



A Community For All Ages

Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative
Year 3 Final Evaluation Report - April 2013

Prepared by
Niagara Connects
(formerly Niagara Research and Planning Council)
on behalf of the
Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative



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In late 2009, the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative (NAFCI) was awarded a 3-year grant (2010 - 2013) from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, to promote awareness of World Health Organization (WHO) age-friendly principles, and local action toward making Niagara a more age-friendly community for people of all ages, with a special focus on older adults.

In 2010, the Initiative was piloted in the City of Welland. There, a community engagement and action plan was established, as a basis for encouraging age-friendly action in all twelve of the local municipalities throughout Niagara.

By April 2012, over 100 citizens from across Niagara had participated in a total of twelve age-friendly round-table focus groups. Their thoughts and ideas provided a basis to advance local age-friendly action in communities throughout Niagara.

Common themes for age-friendly action priorities are:

- **Respect and appreciation for all** - leveraging the power of intergenerational opportunities, and valuing the wisdom of seniors' advisory committees to guide local planning;
- **Information availability and knowledge transfer** - utilizing age-friendly communication practices across all sectors, Niagara-wide; and
- **Accessibility and mobility** - applying walkability and transit lenses to our planning, so that citizens are connected to their community, and vulnerable people have access to health and human services.

NAFCI is supported by the following community partners:

- Rose City Seniors Foundation
- Niagara Region
- City of Welland
- Welland Senior Citizens' Advisory Committee
- Niagara Connects (formerly known as Niagara Research and Planning Council).

Older Adults in Niagara at a Glance:

According to Statistics Canada 2011 Community Profiles, Niagara is home to 81,060 persons over the age of 65. Seniors (65 years of age and older) represent 18.8% of the total population of Niagara, which is a bit lower than the Ontario rate of 20.6%. The rate is expected to climb to represent 28.8% of the population by 2036 (Ministry of Finance Ontario Population Projections Update 2010-2036).

Statistics Canada (2010) and Ontario Ministry of Finance projections show that by 2036 the number of older adults living in Niagara is expected to increase by 91.4%. The rate of growth of seniors in Niagara is slightly lower than the projections for Ontario, which suggest that the rate of seniors provincially will increase by 126% by 2036. (Ministry of Finance Ontario Population Projections Update 2010-2036).



-Focus on 'Seniors in Niagara' Niagara Community Observatory Policy Brief

A NAFCI project launch event held in October, 2010 in Welland was attended by over 100 people.

The launch featured highlights of a 2009 policy brief prepared by the Niagara Community Observatory (NCO) at Brock University: "Seniors in Niagara: Creating Age-Friendly Communities".

The brief points out that:

- Most seniors in Niagara are aging in place, as long-term residents
- Adults over the age of 65 make up over 17% of Niagara's population, and that percentage is growing.
- Seniors give to the community of Niagara: almost 70% of Niagara's seniors provide assistance in the form of time and money, to spouses, children, grandchildren, friends, and neighbours; almost 40% volunteer hundreds of thousands of hours each year, particularly in health and long-term care institutions; and seniors donate about 20% of their after-tax income to charities as compared to 7% donated by younger people.
- Older adults vote at higher rates than other age groups.
- Seniors are an economic force in Niagara, and thus are driving marketplace innovations, particularly in the areas of health/wellness and construction for accessibility.
- Citizens are remaining in the workforce longer, and embarking on encore careers as older adults.
- Although Niagara's average incomes are lower than in other parts of Canada, younger seniors tend to have higher net worth than average; however incomes drop substantially for people in their eighties - people are living longer, thus costs of long-term care may be a challenge.

The brief cites the following as "what Niagara's Seniors want":

- community engagement;
- independence via accessible transportation;
- sound economic, social & physical planning policy;
- consumer-focused health care services;
- open spaces & accessible buildings;
- accessible recreation facilities;
- libraries & other low-cost services;
- alternative methods of communication; and
- safe communities.

NCO Policy Brief #2b, October 1, 2009: http://www.brocku.ca/webfm_send/7491



"Even small actions make a difference" - - NAFCI focus group participant, Welland, Fall, 2010

Year 1 project activity, based in Welland, included the following achievements:

- A NAFCI Community Coordinator position was established, to support facilitation of this Ontario Trillium Foundation funded project, create tool kits, communications products and tools to engage citizens, and assist with formation of local age-friendly action committees across Niagara.
- A project Management committee and Vision committee created a Niagara-wide framework for applying age-friendly principles.
- The Welland Age-Friendly Local Action Committee's work resulted in municipal actions such as increasing the number of park benches to improve walkability and enjoyment for older adults and a commitment for larger text for improved readability on new street signs going forward.
- A regular age-friendly column guest-written by NAFCI volunteers was launched in partnership with the Niagara This Week newspaper.
- A NAFCI web presence was created on the Niagara Region website, at:
<http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/seniors/agefriendly/default.aspx>
- Three main themes emerged for applying an age-friendly lens to planning:
 - (1) Better communication practices;
 - (2) Improved accessibility for all; and
 - (3) A community culture valuing older adults.



Twelve age-friendly focus groups were held across Niagara between November 2011 and April 2012, gathering the opinions and ideas of over 100 citizens. These focus groups built upon the ones held for the pilot phase, in the City of Welland. They were held in Fort Erie, Grimsby, Lincoln, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Port Colborne, St. Catharines, Thorold, Wainfleet and West Lincoln.

The focus group conversations provided insights into ways we can help older adults to live healthy, active lives, and gathered participants' ideas for improving age-friendliness in their community. Of those that participated in the focus groups, 78% were female and 21% were male.

Common themes for action emerged from the focus group discussions; aligning with findings from the Welland pilot phase. Following is a summary.

1. Information Availability and Knowledge Transfer:

1.1 Streamline information - Many participants voiced challenges with knowing where to get information and a lack of consistency with information dissemination. The 211 Information Niagara service was promoted at all of the sessions. In many sessions, participants voiced challenges around service providers and agencies putting all of their information online, as the majority of participants do not have access to a computer or did not know how to use computers. There were many statements made regarding the complexity of navigating through automated telephone systems and online inquiries.

1.2 Have service providers/agencies initiate information sessions - For example, police sessions focused on safety (crimes against seniors); education institutions' role in helping us further our knowledge (Brock, Niagara College, Continuing Education, local classes); health care providers or advocates to help us navigate through complex systems to learn more about health; Niagara Regional Services so that we can better understand and/or can contribute to improved services (Public Health Department, Regional Transportation)

1.3 Better overall information - Many of the roundtable conversations were informal information-sharing sessions about a wide range of topics, including transportation, education availability, volunteer opportunities, where to go for assistance with particular issues and 211 Information Niagara. In all of the communities, there was a general lack of having a central point of printed or posted information about upcoming events and new services / existing service availability.

2. Accessibility and Mobility:

2.1 Transportation - This was a key theme that emerged. Walkability and public access to transportation were both considered issues, with a particular focus on bus stops / sidewalk maintenance / snow clearing near high-density senior areas or their destinations (i.e., senior centers/medical buildings). It was further suggested that information related to Regional Transportation be better publicized and that Regional Meetings and Public Niagara-wide meetings be conducted with regard to transportation. Many indicated that they would like to be more involved, however, could not as their participation was limited to the bus schedules. Taxi availability (for smaller areas) and fare costs were also consistently discussed as a major challenge.

