

Quality Of Life — What's It To You?

Most of us know what a “quality” life is — it is life at its best, a life that is full of the people and things we value most. We hear a lot about quality of life these days, mostly because many people are concerned with the “quality” of their lives. They ask, “How good is my life anyway? Is my life the best it can be for me?”

When it comes to your life, “quality” means something quite unique to you. The things you value, the people you associate with, the things you enjoy doing, what gives you the most pleasure — all these are things that are unique to you. Someone else probably wouldn't enjoy everything in your life, nor would you enjoy everything in theirs. But that's what is fascinating about human nature.

An interesting project conducted by the Centre for Health Promotion at the University of Toronto looked at ways government actions affect seniors' quality of life. In eight cities across Canada, including Toronto and Ottawa, we asked hundreds of informed seniors: How do government decisions affect your life?

Government decisions do affect seniors' lives, sometimes in positive ways, but all too often in negative ways. In the new millennium, seniors have grave concerns in many areas. Some of the key concerns are:

- availability of affordable housing
- lack of appropriate long term care services and facilities, including home care
- declining hospital services
- affordable and accessible public transportation
- promoting healthy lifestyles through local public health, education, and recreation programs
- access to information about services and issues
- consideration for diverse cultural backgrounds
- having adequate income

One problem that arises within all of these concerns is that seniors feel that their issues are not being heard by governments at all levels.

This report is unique in that it reflects seniors' own views of how government actions influence their well-being.

Do you want to learn more? The project's website, www.utoronto.ca/seniors, contains the full report. You may print and distribute it if you wish.

What will you learn? First and foremost, if you are a senior, caregiver, or service provider, you are not alone. There are many others who share your concerns. Secondly, the project's report has an Action Plan that shows you what you can do to make a difference. The Action Plan contains specific ideas that individuals and organizations can use to bring about change in government decisions. We can each do something, so check it out.

Quality of life — what's it to you? Everything, that's all!

Submitted by Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto