



Aging and Ontario's Not-for-Profit Sector: Ready or Not?
Notes for a presentation to the Symposium on Aging
April 6, 2011

Introduction

The Ontario Trillium Foundation has identified the aging of our population as an area of strategic opportunity where we intend to focus more of our attention and strive to make a greater impact.

This is a new area of interest for us from a research and knowledge-sharing perspective. To help us learn as much as we can as quickly as we can, we've engaged a research team and we've enlisted the support of a terrific advisory group.

What we're learning from five areas of research activity:

1. What we're learning from our research on the NFP sector, and the sub-sector currently delivering programs and services related to the aging population – who's doing what is perhaps the most difficult thing to get a handle on
2. What we're learning from demographic and other trends related to aging – particularly how complex and diverse the aging population is – one size definitely does not fit all
3. What we're learning from fellow funders, based on the early results of a survey project, about their support for and perceptions of the sector in terms of the challenges and opportunities our aging population presents.
4. What we're learning from case studies of communities and convening with community leaders working on the ground about the innovative ways they are responding and the lessons others can benefit from.
5. What we're learning from our own grantmaking experience across the province – particularly how much innovation is out there to build on going forward.

→ Notice I'm saying "are learning", as opposed to "have learned"... Our learning has just begun, and it will continue today.

In preparing for the symposium, I found myself drawn back to two of my favourite books from recent years, *Made to Stick* and *Switch*, by the Heath brothers. In these books, they highlight the importance of:

→ “Sticky Points” – ideas you will understand and remember, in order to change something

And

→ “Switch Points” – the data and the “bright spots” that will support change when change is hard

I’m hoping that my presentation will offer you some sticky points and some switch points to help advance our work on the challenges and opportunities our changing demographics pose for us.

The three “stickiest” points that have emerged to date are:

1. We’re not ready for the impact our changing demographics are having on our communities.

- More older adults and more very old adults means increased demand for programs and services.
- There is a growing need for programs and services that preserve the independence of older adults and help them remain connected to their community.
- The list of pressure points is long and familiar to many of us: from the provision of health care and mental health services, to supportive services for caregivers, affordable housing, reliable transportation choices, combating ageism and elder abuse, to addressing cultural and linguistic diversity and helping seniors age in their place of choice.
- These challenges will be most acute in underserved areas, for people with limited income or disabilities, for newcomers who don’t speak English or French, for those who are unattached or living in rural and isolated communities.
- Neither we as funders nor the organizations we fund appear to be ready.

2. Business as usual won’t work – a “next generation” of solutions is needed

- it’s not just about volume increases – it’s more complex than that
- Our traditional models of service are challenged
- Baby boomers have different expectations – both as clients and as part-time employees or volunteers in the sector
- Public perceptions about aging and ageism are changing

- More culturally-sensitive programs and services are needed
 - AND... the ideas and building blocks needed to move us forward are out there in communities all over Ontario and are here in this room today...
- 3. Funders and the organizations we support are not on the same page – and we need to get there**
- We all need to start thinking differently about our aging population
 - We need to start communicating more with each other, sharing more knowledge and collaborating more
 - And we need to get better at engaging the groups we're aiming to serve in designing and delivering the solutions that are needed.
- **Here are the highlights of the data and other findings from our research that make these points so “sticky” for me.**

1. What we've learned from our research on the sector

The sector is complex, and we need to know more about it.

- Over 1/2 of the sector is made up of small, volunteer organizations with no paid staff
- 1/3 of the sector has revenues under \$30K
- About 2/3 of organizations in Ontario report that they serve their local community
- The 1% of organizations with revenues over \$10M employ 38% of the sector's paid employees
- 8% of organizations in the sector report serving seniors and older adults (compared to 22% serving children and youth)
- People from the sector serving older adults use the following words to describe it: fragmented, insufficient, piecemeal, difficult to navigate, underfunded, and waiting list.
- The current system is also described as unbalanced – seen to place a tremendous focus on care for the most frail or ill seniors as an alternative to institutional or hospital care, and far less on prevention, wellness, active lifestyles and social interaction.
- The role of umbrella organizations and intermediary bodies is seen as not strong enough – there are a number, but they tend to focus on specific service areas – residential care, home supports, or specific consumer areas – as opposed to more sector-wide needs, such as capacity building or advocacy.