2.2 Policing / Bylaw enforcement – Many participants indicated that they would like to see more police enforcement in high traffic areas with particular emphasis on areas where many seniors live. By-Law enforcement was also consistently discussed in relation to bicycles on the sidewalks, youth loitering, public park responsibility (particularly with dog owners).

2.3 Housing / Public Buildings – Increasing accessible and affordable housing alternatives and raising awareness among developers to be mindful of older adults' concerns was emphasized. Participants stressed that new developments must have sidewalks, and that it is vital to ensure accessibility in areas where many seniors live and visit. Additionally, participants emphasized that a priority be placed on making "public" buildings accessible for those with mobility challenges. Ensuring that adequate accessible parking is available and that those spaces are close to building entries was commonly discussed.

3. Respect and Appreciation:

3.1 Intergenerational Interaction – Many of the participants indicated that they would like to be part of intergeneration projects or to have interaction with younger people. Many suggestions were provided (i.e. have youth teach us to use computers, be a part of the school system or have schools come and visit us). Those cities that had a seniors' advisory council expressed their appreciation for a formal place to go and be heard.

3.2 Respect – Respect for older adults was a theme that emerged in different ways. Volunteer appreciation and opportunities for older adults to be engaged in civic life was a common discussion. Those that were active in volunteer groups discussed that they appreciated when agencies rewarded them for helping out. However, participants argue that agencies need to be mindful of limitations (e.g., standing for long periods of time) and to be respectful of what volunteers signed on for. Respect was also discussed in relation to older adults as consumers – many said that retailers should be provided senior sensitivity training and/or that seniors be part of the staff to ensure that younger employees were more aware of senior-related issues. Historical information (or lack of) was also discussed in several groups, especially that those providing information should collaborate with older adults that have the lived experiences. Also, the opinion of seniors should be considered when implementing new services or providing services that directly affect them - they should be provided with options (i.e., support aging in place, give seniors power over spending dollars, home care providers).



In March of 2013, Niagara Connects sent an invitation to complete an online survey to members of the NAFCI Management and Vision Committees. Of the twenty-four people invited to complete the survey, thirteen people responded, for a 54% response rate.

In April of 2013, an invitation to complete a similar online survey was sent to twenty Age-Friendly champions active in their particular local area of Niagara. Of these, twelve people completed the survey, for a 60% response rate.

Both groups were asked to rank the overall effectiveness of NAFCI, on a scale of 1 to 10, (with 1 being not at all effective and 10 being very effective), in terms of:

- Raising awareness among the Niagara-wide community about Age-Friendly principles; and
- Engaging local citizens to lead Age-Friendly action in Niagara's local municipalities.

Both groups' responses indicated that the majority believed NAFCI was about "fifty per cent of the way there" in terms of raising Niagara-wide awareness about Age-Friendly, and about "forty per cent of the way there" in terms of engaging local citizens in Age-Friendly actions.

Respondents were asked a series of questions around what project actions made the biggest difference toward raising awareness about Age-Friendly, what things about the project they believe would have benefited from receiving more attention or emphasis, and what they would do if they had unlimited resources to promote Age-Friendly. The following three overall themes emerged from their responses.

1. Continue to Build Age-Friendly Momentum across Niagara - Acknowledge that community development initiatives and broad social change take time. Continue to patiently work together to build momentum leading to Niagara-wide acceptance of Age-Friendly principles as important for improved quality of life in Niagara. Track levels of Age-Friendly activity in local areas across Niagara, and support connectedness among local Age-Friendly leaders with tools such as information resources, knowledge-sharing opportunities, and connections to emerging Age-Friendly intelligence from around the globe.

2. Position Age-Friendly principles as a Best Practice Lens for planning - Profile testimonials and concrete examples to raise awareness about the 'return on investment' from applying Age-Friendly principles in Niagara's communities. Age-Friendly practices, at their root, are about "helping each other", and connecting citizens for a strengthened community. Strategies for business and/or organizational success, seniors aging at home, efficient deployment of health care dollars, and integrated person-centered health and human service delivery are strengthened by viewing them through an Age-Friendly lens.

3. Lead a Culture of Practical Goal-setting for Local Age-Friendly Action - Attract community Age-Friendly advocates and champions to promote actions, and leaders to support local Age-Friendly initiatives by focusing on tangible issues of common interest.

Six-Step Guide to Becoming an Age-Friendly Community



The Age-Friendly Community Action Committee in the City of Welland, the pilot municipality for NAFCI, prepared a concise document to help other municipalities expedite Age-Friendly action. Entitled “Six-Step Guide to Becoming an Age-Friendly Community”, it is based on a 2011 Age-Friendly Community guide from the BC Ministry of Health, Seniors’ Healthy Living Secretariat. The Welland document is provided at the end of this document, in Appendix 1, on page 9 and 10.

NAFCI Community Update Events



Two Niagara Age-Friendly events were held, on November 9, 2012 and April 8, 2013. Highlights of these are included as appendices to this report.

NAFCI Community Update Meeting - November 9, 2012

See Appendix 2, pages 11 to 18

Exploring a Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan Forum – April 8, 2013

See Appendix 3, pages 19 to 30

Appendix 1

Six-Step Guide to Becoming an Age-Friendly Community

by the Welland Age-Friendly Local Action Committee, 2013

Based on *Becoming An Age-Friendly Community: Local Government Guide*, 2011, Seniors' Healthy Living Secretariat, BC Ministry of Health.

Step by Step Guide to becoming an Age-Friendly community	Comments on Process and Outcomes	Lessons Learned
<p>Step 1: Establish an Age-Friendly Committee</p>	<p>Welland utilized the city's Senior Citizens Advisory Committee (SCAC) to champion an Age-Friendly local action committee.</p> <p>Through partnerships (Niagara Region/ Rose City Seniors Foundation/City of Welland/Niagara Connects - (formerly Niagara Research and Planning Council), an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant was obtained to launch the initiative, that included Welland as the pilot. (Without the grant much of the work would not have been completed.)</p>	<p>For Niagara, it is important to have the integral support of local and regional council.</p>
<p>Step 2: Pass a Local Council or District Board Resolution</p>	<p>The SCAC, a well-respected committee of Council, requested its support for the Age-Friendly project. They subsequently endorsed the Age-Friendly principles and a councillor was appointed to work with the group.</p>	<p>Important to be well prepared in presenting to sell the idea to council.</p> <p>A leader in the community to sell the idea is critical to success.</p>
<p>Step 3: Conduct an Age-Friendly Assessment</p>	<p>Focus groups were held following the WHO Age-Friendly protocol in the fall of 2010.</p> <p>September 2011, Niagara Connects (formerly Niagara Research and Planning Council) completed Year 1 NAFCI evaluation narrative report; summary of report available at www.niagaraconnects.ca</p> <p>November 2012, Welland results are incorporated into a Niagara-wide report for all 12 municipalities. It is available on the Niagara Connects website.</p>	<p>A successful launch was held in June 2010 to build awareness of age-friendly before any focus groups were held. This is a good means to build awareness of the project.</p> <p>For focus groups - key players should be invited ie: Mayor, council reps, businesses and community agencies who deal with seniors or have aligned priorities.</p> <p>Should be promoted well in advance.</p> <p>Transportation needs should be reviewed to support seniors attending the focus groups.</p>

