

Connecting Edmonton Seniors Extension

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

NOTE TO CLIENT

This document provides a high-level framework to guide communications efforts around the Connecting Edmonton Seniors Extension. Its purpose is to ensure that all communications activities are rooted in a consistent communications strategy and messaging framework.

JANUARY 29, 2020

KEY MESSAGE	SUPPORTING POINTS
<p>WE ALL BENEFIT WHEN SENIORS ARE VALUED, RESPECTED AND SUPPORTED TO LIVE HEALTHILY IN THEIR OWN HOMES AND COMMUNITIES.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seniors have a lot to offer. We can all benefit from their experience and perspective when they have opportunities to share it, and seniors deserve respect and support as they navigate the significant transitions that come with aging. Aging “in place” – in their own homes, within appropriate community-based support – is the ideal scenario for seniors themselves and for the community. Availability of community support prevents potentially distressing displacement of seniors and can reduce the need for more costly and intensive interventions down the road. Inclusion and social connectedness are key social determinants of health. People of all ages with robust networks of social and community support have better physical and mental health outcomes, while isolation and loneliness put health at risk. Social inclusion is a preventive measure that supports government and community goals, such as easing strain on our health care system. Because they are often contending with major life transitions, health challenges and smaller social networks, we need to be particularly vigilant about supporting seniors and ensuring they are firmly connected their community.
<p>OUR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS ARE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE, WITH EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD FURTHER CAPACITY.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PEGASIS – a project supported by the Government of Canada – brought seven local seniors’ organizations together to launch programs and initiatives that improve seniors’ connectedness, quality of life and long-term health. The initiatives developed through PEGASIS (e.g. assisted transportation, phone-based social/personal development opportunities and English training courses for immigrant seniors) were highly successful at meeting seniors’ needs. Three of these initiatives are continuing now that federal funding has ended, and at least one is expanding to other communities. We are proud of the difference made by initiatives under PEGASIS, but those initiatives are a tiny fraction of what community organizations offer in Edmonton. The dedicated staff and volunteers take on much of the responsibility for keeping seniors connected, engaged and healthy – a service that’s vital to the social health of our community. These non-profit organizations make an enormous impact with exceptional efficiency. They are capable, cost effective, agile and highly responsive to emerging needs – their success is driven by the expertise and dedication of passionate employees and volunteers who want to serve the community. Many community organizations in the seniors-serving sector have valuable expertise that can help inform governmental, organizational and community decision making. ESCC can help government departments, organizations and communities find the right people within the sector to advise on specific questions or issues.

KEY MESSAGE

COLLABORATION - AMONG AGENCIES, GOVERNMENTS, DEPARTMENTS AND COMMUNITIES - IS A CATALYST FOR ACHIEVING POWERFUL OUTCOMES.

SUPPORTING POINTS

- Like most important social issues, community-based support for seniors is complex. No single organization has all the answers or can provide every program or function that’s needed.
- A silo mentality gets in the way of achieving the outcomes we need. Seniors’ wellbeing encompasses many different areas and ministries (including seniors and housing, health, finance, culture, infrastructure and transportation) and collaboration among government departments and agencies in charge of these different areas is key to developing effective, comprehensive solutions.
- The importance of sharing expertise, resources, contacts and talent across the seniors-serving sector was one of the key learnings of the PEGASIS initiative. Offering joint programs, facilitating referrals and keeping lines of communication open increased organizations’ impact, helped them connect seniors with appropriate services and helped them meet seniors’ needs more effectively.
- Collaboration and shared learning among community organizations and various facets of government has the power to dramatically improve outcomes for seniors. ESCC and PEGASIS partners want to bring more organizations and government officials to the table so that we can further develop a seamless, coordinated approach to promoting inclusion and wellbeing.

ANYONE CAN BE A CONNECTOR WHO HELPS SENIORS THRIVE, AND THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT.

- Family members, neighbours, faith leaders, health care providers and leaders within recreation and social organizations can all play a role in supporting healthy aging. Everyone can, and should, reach out to seniors who might be feeling isolated – it strengthens our community and creates shared benefit.
- ESCC offers information on how to identify when seniors in your life could use some more support and community involvement, as well as resources that can help seniors access community-based assistance. Helping point seniors in the right direction when they’re struggling and connecting them with people who can help is a meaningful, powerful act of respect and support.
- Making a difference doesn’t have to be complicated. Forming positive relationships with elders benefits everyone involved. Donating or volunteering to support seniors is a rewarding experience.
- Aging is a universal experience, and it doesn’t have to be a negative one. Building community support for seniors and celebrating their contributions means that all of us can look forward to our future, and trust that we’ll be respected and cared for.

KEY MESSAGE	SUPPORTING POINTS
ACCESS TO ASSISTED TRANSPORTATION IS AN IMPORTANT AREA WHERE IMPROVEMENTS WOULD HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT ON SENIORS' WELL-BEING.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="722 430 1536 504">• Seniors' ability to age in place often depends on access to transportation. Assisted transportation needs to be a priority alongside health care, housing and other basic needs.<li data-bbox="722 535 1536 630">• Our current mass transit solutions aren't sufficient for seniors who need specialized forms of assisted transportation, and even a minimal cost for service is prohibitive for some seniors with low income.<li data-bbox="722 661 1536 756">• There is a disconnect between the level of need and service providers' capacity. Service providers don't have the capacity to meet demand and current conditions prevent them from expanding.<li data-bbox="722 787 1536 913">• A lack of core funding and lack of clarity around licensing requirements are factors that make it difficult for service providers to meet seniors' assisted transportation needs. Addressing those issues would be part of making assisted transportation a priority.<li data-bbox="722 945 1536 1115">• Making user subsidies available for low-income seniors, introducing operational funding for service providers and supporting collaboration between transportation service providers and potential partners (e.g. housing organizations and recreational facilities) could all help close the gap between seniors' needs and available assisted transportation services.