Organizations serving seniors and older adults face the same three big challenges that entire sector faces:

1. Funding and finance – those most reliant on government sources face the biggest challenges
2. Human Resources – succession planning, recruitment and retention of paid staff and volunteers
3. Capacity – to plan, to meet the growing demand, to use technology effectively, and to collaborate more with others.

Sector Strengths and Opportunities

- The sector sees its strengths as partnerships, the commitment and mission focus of the many agencies out there doing very good work, the diverse range of services that are being delivered, and the strong volunteers that are involved.
- The key opportunities for the sector include technology, social enterprise, collaboration and partnerships.

➤ **2. What we're learning from our research on demographic and other trends related to aging**

There's one BIG difference that most distinguishes this part of the sector [Population Chart/Pyramids]

- Our senior population will grow from 1.6M today to 4.2M by 2036 (or 23.4% of the total population) – think of a population group the size of today's GTA
- The fastest growth will occur in the over-75 and over-85 age groups, the majority of which will be women.
- Different generations (cohorts) of seniors have significantly different expectations and capacities.
- “Younger seniors” – those 65 to 74 – are entering their golden years healthier and wealthier, with higher expectations around maintaining their independence and continuing to live life to the fullest.
- “Older seniors” – those 75 or older – are the fastest growing group and are experiencing poverty and health challenges.
- Seniors with developmental/intellectual or physical disabilities are living longer in the community – the sector does not have much experience with this group of seniors and we're hearing there are few programs currently in place.
- Homelessness among seniors, particularly those with mental illness, is also a significant concern for service providers.
- And the Gay-Lesbian-Trans-Queer community has been described as invisible in the current service system.

Ontario's older population is also becoming more diverse

- 5% of today's seniors arrived in the last 20 years.
- Immigrants are older than the general population – 19.7% vs 13.7%.
- 15.6% of Immigrant seniors don't speak English or French.
- Immigrant seniors, especially women, face higher rates of poverty than seniors born in Canada.
- Nearly one in three seniors who are from visible minority groups don't speak English or French.
- Economic insecurity is most severe for immigrant seniors who have been here less than 10 years

The Francophone community is older than the general population

- Close to 1/2 (46.7%) of Ontario's Francophones are over 45 years old compared to 39.5% in the total population.
- There are proportionately more seniors in the Francophone community in Ontario: 15.2% compared to 12.9% for the population as a whole.

Our Aboriginal communities face unique challenges related to aging

- A younger population overall, but by 2026, the percentage of Aboriginal seniors will triple.
- Differing health and social conditions and significantly lower life expectancy mean programs and services are needed for Aboriginal adults at an earlier age have led some to suggest that when thinking about Aboriginal seniors and aging, to think about 55 years of age as being equivalent to 65 years of age.

Seniors experienced the greatest rate of growth in poverty as a result of the economic downturn.

- The recession of 2008 ended 30 years of steady decline in the number of seniors living in poverty.
- In 2008, the number grew to 250,000 seniors, up from 204,000 in 2007 – a nearly 25 percent increase.
- Women were most affected.

Where do older adults live in Ontario? [MAPS]

- Remote rural areas have a much higher proportion of seniors – 16.1% vs 13.2% for metropolitan areas and 13.9% for rural areas close to urban centres.
- But the majority of seniors (83.8%) live in large urban centres.
- Regionally, the share of seniors ranges from a low of 12% in the GTA to a high of 17% in the Northeast.
- By 2036, the share of seniors in these regions is projected to range from 20.4% in the GTA to 30.6% in the Northeast.

Which communities in Ontario have the most seniors?

- Among larger centres, Peterborough – 18.2% seniors – followed by St. Catharines-Niagara (17.7%) and Thunder Bay (16%).
- Among mid-sized communities, Elliot Lake is second highest in Canada (31.6%).
- Among rural communities, Perth has the highest proportion of seniors (28%).
- Generally speaking, the suburbs, or peripheral municipalities, tend to have younger populations and a lower proportion of seniors, than the downtown areas. For example, Toronto's population is older (14%) than Brampton's (7.8%).