Step by Step Guide to becoming an Age-Friendly community	Comments on Process and Outcomes	Lessons Learned
Step 4: Develop and Publish an Action Plan	<p>September 2011 the action report was accepted by the Local Action Committee</p> <p>The action plan was shared with select NAFCI members and City Council representatives as well as community partners.</p>	<p>Continue to engage stakeholders in the process over time, eg. share outcomes and ask for feedback.</p>
Step 5: Implement the Action Plan	<p>Action members commit to supporting steps of plan</p> <p>Regular communication through articles submitted to Niagara this Week regarding Age-Friendly was a tool used to promote the action plan and build Age-Friendly profile</p> <p>Interviews with newspapers, local cable TV station helped to extend awareness of age-friendly community principles</p>	<p>Communication to group members and interested parties is vital.</p> <p>It is important to become aware of priorities of similar committees and where possible to partner on projects.</p>
Step 6: Monitor Age-Friendly Progress	<p>Update letter provided to Mayor and City Council in January 2012 and 2013 outlining progress of the previous year</p> <p>33 benches installed by City of Welland, along canal</p> <p>Commitment by City of Welland to install several outdoor washrooms along canal</p> <p>Street signs with larger font policy reviewed, to fast track the installation of signs throughout Niagara</p>	<p>Continuous follow-up is important.</p> <p>Mention of communities that support Age-Friendly by the World Health Organization is important.</p> <p>Considerable publicity of Age-Friendly actions is important. Small actions are worthy of promotion, eg. pharmacy that provides magnifying lenses for customers</p>

Appendix 2

NIAGARA AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY INITIATIVE Community Update Meeting - November 9, 2012 Welland Community Wellness Complex Presentations Summary

(Prepared by the Niagara Research and Planning Council, www.nrapc.com)

The Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative (NAFCI) was officially launched in Welland, Ontario on June 22, 2010. A Community Update meeting was held in the same location on November 9, 2012, to share Age-Friendly progress and achievements with the Niagara-wide community.

Approximately 70 citizens from across Niagara were present at the event, including volunteers involved in the work of Local Action Committees in each of Niagara's 12 local municipalities, members of the Management and Vision committees for the initiative, Niagara Region staff providing support to the project, and the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Coordinator.

Event accessibility was emphasized, as the meeting host, City of Welland, made audio available on 98.5 FM for attendees with assistive listening devices, and provided real-time captioning of each speaker's presentation on a large screen in the meeting room.

Presentations:

1. Welcome - Henry O'Keefe, Rose City Seniors' Foundation, and Welland Age-Friendly Local Action Committee

2. Introduction - Dominic Ventresca, Co-Chair, NAFCI Management Committee

- NAFCI partners include: Rose City Seniors' Foundation, Niagara Region, City of Welland, and the Niagara Research and Planning Council.
- Funding for the project is provided by the Ontario Trillium Foundation
- The Age-Friendly Community Coordinator was hired in 2010, to manage project activities, raise awareness and mobilize local citizens in each of Niagara's 12 local municipalities.
- Local Action Committees are in various stages of development throughout Niagara, to apply World Health Organization age-friendly principles at the local level, thus making Niagara's communities friendly for all ages.
- A Vision Committee was formed, including representatives with various perspectives across Niagara.
- The NAFCI Coordinator launched the initiative by engaging the respective mayors and seeking municipal councils' endorsements. Roundtable conversations were held with older adults in each local municipality, and citizens were engaged to form Local Action Committees to implement Age-Friendly principles according to each local community's needs and interests.
- This project will wind down in April, 2013. Plans are being made to ensure that Age-Friendly progress made across Niagara is sustained. Your input is welcomed, as we further this journey toward Niagara becoming an increasingly age-friendly community.
- Clarification: Age-Friendly initiatives focus on older adults with the full range of abilities; whereas Accessibility initiatives focus on accommodating needs of citizens with disabilities. These initiatives are complementary, with minimal overlap. There are some shared rules between the two, such as curb cuts and wide sidewalks, which will benefit older adults, disabled citizens, and people of all ages, such as parents with children in strollers. Age-friendly principles support a community for all ages.

3. Planning for Age-Friendly Communities - Mary Lou Tanner, President, Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI), and a Planner with Integrated Community Planning, Niagara Region.

- OPPI is the recognized voice of planning professionals, with over 3500 members who work in government, private practice, universities, and non-profit agencies in the field of urban and rural development, urban design and environmental planning, transportation and health providers, conservation, housing and economic development.
- Communities that plan for citizens to have access to public transit, and active transportation support public health
- When municipal planners take Niagara's aging demographic into consideration, they are also addressing the needs of children - age-friendly principles are good for citizens of all ages
- (eg. a sidewalk or walking trail wide enough for two adults to safely walk side-by-side is also wide enough for an adult holding a child's hand, or for wheelchair access)
- Investing in housing to make it affordable, accessible and allowing for mobility within is a wise investment in community
- When planning for age-friendly communities, we must pay attention to the big picture, citizens' day-to-day life, implementing accessibility and mobility in our communities for people of all ages.

4. Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative Project Evaluation - Mary Wiley, Executive Director, Niagara Research and Planning Council

- Niagara Research and Planning Council Mission: Generating knowledge that drives community action

Products:

- Living in Niagara report (2008, 2011)
- Niagara Knowledge Exchange
- Niagara Community Calendar
- Linking Niagara

Purpose of Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative Project Evaluation - to track project progress, accomplishments; - Provide relevant, reliable information for community partners, volunteers; - Basis for evidence-informed community action; - Document the Niagara-wide community's experience for future learning

Year 1 - Pilot Phase - Welland - April 2010 to March 2011

- 125 citizens were engaged through a total of 26 community presentations and 10 consultations (primarily Welland citizens, a few from Port Colborne and Pelham as well as some inter-municipal agency representatives)
- Of these, 76 older adults from Welland were involved in 3 Age-Friendly focus groups conducted by the NAFCI Community Coordinator, based on WHO Vancouver protocol

NAFCI Year 1 Evaluation Narrative Report (September, 2011)

- Summary of activities and engaged citizens' input during project pilot phase
- Served as basis for a template for engaging citizens in each of Niagara's local municipalities, to champion local community action toward applying Age-Friendly principles
- Recommendations for future actions, based on lessons learned from project's pilot phase in Welland

Year 1 Common Themes:

- A community culture of valuing older adults
- Better communication practices
- Improve accessibility for all

Year 2 Roundtable Conversations - October, 2011 to April 2012

- 12 Roundtable Conversations
- Over 100 participants
- Fort Erie, Grimsby, Lincoln, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Port Colborne, St Catharines, Thorold, Wainfleet, West Lincoln

Report: "Common Niagara-wide Themes of Age-Friendly Roundtable Conversations, October 2011 - April 2012" completed October 2012

