safety and security** – refers to living without fear of violence and danger.
- **Getting around** – refers to availability of transportation and to removing barriers such as steps and icy sidewalks that make it difficult for seniors to get around. Getting around is shown on the diagram as a circle that encompasses all other aspects of quality of life. People’s ability to get around affects their capacity to connect with others, to do interesting things, to do everyday chores such as shopping, to get health care, and to enjoy life.
- An *Action Plan* was developed which makes recommendations to municipal, provincial and federal governments and community as a whole.
- Materials to support action by seniors were prepared. These materials are:
 - *Speak Up, Speak Out* – which offers seniors ideas for strategies to influence government decision-makers and public opinion.
 - *Speaking Notes* – a script for a 20-minute presentation on the recommendations in the *Action Plan*.
 - *Workshop* – a plan for an interactive workshop that encourages seniors to “speak up, speak out” on issues that concern them.
 - *Elected Officials* – a list of provincial MLAs and relevant MPs and cabinet ministers that seniors can contact.
- An *Evaluation Report* for Phase 1 of the project was prepared.

All of these documents are available on-line at both the Seniors’ Education Centre’s website (www.uregina.ca/extension/seniors) and the National Seniors’ Quality of Life (University of Toronto) website (www.utoronto.ca/seniors).

Copies of all the documents described above were presented to Judy Junor, the minister responsible for seniors in Saskatchewan, and letters describing the project were written to relevant cabinet ministers, city councillors and senior civil servants.

Ms. Junor, several city councillors, the Leader of the Opposition, several deputy ministers and several other decision makers visited the Seniors’ Education Centre to learn more about the *Seniors’ Quality of Life Project*.

QUALITY OF LIFE: INFORMATION AND ACTION FOR HEALTHY AGING

Quality of Life: Information and Action for Healthy Aging will extend the work done during Phase 1 of the *Improving Saskatchewan Seniors' Quality of Life* project and represents Phase 2 of this project. Phase 2 has two major goals:

- To equip seniors with skills and confidence to speak out to government and community decision makers and influence policies, systems and procedures that affect their lives.
- To influence government and community decision makers so that public policy and public services better reflect the needs and priorities of seniors.

These goals will be achieved by:

- recruiting and training seniors to be speakers on the factors that affect seniors' quality of life and on ways that seniors can influence the policies, systems and procedures that affect their lives.
- identifying seniors' groups and other community groups that would welcome a speaker and booking an appropriate speaker from among those who have been trained. The *Speaking Notes* prepared during Phase 1 of this project will provide a foundation for these presentations.
- recruiting and training seniors to deliver interactive workshops to other seniors on ways they can influence public policy. For example, there might be workshops on letter-writing and on lobbying. The *Workshop* plan developed during Phase 1 of this project will provide a foundation for these workshops.
- organizing a Provincial Symposium that brings together seniors who are "speaking up" and "speaking out" on their own behalf.
- encouraging seniors, in all training sessions, presentations, workshops and the Provincial Symposium, to "speak up, speak out" about the issues that concern them.
- contracting a project coordinator who will organize and coordinate activity.

Throughout the project, government and community decision makers will be encouraged to think about the impact of their decisions on seniors. Some issues may be simple, such as holding meetings in accessible buildings so seniors can participate. Other issues may be complex, such as organizing public transportation so that seniors without cars and those with disabilities can get out regularly. Some issues may involve expenditure of money, for example, housing and transportation. Others may involve attitudinal change, such as addressing medical professionals' tendency to patronize older people.

This project is aimed at strengthening the capacity of our communities and our province to support healthy aging by fostering support networks, caring communities, and appropriate health and social systems.

DURATION

Quality of Life: Information and Action for Healthy Aging is a three-year project.

- **Year 1 (January 1, 2001 – March 31, 2001):**
 - Speakers and workshop leaders will be recruited from Regina and nearby rural areas, and speeches and workshops will be offered in the City of Regina and adjacent rural communities.
 - *Speak Up, Speak Out* and *Improving Seniors' Quality of Life Action Plan* will be printed for distribution at events and in seniors' centres.
- **Year 2 (April 1, 2001 – March 31, 2002):**
 - Speakers and workshop leaders will be recruited from throughout southern Saskatchewan, and presentations and workshops will be available to communities throughout the southern half of the province.
 - A Provincial Symposium on the topic of *Speak Up, Speak Out* will be held to draw together seniors and other stakeholders.
- **Year 3 (April 1, 2002 – March 31, 2003):**
 - Speakers and workshop leaders will be recruited province-wide, and presentations and workshops will be available throughout all of Saskatchewan.

There will be an interim evaluation at the end of the second year and a final evaluation at the end of the third year.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A nine-person Advisory Committee provided direction for Phase 1 of the project. This Committee is continuing its work throughout Phase 2. The members of the Advisory Committee are:

- Beth Smith (chair) – Retired educator; Board Member, Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina.
- Martha Wettstein (vice-chair) – Retired nursing administrator; Past President and current board member, Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina.
- Dr. Frank Bellamy – Retired school administrator; retired Director of Science and Mathematics, Curriculum Branch, Saskatchewan Education; President, Saskatchewan Seniors' Mechanism; member of several other seniors' organizations.
- Louella Cassell – Regina Housing Authority tenant.
- Blenda Ramsay – Active in disability community.
- Dr. Colin M. Smith – Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, University of Saskatchewan; Treasurer, Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina; semi-retired.

- Jeanne Wassill – Retired obstetrical nurse at the, then, Grey Nuns’ Hospital; Director of Patient Care at Santa Maria Nursing Home for 13 years; Executive Director of Senior Citizens Service of Regina for one year; volunteer community activist for the last six years; presently on board of Regina Seniors’ Centre; volunteer with Wascana Home Care; member of Senior Power; also involved with yearly immunization clinics and giving injections of interferon to advanced MS victims.
- Rev. Dr. Don King (ex-officio), Director, Seniors’ Education Centre, University of Regina; ordained minister; former President of Luther College. University of Regina; manager of *Improving the Quality of Life of Saskatchewan Seniors*.
- Bruce Rice (ex-officio), Senior Policy Advisor, Social Development Division, City of Regina.

PARTNERS

Partners for Phase 1 of the project were:

- National Seniors Quality of Life Project (administered by the Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto)
- City of Regina
- Regina Health District

These partners will continue their collaboration throughout Phase 2 of the project. Additional partners throughout the rest of Saskatchewan will be sought at the end of the second year, so that the project can be delivered province-wide in the third year.