Rural communities face the greatest challenges

- Geographic isolation makes rural seniors more vulnerable to receiving inadequate services
- Access to health care is a major problem
- The health of rural residents is worse than their urban counterparts
- The revenue to fund new programs and services is more difficult to find
- There's a special need to find alternative transportation and housing options – urban models don't work

Isolation of older adults is a real concern

- The number of seniors living alone has greatly increased over the past two decades, with nearly three quarters of them being senior women. Today, more than one in four seniors in Ontario live alone.
- Unattached seniors are almost 3 times more likely to experience low income than other seniors (15.5% vs 5.6% for all seniors).
- Seniors living alone often experience poorer health and greater levels of neglect and abuse.

3. What we've learned from our survey of funders

Note: reporting on partial results, mostly from Municipalities, Community Foundations, United Ways, and to a lesser extent private foundations (smaller players in this area overall).

Funders are not ready

- Slightly more than half of respondents (54%) reported supporting aging-related programs.
- The vast majority of funding in this area is made up of single year grants to organizations on an ongoing basis for project and operating expenses, with fewer than 1 in 5 being multi-year grants.
- Almost half of those who responded do not see do not consider the NFP sector nor themselves as ready to meet the challenges ahead related to aging.
- No evidence yet of funders reviewing their programs or approaches related to the impact of the changing demographics on the sector.
- And there's no evidence of funders working together to plan for the changing context – at least not until today!
- However, 54% identified aging as a current priority, and 70% think it will be a priority for them in the future – so there are some bright spots!

Funders and Not-for-profits are not on the same page

- There are different perceptions of the sector's readiness to respond to the aging population – funders are more optimistic (approximately 37%) than NFPs (roughly 30%)
- The aging population is a higher priority for the NFPs than the funders and there's disagreement over priorities within the sector (health and housing for funders; isolation, mental health/isolation, support to informal caregivers for NFPs).
- There's a disconnect about whether the NFP sector is sufficiently well funded to respond to the aging population.
- More flexible support from funders for community efforts at collaboration, planning and integration is needed, so that funders and the community can work together.
- Broader planning, greater collaboration, and the recruitment of volunteers are seen as key opportunities to focus on.

4. What we've learned from our case studies of local community initiatives

This work is still underway, but here's what is sticking for me at this point:

- There is less system planning and coordination in the seniors sector than there is in other sectors (children, employment, etc.). Planning was described as fragmented. The LHIN and CCAC do some coordination, but it relates to their focus on health and only includes a sub-group of those active in the sector.
- Our planning has improved faster than our ability to move to implementation.
- Communities like Hamilton and Peterborough have recognized the importance of community wide planning for the aging population and are reasonably confident that they can be successful at it. Hamilton has completed a recent effort at community wide seniors planning and Peterborough is engaged in the early stages of a community planning initiative (including a seniors summit). Both involve a wide range of partners – community members, NFPs, funders, community planning organizations, and the municipality.
 - But neither community appears to be confident that they will be able to implement the plan for a number of reasons – lack of funding/resources, lack of commitment from funders and decision makers to a community based plan, lack of strong community leadership and/or champion to lead the implementation.
- Leadership and community engagement are seen as critical ingredients of success.
 - NFPs in both communities talked about the need for an age friendly lens to the planning and decision-making. They felt that older adults need to be more actively involved in the services than they have in the past.
 - The Council on Aging in Hamilton has worked hard to engage older community members; the Seniors Summit planned for Peterborough in June will focus on engaging seniors in discussion future directions and issues.
 - NFPs also talked about the need for a client centered as opposed to service centered focus and the need for system navigation supports for organizations in the sector as well as for seniors.

5. What we have learned from our own granting experience

- Between 2005 and 2010, OTF invested \$39M in grants to organizations serving the senior population.
- More than 700 grants have been awarded to initiatives that assist seniors to remain active, enhance their health, well-being and quality of life, remain engaged in their communities and help overcome isolation.

\$9.1M in cultural and recreational programming.