- Qualitative report summarizing opinions of citizens, caregivers and service providers across Niagara
- Demographic profile of older adults in Niagara
- Goal of report: to begin to isolate elements of Age-Friendly community principles requiring further description and refinement, leading to local Age-Friendly community action across Niagara
- Also provides a profile of older adults in Niagara and a community profile for each of the 12 local municipalities

Themes:

- Respect and Appreciation
 - Information Availability and Knowledge Transfer
 - Access and Mobility
- (NB: These themes align well with those of the pilot phase in Welland)

Respect and Appreciation

- Intergenerational interaction - eg. youth teach older adults computer skills; older adults assist at schools
- Municipal Seniors' Advisory Councils appreciated as a formal avenue through which older adults' concerns are heard
- Respect - Opportunities for civic engagement, volunteer appreciation, agencies being mindful of seniors' limitations (eg. standing for long periods of time, clearly understanding 'what they have signed on for')
- Older adults as consumers - 'senior sensitivity training' for retailers (accessibility issues such as built environment aspects, readability of marketing materials - font sizes, white space), ; have some seniors on staff to help younger staff be more aware of seniors' issues
- Encourage collaboration that values the the historical perspective older adults can provide through their lived experience
- Consider opinions of seniors when implementing new services or providing services that directly affect them - provide them with options (i.e., support aging in place, give seniors power over spending dollars, home care providers).

Information Availability and Knowledge Transfer

- Streamline information
- Consistently promote 211
- Address complexity of navigating automated telephone systems and online inquiries, especially for older adults without computer skills and/or access to computers
- Have service providers/agencies initiate information sessions

- Police: crimes against seniors
- Education institutions: furthering knowledge through continuing education, local classes
- Health care providers/advocates to assist with navigation of complex systems
- Niagara Region services, eg. Public Health, Transportation, so that older adults can better understand and/or contribute to improved services
 - Better overall information re: volunteer opportunities, where to go for services and assistance, information about community events

Access and Mobility

- Transportation
 - walkability, public access to transportation - particular focus on bus stops/ sidewalk maintenance/ snow-clearing near high-density senior areas/destinations, such as seniors', medical buildings
 - A desire to be more engaged in issues around Regional Transportation
 - For more rural areas of the region, the issue of taxi availability/fare costs were identified as a challenge
 - Policing/bylaw enforcement - desire for enhanced enforcement in high traffic areas, particularly where seniors live - eg. bicycles on sidewalks, public park responsibilities
 - Housing/Public Buildings - increase accessible, affordable housing alternatives; raise awareness among developers of older adults' concerns around sidewalks, public building accessibility for people with mobility challenges, adequate accessible parking close to building entrances

Final phase of evaluation

- Continue to track project accomplishments, lessons learned
- Provide a final project evaluation report

5. Origins of Niagara Age-Friendly Action in Welland - Doug Rapelje, Welland Senior Citizens' Advisory Committee, & Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative Management Committee

- Origin of this project - Welland Senior Citizen Advisory Committee on April 10, 2009 presented recommendation to the city Council requesting endorsement for an age-friendly project, which was unanimously supported by Council, an important first step
- Followed by endorsement by the Niagara regional Council
- On October 1, 2009, in Welland, the project was officially launched with presentation of a policy brief by Brock University, entitled "Seniors in Niagara: Creating Age-Friendly Communities".
- Welland was the pilot municipality for the project, and was the first in Niagara to be recognized by the World Health Organization as being engaged in this project.
- All partners in the project working together are responsible for developments to date. The role of the Local Action Committees in each of Niagara's local municipalities will determine what directions the project will take in our individual communities throughout the region.
- Leger Marketing recently released a study that shows that Canadians 75 years of age and older are viewed as less important than younger people, and more than one third of Canadians admit to treating seniors differently than they would younger citizens. Among seniors who were polled, 41 per cent said they have been ignored or treated as invisible. 38 per cent feel they are treated like they have nothing to contribute and 27 per cent find they are assumed to be incompetent.

- Age discrimination rears its ugly wrinkled head when we see practices in our communities that are not senior-friendly. The Leger research shows that one third of seniors say that their medical concerns are often written off as a result of too many birthdays. The study suggests that through education, advertising and training of service providers, seniors could be better appreciated for their vitality, and negative attitudes could be reversed. We are doing this through Age-Friendly.
- At the same time, older Canadians need to take responsibility for how they are perceived. They need to recognize discrimination, and be prepared to fight it. What our Welland Local Action Committee wants is for our community to be welcoming, inclusive, supportive, accessible, offer choice, celebrate diversity, enable citizens' participation, promote use of seniors' abilities and skills and foster community pride. A true Age-Friendly Community will embrace and engage all ages. We are not here talking about seniors alone. We are talking about the importance of the interaction between seniors and younger people.
- Here in Welland, the Local Age-Friendly Action Committee (LAC) is a good example of the importance of creating such local Action Committees in each of our local municipalities - to identify the issues and needs at local level, where we can take action. For example, the Welland LAC was able to get more benches placed along the canal for seniors, so they could walk the path and have benches to stop for a rest. As well, Welland City Council has agreed to use larger print on street signs as they are replaced. The LAC is also considering developing a guide for Age-Friendly businesses. The LAC's work will be informed by the key themes outlined in the NAFCI Evaluation reports, which are available on the NAFCI website. And, we will continue to listen to the community, and take action.
- Important to note, re: Seniors Advisory Committees and Age-Friendly Local Action Committees - there are several models that can be considered. In Welland, we are considering presenting to Council a recommendation that the two committees be amalgamated, so that we have one sustainable voice speaking for seniors that engages as many different organizations as possible. Such a committee must inform and bring attention to the needs of seniors in the community.
- I believe the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative has promoted awareness over the last two and half years, in Niagara, of the WHO age-friendly principles and is fostering local action towards making Niagara a more friendly community for all ages.

6. City of Welland Perspective - Richard Morwald, Manager, Leisure Services, City of Welland, & Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative Management Committee

- Technology is amazing. The Real-Time Captioning service being provided today (which provides the captioning that you can see on the large screen, behind and to the right of the podium), is being instantly transcribed (quite a skill) by a lady named Margaret, who is located in Bedford, Ohio, United States.
- We are also providing FM access to audio, compatible with personal hearing devices. Although we have had a few small glitches with providing both of these technologies for you here today, the good news is that we are trying, and we are on a positive track on the learning curve toward it becoming more effective - and coincidentally, this is what Age-Friendly is all about. Not only will seniors benefit from use of this technology - younger people will also benefit. Just as with accessibility, when we make improvements and remove barriers for people with disabilities, we remove them for all people.

- Our facility today, the Welland Community Wellness Complex, is an age-friendly facility, not just because of its physical attributes and the fact that it is enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities; it has also to do with what is happening in the facility.
- For example, this week: On Monday, we hosted a forum for 100 students to dialogue on current issues surrounding citizen engagement and recreation and share stories about local initiatives of community development. On Tuesday evening, the sound of Latin music was inspiring adults to dance. As they participated in the Zoomba program, you would have observed a high school student mentoring a senior in computer skills (and also acquiring community service hours) - such an intergenerational program is a fine example of age-friendly principles in action. On Thursday morning, seniors enjoyed the therapeutic pool while at the same time, in this room, a group of children was making music and burning off energy. This morning, moms and babies were participating in yoga designed to help mothers build back strength and regain healthy balance while bonding with newborns.
- Here we are, wrapping up the week hosting partners from across Niagara, to focus on the important subject of Age-Friendly Communities. Welland City Council, as part of its healthy community goal is specifically building upon the Age-Friendly Initiative, to become a model city for creating an Age-Friendly community. That is quite a commitment.
- This commitment is where it starts - with support from decision-makers, to move the initiative forward, and link through into a strategic plan that touches on a number of City advisory committees, including seniors advisory, arts and culture, accessibility advisory, market square advisory, and most recently developed, our Welland Community Wellness Complex advisory committee.
- That sounds like a lot of committees, but our experience is that there is not duplication/overlap; in fact we are seeing that citizen involvement is leading to actions and results. We have committees that focus on particular subject areas, and, because of a solid foundation of strategic planning, they all run parallel to each other; they are effective because they work together. For example the arts and culture committee recognizes that accessibility is important so that citizens have access to their programming.
- Community engagement is part of the reason why Welland has achieved success in developing the plans and ideas of Council. The role of City staff is to facilitate, by being involved in the process from the beginning, and acting as resource people for the citizen groups. It starts with commitment to a plan and it has a ripple effect and gains power as more people become involved. Council involves citizens to develop the plans and become involved in advisory committees, or by completing surveys and providing feedback in a number of ways.

7. Welland Age-Friendly Local Action Committee - Deb Rollo, Chair, Welland Age-Friendly Local Action Committee, & Community Support Service Centre of Niagara Program Manager

- Our Local Action Committee action items have been built around feedback from our Welland residents. We recognize the importance of their ideas, and we are following up with action.
- One of our major areas of focus is on engaging with the business community, to provide age-friendly service. Some businesses have introduced scooter parking and some have changed communication systems. Some have increased clarity in their messaging system, some are providing home delivery of services, and there are even a few stores that are providing magnifying lenses for people to read labels. These are just a few examples of the many actions that our Welland businesses are taking to be more age-friendly. We have gathered this information from questionnaires provided to the businesses. The questionnaires were developed utilizing resources from other Age-Friendly initiatives in Canada that are ahead of where we are in Niagara.

- The Age-Friendly questionnaire for Welland businesses will be offered throughout the winter and spring of 2013. Filling it out provides participants the opportunity to review all aspects of operating in terms of Age-friendly principles. Included are suggestions and tips from other businesses.
- In June 2013, the Welland Age-Friendly Local Action Committee will recognize those businesses in the service industry that have made contributions to our efforts to make Welland a more Age-Friendly community. This will be done at an event to be hosted at the Welland Community Wellness Complex.

8. Panel Presentation - Age-Friendly Developments Across Niagara

- Mayor Dave Augustyn, Town of Pelham - We are in the beginning stages of creating an Age-Friendly Local Action Committee, and will be looking at issues such as walkability/active transportation, engaging businesses, intergenerational interaction, built environment.
- Rhonda Barron, Health Promoter, Bridges Community Health Centre, Fort Erie - One of the most effective ways to plan for increasing numbers of seniors in our communities is at the local level. Civic communication, citizen engagement, and ensuring coordination between various committees in Fort Erie is seen as the key to moving forward for local Age-Friendly action.
- Angie Desmarais, City of Port Colborne Councillor & Member, Port Colborne Seniors Advisory Committee - We are just getting started toward creating an Age-Friendly community; it's about networking, and educating to promote and Age-Friendly mindset. Quote: "All historic evidence indicates that significant community development only takes place in local communities where people are committed to investing themselves and their resources." That is why you can't develop communities from top-down or from the outside-in. Everyone needs to be involved and engaged. Collaboration is very important - no one should "own" the information. We have engaged the City Manager and Planner, as well as local businesses and service providers. We are creating a plan to speak to our Seniors' Advisory Committee about standing together as one committee.
- Virginia Stewart, NAFCI Community Coordinator (for Margaret Maynard, Age-Friendly Advocate for the west Niagara communities of Lincoln, Grimsby and West Lincoln). - Lack of public transportation, accessibility, and the barriers and issues facing the population of the west Niagara will all inform the action steps we take, as we begin the process of building an Age-Friendly Local Action Committee for west Niagara.

9. Summary Remarks - Kirk Weaver, Director of Community and Corporate Planning, Integrated Community Planning, Niagara Region

Significant progress has been made since we launched the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative (NAFCI) in 2010. Development of Local Action Committees in the 12 local municipalities is at differing stages. There is more to come, and it will continue to be driven locally.

The NAFCI Management Committee has discussed an Age-Friendly network model intended to sustain activity across Niagara beyond the time period of the initial Age-Friendly project. Our hope is that the network will be made up of many of you in attendance today, as well as your friends and colleagues. The network model being discussed would be led by a governing network council, comprised of local community representatives from a broader network dedicated to region-wide sharing of Age-Friendly ideas and actions. The work of Local Age-Friendly Action Committees would continue to be locally-driven, and tailored to the needs in each community.

In the upcoming weeks, we will be providing an online survey for you to provide your thoughts about and input to this model.

The other initiative we are considering is to gather Niagara-wide partners to create a Seniors Strategy for Niagara that reflects the needs of our older adults, the changing demographics across the region, assets already in place to serve seniors, and any gaps that need to be addressed.

Finally: thank you to the City of Welland, Rose City Seniors Foundation, the planners of today's agenda, and the Red Cross and Inclusive Media for the audio and real-time captioning services.

Appendix 3

Exploring a Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan

A Niagara-wide Forum

hosted by the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative

April 8, 2013, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Welland Community Wellness Complex

Meeting Summary based on Transcript provided by Inclusive Media and Design Inc.

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Edited by Mary Wiley, Niagara Connects

Generating knowledge that drives community action.

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Welcome and Introductions:

Henry O'Keefe, Co-Chair of the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative welcomed 100 attendees to the forum. He noted the diversity in the group - managers, staff, and volunteers from many community organizations and businesses, as well as citizens interested in seniors' issues.

Doug Rapelje, a member of the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative Management Committee and Welland Seniors Advisory Committee facilitated the first portion of the program. He introduced members of the organizing committee for the forum: Dominic Ventresca, Co Chair of the Niagara Age Friendly Management Committee; Professor David Siegel, Niagara Community Observatory at Brock University; Mary Wiley, Executive Director, Niagara Connects; Kirk Weaver, Integrated Community Planning, Niagara Region; Carolyn Treimstra, Chair of the School of Allied Health Studies, Niagara College; Shirley Stewart, HNHB LHIN; Gerrit Boerma, ICP Student Intern, Niagara Region.

Doug noted the importance of having real-time captioning for event accessibility. The captioner, located in California, typed what the speakers were saying to the group so that it was visible on a large screen at the front of the room.

The Brantford Experience:

Keynote speakers Lucy Marco and Jean Kincade of the Grand River Council on Aging presented highlights from "A Community for a Lifetime - A Master Aging Plan

For Brantford & e County of Brant" (2008), and relayed their experiences in gathering their community around the idea of creating an aging plan.