- Participation in direct cultural and artistic programs (choirs, community bands, theatre groups, arts and crafts activities)
- Development of action plans, strategies, outreach and awareness
- Capital infrastructure and equipment for recreational activities

\$3.9M for increasing participation in physical activities among seniors

- Senior's participation in programs encouraging an active lifestyle and capital funding for infrastructure and equipment

\$7.6M creating conditions for seniors to reach their full health and well-being potential

- Health promotion, nutrition
- Elder abuse awareness and support systems for those with disabilities and health issues; early intervention; educational workshops; links to health care facilities and service providers; community-based hospice/palliative/respite care services.
- Needs assessments to determine priorities and address gaps in health services for the frail elderly.

\$4.5M enhancing civic engagement of seniors within their communities

- Volunteering opportunities; intergenerational programming; knowledge sharing and mentoring programs

\$7.5M building the capacity of organizations serving seniors

- Board training and development, volunteer recruitment and training, etc.

\$1.6M for increased transportation services

- Transportation services that assist seniors to access health care and social-recreational activities.

\$4.8M increasing access to other types of programs

- Housing programs; financial counseling; computer and other training; support services helping to keep seniors in their own home (snow removal, grocery shopping, energy efficiency training and upgrades, etc.)

There is a lot of innovation happening out there – lots of “bright spots” to build on going forward

- Planning for age-friendly communities – in Hamilton, Peterborough, Niagara, Grey, Bruce, Huron & Perth
- Community engagement – including work focusing on homeless older adults in southeast Toronto or isolated South Asian seniors in York Region
- Collaboration — mergers and new ways of working together to improve service delivery
- Increasing access – from storefront service delivery to multi-service centres like those offered by Rendez-vous des aînés in the eastern suburbs of Ottawa.
- Volunteer recruitment and the local engagement of seniors – e.g. in Pelham in Niagara Region.

Key Areas of Opportunity

Revenue strategies: an aging population presents new opportunities

- Giving tends to increase with age, and those over 65 have the highest donation rate and the highest average donation among all age groups – the value of their donations (almost 25% of all donations) is much higher than their proportion of the population (15.3%).
- There is an opportunity to nurture the altruistic needs of this large and growing demographic group through meaningful volunteerism.
- Baby boomers represent new opportunities for social enterprise (with their ability to pay)

HR strategies: the sector is already feeling the pressure of an aging workforce

- Half of the employers in the sector are already reporting difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified staff.
- The departure of baby boomers will mean the loss of experienced workers from the sector – particularly the loss of people from leadership positions.
- Yet, the labour force participation rate of Canadians aged 55 and over is increasing – the previous trend towards increasing early retirements is reversing. This is a potential pool of experienced workers with skills and experience that could benefit the sector.

Volunteerism strategies: a real conundrum

- There will be more potential volunteers, but, based on current trends, a lower likelihood of volunteering
- Volunteering overall declines after age 65, but those who do volunteer contribute more hours than the average volunteer
- Key opportunity is the 55-64 cohort, where the average number of volunteer hours increases – the most recent statistics show that four in ten people aged 54-64 volunteer 75 hours annually.

Next Steps for OTF

Build on our current strengths:

- Funding volunteerism
- Making community facilities accessible
- Providing physical and recreational programming to keep people healthy and active
- Promoting inclusion for people who are disabled, marginalized or new to Ontario
- Fostering collaboration among grantees and funders

Key opportunities to enhance our impact

- Increasing our support on issues related to aging
- Making sure our granting extends to under-served, vulnerable groups, including culturally sensitive programs for seniors in immigrant families; and that it reaches aging people most at risk of societal isolation, for example the significant numbers of seniors living at home in rural areas
- Supporting community action planning that engages seniors

As the population continues to age, there will be continued and no doubt increased demand for more of what OTF currently does. Currently, OTF invests about 8% of granting dollars to seniors – will this be enough going forward?

Finally, there is an opportunity to meet the changing needs of the aging population and at the same time help reinvigorate a sagging volunteer base in Ontario communities. All of this will require greater collaboration among and between funders and the organizations they fund, and new ways of engaging older adults in the solutions.

The Senate Committee on Aging Population saw aging as a national success story and seniors as a rich and vibrant part of our country. It's time for all of us to work more effectively together to fulfill that optimistic vision.