Lucy Marco retired as Director of Immigration Settlement Services, YMCA of Brantford in June of 2006 and is currently president of the Grand River Council on Aging.

Dr. Jean Kincade, born and raised in rural Saskatchewan, and retired from the School of Medicine, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2006. She is active in community service focusing primarily on health and social services to improve the quality of life for older adults. Dr. Kincade is Vice President of the Grand River Council on aging.

Dr. Kincade noted that there are challenges and lessons to be learned from the Brant – Brantford experience in creating a master aging plan, and creating the Grand River Council on Aging.

What is a master aging plan?

A roadmap or a strategic plan to create an age friendly community, focusing on all aspects of the life of seniors, including transportation, housing, recreation, and other community services. (Note: When the Brant - Brantford group began developing their plan in 2007, they had not yet heard about the World Health Organization (WHO) Age-Friendly Communities project, but the two concepts are related.

It involves the whole community. It is by and for the community. It does not replace long-term planning, strategic planning for various organizations.

It's important because of the growth of the aging population. The overall life expectancy for Canadians is now 81.1 years, slightly higher for women than for men. For the Niagara Census division, these are the estimates, the projections that the census produces. There is going to be a 62% increase in those 65 and older between now and 2030. There is going to be rapid growth. This year, 33% of people in the Niagara Region are aged 55 and older. That is projected to be almost 40% by 2030. The age group 65 and older makes up about 19% of the population here in Niagara; that is projected to be about 28% by 2030.

It also allows for proactive planning. You're not reacting to crises. You're able to plan.

It provides information that we can better allocate resources to where they are needed most and take advantage of funding opportunities. You have the numbers and rationale right in front of you, ready to respond to grant proposals.

How the Brantford-County of Brant Master Aging Plan was Developed - This started back in 2007. In 2006, Dr. Kincade retired from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. While she was in Chapel Hill she had been involved in developing two master aging plans. When she moved to Brantford she helped to lead creation of a Strategy for that community. The Brant-Brantford group made a presentation to City Council. By the end of 2007 they had a proposal into the Trillium foundation to develop a master aging plan. They used somewhat different terminology than we are using in Niagara, because it was halfway through 2008 when they discovered the World Health Organization Age-Friendly documents. In 2008, they received their first Ontario Trillium Foundation grant. The funding flowed through the local Alzheimer's Foundation. They established a 13-member steering committee to oversee the whole process, with composition similar to the diverse group attending today's forum. They engaged a consultant to help with obtaining stakeholder input and doing an environmental scan and writing reports.

The steering committee was made up of managers/leaders from diverse agencies that provided services and had interactions with seniors, local government and senior citizens. They developed three planning committees that represented levels of functioning amongst seniors rather than chronological age. This was the way Jean's groups in North Carolina had organized their work. Really, functional status is more representative of needs than chronological age. Someone who is 67 or 68 might have more functional disabilities than someone who is 90.

- One committee focused on the needs of the **well fit senior**
- One focused on **seniors needing some assistance with daily living**
- One focused on **seniors needing 24 hour assistance.**

Each of these planning committees included representatives from agencies working with seniors at that functional level. In the case of well fit seniors, it was the library, the local community college, so forth. With the steering committee, they wanted representatives from a management level, whereas with the planning committees, we wanted representatives from the frontline who work directly with the seniors and knew what kind of needs they had.

How did the Brantford-Brant group get information for their Master Aging Plan?

They held focus groups to get stakeholder input, in Burford, Paris, Oakland, Scotland and Brantford.

Each planning committee met about three times, half to a full day each time.

They held interviews with community leaders, to find out what services are available for well fit seniors, seniors that need some assistance, and seniors who need 24 hour assistance - what is out there, what is working, what is not working, and what other things are needed in the community. They had input from the consumer level, the provider level, a higher level of policy making, and from the planning level.

A draft of their master aging plan was put together and widely distributed in the community. There were copies distributed to organized agencies, copies in the public library. They tried to get as much feedback on the first draft as they could, and from that the final report was compiled.

At least 100 seniors, 40 service provider agencies, and 15 community leaders had input to creating the plan. In the plan, there are a number of different objectives and recommendations, relating to the top priorities for each of the 3 functional levels of seniors. The plan was presented to local Councils, and then it was finalized for printing.

Implementing the Master Aging Plan Recommendations - The group developed a second proposal to build a plan for implementation of the recommendations of master aging plan, which also received OTF funding. They worked with the same consultant as for the first stage, because he knew the whole process.

They had a public launch of the master aging plan in the summer of 2009, similar to today's forum. They invited the community to hear what we had done. Their steering committee went out to all the different agencies who had participated in the development of the plan and had them inventory, look at what they were doing, look at the recommendations of the master aging plan, what are they doing now and what would they commit to doing in the future.

From that input they created an implementation plan for the recommendations of their Master Aging Plan.

Of course, this process was not without its challenges!

Barriers/challenges - There was no social planning council in their jurisdiction to take the lead. From that realization, the Grand River Council on Aging was formed.

They discovered that you can only count on volunteers to a certain extent. The group identified that they needed to build infrastructure and hire a staff person to move things forward.

While there was a core group of dedicated volunteers on the Steering Committee, who stayed with the project two years, it was a challenge to ensure they were getting input from all segments of the community. Two segments of the senior community where they had to put in extra effort were: aboriginal seniors and rural seniors. There is always a group of seniors who are very vocal, out there having their voice heard. But there may be issues facing more hard-to-reach groups, and special effort needs to go into hearing the voices of those people.

They learned that you really need extensive community involvement, and you have to go to where the people are. Focus groups were held in church basements, Legion halls, rural communities, and even one at a person's home.

Collaboration among providers is really necessary. Some organizations and agencies were unclear what other organizations did. By collaboration, they could share information and help to understand some of the gaps in services.

The seniors of today are not the seniors of tomorrow. The future seniors, those who are in their late 50s, early 60s now are going to be better educated, more affluent, technologically sophisticated, and make more demands on our system.

The planning needs to be done on the basis of functioning rather than the basis of chronological age.

Although they have no evidence to validate this, they believe that seniors will be more open about issues, and agencies will be more likely to work together if the lead group that is making sure the recommendations are implemented is an independent organization, not a department in local government. It's not part of the Alzheimer's Society, it's not part of some agency that might be perceived as having its own agenda. This is why they decided the way they would go was to create the Grand River Council on Aging.

Creating Infrastructure - In order to move beyond all of the work being done by volunteers, and to create infrastructure, the group expanded the membership of their steering committee to get more input. They incorporated as a stand-alone nonprofit organization, called the Grand River Council on aging. The Council has a 12 member board; six of these are seniors from the original committee, and six represent organizations that serve seniors. Jean is the VP and Lucy is the current president.

The vision of the Grand River Council on aging is to engage Brantford and Brant County to meet the needs of their aging population. They are a planning group; they don't provide direct service. Their mission is to promote the voice of seniors, and their motto is to create a community for a lifetime. They believe that whatever is done to improve the quality of life of seniors will improve the quality of life of everyone in the community.

Methods of Implementing Report Recommendations - The Grand River Council on Aging promotes collaboration among agencies that normally would never think of sitting around the same table to address community issues. They also encourage the alignment of agency strategies and their strategic plans with the Master Aging Plan. They inform the public, local government, and businesses about the accomplishments and needs of seniors. They started out with three committees formed around top priorities. In all three cases, they promoted collaboration, encouraged alignment with strategic plans and informed people.

Transportation - They have held two transportation forums to date, to address issues around seniors getting to where they need to go, and having access to not only healthcare appointments, but to go shopping and meet with their friends, etc. Anyone in the City and County who provides transportation is included, such as church groups, long-time care facilities with buses, Red Cross, private taxi firms, Operation Lift (accessible transit). These groups are collaborating to figure out how transportation can be brought into the city and county better than what is provided now.

Collaboration for Senior Housing - This committee is chaired by one of the Council on Aging's board members, the CEO of John Noble home. Membership of the committee is from the City of Brantford, the hospital, and Brantford native housing. These people shared information about services they provide, and identified gaps and opportunities. They conducted a survey of residents in two city-operated Seniors' Apartments. The results of the survey led to a new committee being formed, called the "Continuum Collaborative". This group converted housing to provide services such as bathing and foot care right in the building.

Encouraging the alignment of agency strategic plans - They asked the City of Brantford, CCAC, and the Brant Community Health Care System to look at their strategic plans and see what commonalities there were, as well as how they fit with the Master Aging Plan. The focus is on agencies that provide services to a variety of age groups, not just seniors; this includes the City of Brantford. The group created a document that identifies what had been accomplished by the City of Brantford, what they were planning, and how those plans intersect with recommendations of the Master Aging Plan.

In terms of outreach, the Grand River Council on Aging informs local government and businesses about the accomplishments of seniors and where services are needed. The public affairs director for the local hospital volunteered to write a column, Shifting Sands, in the local newspaper, spotlighting ordinary citizens, their accomplishments and how they faced challenges in their life. In 2012, for the first time the Council celebrated National Seniors Day (October 1). They are establishing a database of volunteers, so that, for example, if someone asks for input about accessibility of downtown, they can provide names of seniors who would be willing to take part in focus groups. They created a website: <http://www.grcoa.ca>

Jean and Lucy noted that the Grand River Council on Aging has had tremendous community support from Brantford, and they have had three grants from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The Grand River Community Health Center has provided financial support, partnered with the Council, and has provided office space.

Q & A for Jean and Lucy:

Has the group done any work with the AODA?

This is covered within the work of the Transportation committee.

Did the group access any younger adults in addition to the seniors?

Yes, families were invited to participate in the original focus groups; this included people under the age of 55.

Do you maintain communications with other levels of seniors planning?

Yes, in the context of planning for our community, and the people who live there, we keep abreast of the WHO age friendly initiatives, federal government programs through Human Resources Development Canada, the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat and the advocacy and lobbying done by the Canadian Association for Retired Persons.

Did the group include organizations working with people with disabilities?

Yes, those organizations were included within the working group considering seniors requiring some assistance and those that require 24-hour assistance. For example, Participation House and similar organizations were involved.

Is there a long-term sustainability plan?

Financial sustainability is a stumbling block; it is something that the group is working on trying to develop. This was another reason for creating the Grand River Council on Aging, so that they could access donations from the private sector, to raise funds to pay for a staff member. They have created a fund-raising committee to work on this. It is a challenge. Some communities have a Social Planning Council that is municipally-funded, such as Cambridge, Ontario, that has taken the lead on implementing a Master Aging Plan. Hamilton has a Council on Aging, as do Ottawa and Saskatoon. The Grand River Council on Aging created its strategic plan first and then developed their organization; one of the drawbacks of doing it the way we did it, is that now they have to take some time to develop a sustainability strategy, whereas the other groups do have funding and staff members already. Each community has to do it their own way. There is no right way or wrong way to do this.

What are some of the key recommendations in your plan, and could we use them in the Niagara plan?

There are approximately 35 recommendations.

The Niagara Experience:

Following the presentation by the Grand River Council on Aging, Dominic Ventresca, Co-Chair of the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative provided an overview of the activities and accomplishments of this 3-year project.

This forum is about both celebrating the work of Niagara Age-Friendly, and looking to the future, hopefully validated by the group today - formation of a Niagara Age-Friendly Network and an Age-Friendly Council to support the network. Similar to the Brantford experience, sustainability is a big issue.

The Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative (NAFCI) was established with the support of an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant three years ago; that grant expires this month. The group leading NAFCI has some plans for sustaining the gains in moving the age friendly cause forward. There has been plenty of promoting of awareness and hopefully a fair bit of action. Progress ranges from the formation of local action committees to presentations and acceptance of the Age-Friendly principles by every municipal Council, including Regional Council.

We have commitments to larger road signs to address individual needs, not just of older citizens, but others too. The vision of park benches along the City of Welland Recreational Canal is another example of Age-Friendly action. Older adults as well as parents with young children in strollers can stop and enjoy the walkways with park benches. Some of our local municipalities, led by the City of Welland, are joining the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities Network.

We are here today to involve community partners in planning the transition from an Age-Friendly awareness initiative to the development of a Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan that ultimately, like Brantford, would provide guidance to all the agencies and municipal governments and businesses that operate in Niagara as to how they could be more responsive to the need of the ever-increasing older adults demographic.

We envision transitioning from an OTF-funded project to a self-sustaining Age Friendly Council that builds on the good work already done locally, provincially, and globally, such as the "Seniors Aging Well" initiative that the Region of Niagara has led, through the Senior Services division.

To make NAFCI work, community partners collaborated to secure a Trillium grant. The Rose City Seniors Foundation served as the transfer agency for the \$250,000 that supported this project for the past three years. Other partners are Niagara Connects, (formerly known as the Niagara Research and Planning Council), the City of Welland, and the City of Welland's Senior Citizens Advisory Committee (which is a good example of a leading edge practice in Niagara for engagement of older adults in the city), and Niagara Region, through both the Community Services Department (Senior Services), and the Integrated Community Planning department.

All of these partners provided in-kind support to make this project the success it has been over the past three years. The project partners formed a project management committee. The group envisions Niagara to become a caring community for all ages that optimizes opportunities for an enhanced quality of life as people age. The mission was to raise awareness of age friendly principles across all sectors of our community, with a particular focus on older adults.

The project raised awareness through involving local citizens in each community, and by addressing each local municipal Council. Local citizens engaged local politicians. Welland was the pilot community for the project, led by a well- informed and active Local Action Committee; this is an example of how local citizens can drive this work forward, with some guidance from a region-wide leadership.

Focus groups were held across Niagara, to learn about local issues for the creation of a more Age- Friendly community. Niagara-wide information forums were held each year, for participants from across Niagara to come together to learn about Age- Friendly developments, share best practices and provide input into the next stage of the project. We have reconciled and harnessed the local mandated accessibility initiatives to ensure a comprehensive approach to meeting citizen's needs.

Vision for the Future: We envisage establishing a Niagara Age-Friendly Network. This would be a group of local citizens and representatives that have a common interest in continuing the journey towards an improved Age- Friendly community, and an interest in learning from each other, sharing local successes through various communication media, member forums, and word of mouth (not everyone is into computers). The NAFCI Management Committee will send out an invitation to everyone in the community, all those who were invited to this forum, will be invited to join this network.

We will also shortly send out a call for nominations for individuals to become part of the Niagara Age-Friendly Network Council, to provide leadership to the network and coordinate meetings of the Council. For example, people here today who work in the long-term-care area know about the long-term-care network. It is initially proposed that the Council would be comprised by members of the NAFCI Management Committee. We are looking for five additional individuals so that we have better representation across Niagara.

The intent is for this group to build building on the good work that has already been done, moving forward, such as the Living in Niagara report, the Aging Well strategy, the HNHB LHIN's strategic health systems plan, and the province's Living Longer, Living Well document. We need to integrate all of these with what Niagara needs.

As well, there is good work being done around housing and homelessness, being led by Niagara Region Community Services, in partnership with Niagara community partners. Work is underway to create a mental health charter for Niagara; we can build on that as well. Finally, it is important to hear from you, here today, as well as other citizens and community stakeholders, as we collaborate to build Niagara's aging strategy and action plan. You are the leaders, workers, volunteers and students who can help to identify the community's needs, goals and objectives; this parallels what the folks in the City of Brantford and Brant County have done.

Can we work together to develop practical tools, like self-assessment checklists for Age-Friendly standards? Does Niagara need a Council on Aging? How could we take what we have learned from the presentation today and apply it to Niagara?

Here in Niagara we could address aspects of life for all citizens, and not just focus on the continuum of seniors who require a lot of service, but the large majority who are active, how can their needs be better met. We could engage the community to develop an aging strategy and action plan for the community that informs municipalities and businesses as well as providing guidance to individual organizations' long-range planning processes. Organizations doing their regular work will have the benefit of a strategic document to guide them as they plan their strategies and implement their plans. It would be one collaborative plan that would inform all these multiple agencies and organizations that are doing their work, for a concerted effort to drive an agenda forward for older adults in Niagara.

The next part of this forum is a facilitated session that will draw out from all of you ideas about what you are prepared to do starting today, what commitments you are prepared to make to shaping this plan and shaping our community. The planning committee for this forum is prepared to apply for a Trillium grant, serve as the management committee for that purpose, receive the money, manage it, and be accountable for it, all the while engaging the community. If the community desires this, we will follow some of the steps taken at Brantford where they had many planning committees. This definitely requires community involvement to carry it forward.

Q&A for Dominic:

Is the issue of hazards that pedestrians face in terms of an accessible walkways or challenging walkways, and also traffic lights with insufficient time to cross at intersections being addressed? (eg. sidewalks, cycling, and the issue around cycling, active transportation)

In terms of Niagara's experience, the Age-Friendly group has been very aware of these issues. As well as the principles from the World Health Organization, we got into concrete examples and often cited the need for improved sidewalks, lighting, all those things. We raised awareness at the municipal level. We continue to work to encourage city transportation planners and public works people planning using an Age-Friendly lens to their normal planning. It is a journey we have launched, that needs to be reinforced at every opportunity.

(Lucy also provided some ideas): In Brantford, the city struck a safe walkability committee that included a representative for seniors. What the city of Brantford did is that the planning/engineering department did an inventory of what they have done/are doing/could do, compared to the Master Aging Plan. For example, we now have stoplights that start counting down (with audible beeps) to tell you there are 15 seconds to go until the light changes. All of the sidewalks downtown are now equipped with ramps for wheelchairs. These changes do not happen overnight. Infrastructure has to be planned. For bicycles, the city of Brantford has a large trail system; people are encouraged to use bicycle routes that are marked on the city streets to get to the trails. Cycling on sidewalks is discouraged; but we realize that we're talking about young people that are going to do what they're going to do. As an example, the Grand River Council on Aging is making a presentation about the Master Aging Plan in relation to the City of Brantford's official plan review, which relates to the use of land. We need to continue to advocate and engage people to open their eyes and ears to seniors' issues.

What evaluation was done on the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative?

Mary Wiley of Niagara Connects answered that question; her group was contracted to do an evaluation of the three-year NAFCI project. On each table today are NAFCI evaluation sheets that summarize the findings of the focus groups held around Niagara during Year 2 of the project. Themes that emerged were: Respect for and valuing citizens of all ages; Accessibility for all; and the importance of clear Communication (including issues around use of communication technology). There is an Age-Friendly section on the Niagara Connects website (www.niagaraconnects.ca), as well as a Niagara-Age Friendly Community section on the Niagara Region website, for more information: (<http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/seniors/agefriendly/default.aspx>).

Dominic and Doug thanked Virginia Stewart, Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative Community Coordinator, for all the good work she did to move the work of the project forward.

After a quick coffee break, the group reconvened for round table discussion, facilitated by Carolyn Triemstra, Chair, Allied Health, Niagara College.

Highlights from the Forum Evaluation:

One hundred people attended the forum; of these, fifty-three completed evaluation forms at the end of the event. The purpose of the forum was to engage participants in exploring the opportunity to create a Seniors Strategy for Niagara.

The first half of the program included presentations by:

- Lucy Marco and Jean Kincade of the Grand River Council on Aging, who presented highlights from "A Community for a Lifetime - A Master Aging Plan for Brantford & the County of Brant" (2008), and relayed their experiences in gathering their community around the idea of creating an aging plan; and
- Dominic Ventresca, Co-Chair of the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Management Committee, who reviewed actions and accomplishments of the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) - funded Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative (2010 - 2013).

75% of respondents gave a ranking of 7 or higher, when asked to rank the value of the information exchanged at the forum in relation to their work, their organization's future and their priorities in the community, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "not helpful to my work" and 10 being "very helpful to my work".

1 = Not helpful to my work; 10 = Very helpful to my work.

No response	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7.5	8	9	10	Total Responses
4 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (6%)	6 (11%)	9 (17%)	2 (4%)	11 (21%)	9 (17%)	9 (17%)	53

Of the 53 respondents, 85% said they are interested in being involved in next steps.

Response	Number	Per cent (%)
Yes	45	85%
No	05	9%
No Response	03	6%

Major themes that emerged from April 8, 2013 Seniors Strategy Forum round-table discussions were:

Sustainability - Allocate human and financial resources wisely, to create a Network connecting people & agencies attending this forum (as well as others)
One voice for Seniors - a channel to have input as we go forward
Research & Strategy - focus on what the Seniors want and need
Functionality Approach taken by Brant/Brantford a good idea: -well & fit seniors -seniors needing some assistance with daily living -seniors needing 24 hour assistance
Leadership - people at all levels need to know and be committed to the issues
Sharing knowledge - engaging with community - caregivers, family, community, institutions
Geography - is a determinant of health in Niagara; and people strongly identify with their local area of Niagara (thus need to find balanced approach, between Niagara-wide and local
Inclusivity - communications with seniors; people with developmental disabilities; ethnicity/culture/language of choice (eg. francophones and Aborigines); recognition of poverty among some seniors; aging at home requires equipment & support
Access to services - collaboration required; focus on best interest of individuals with tailored plans