

AGING IN PLACE



Rob Jowett

UPCOMING DATES

FEBRUARY

- 26 Brampton Council, 9:30 a.m.
- Durham Region Council, 9:30 a.m.
- Georgina Council, 9:00 a.m.
- Hamilton Council, 5:00 p.m.
- Mississauga General Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- Richmond Hill Council, 9:30 a.m.
- 27 Burlington Community Planning Regulation & Mobility Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- Peel Region Council, 9:30 a.m.
- York Region Council, 9:00 a.m.

MARCH

- 2 Ajax Community Affairs & Planning Committee, 7:00 p.m.
- Brock Committee of the Whole, 9:30 a.m.
- Clarington Council, 7:00 p.m.
- Markham General Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- Milton Council, 7:00 p.m.
- Newmarket Council, 7:00 p.m.
- Pickering Planning & Development Committee, 7:00 p.m.
- Scugog General Purpose & Administration Committee, 1:30 p.m.
- Uxbridge Committee of Council, 10:00 a.m.
- Whitby Committee of the Whole, 7:00 p.m.
- 3 Aurora General Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- Durham Region Planning & Economic Development Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- East Gwillimbury Committee of the Whole, 10:00 a.m.
- East Gwillimbury Council, 3:00 p.m.

Building more housing that can accommodate the needs of seniors is critical to keeping pressure off hospitals and providing safe and comfortable surroundings where people can live as they age, according to a new report.

The **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario** (RCCAO) has released a new [report](#) warning of a “grey tsunami”—the effects of an aging population. Significant pressure is being put on the health care system as the baby boom generation—generally defined as those born during the post-World War II population explosion that occurred between 1946 and 1964—ages and seniors become one of the largest segments of the population. Seniors have relatively high health care needs and as they retire, income tax revenue decreases, meaning that health care costs will rise as the tax money to pay for it declines.

In 2016, Ontario’s population of seniors—those 65 and above—was 16.4 per cent, or around 3 million people.

The **Government of Ontario** projects that by 2041, that number will rise to 25 per cent, or around 4.6 million.

“The baby boomer generation is just beginning to have its effect on [the] health care system, and the kinds of things that we’re doing now seem not to be able to accommodate the volume of patients that we have going into hospital now,” report author and **StrategyCorp** senior advisor **Michael Fenn** told *NRU*. Fenn is also a former Ontario Deputy Minister and was the founding CEO of the **Mississauga Halton Local Health Integration Network** (LHIN).

“That can only get much worse and we really need to look at this as arguably a four decade long issue as the baby boom cohort moves through the system,” says Fenn.

Ontario is already facing a shortfall in the availability of health care beds, which has led to the issue of “hallway health care”—patients being treated in the hallways of hospitals on stretchers because there are no beds available. According to

data obtained by **CBC News** in January, 32 hospitals in Ontario were over capacity for at least 100 days during the first half of 2019, and an average of 997 patients were not able to stay in a proper hospital room in November of last year. The provincial government has committed to providing 15,000 new nursing home beds by around 2024 to take pressure off the health care system and move seniors from hospitals to long-term care facilities, but a study by the **Financial Accountability Office** found that 55,000 additional new beds will be needed by 2034 in order to keep wait lists for nursing homes at current levels, which is 152 days currently, a timeframe that is considered by many to be too long.

Fenn’s report makes four recommendations for how the housing market can address the needs of seniors and provide spaces that allow them to remain in their own homes longer. It recommends the provincial government invest

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more in building more seniors' accommodations, that chronic disease should be treated at home when practical and medically sound, that land use planning should be adjusted to make development of seniors' housing easier, and that tax and pension policies should be modified to incentivize more construction of seniors' housing.

"Hospitals are really set up for acute episodes of ill health or illness or injury. But they were never really designed to look after patients with chronic disease [or chronic health issues related to aging]," says Fenn. "There's [also] some medical evidence that treating people in their home or in the community and making sure that they can be monitored with the appropriate therapies and pharmaceuticals and so on, is much better than letting their condition get to the stage where they have... to be admitted to hospital."

Fenn says that the most effective way to supply nursing homes, seniors' residences, and other housing for the aging population is for all levels of government to work to create market conditions to incentivize the development industry to build these products. For example, the **City of Brampton's** committee of council voted at its February 19 meeting to support **Golden**

Age Village for the Elderly (GAVE)'s proposal to build a long-term care facility with 160 beds at the Flower City Senior's Centre at 8870 McLaughlin Road. The city will assist GAVE in gaining approval from the **Ministry of Long-Term Care** and through the planning approval process to help build a facility.

"There's a big gap and we're struggling with trying to, you know, attract these type of facilities and attract these type of services into the city and work with private operators to ensure that they have proper zoning in place," Wards 3 and 4 councillor **Martin Medeiros** told *NRU*. "We're actually going through our official plan review, and that's one of the top considerations."

Brampton's council declared a Health Care Emergency January 22 as the city experiences a significant shortage of hospital beds and a fast-rising population.

Living in Place Institute co-founder **Erik Listou** told *NRU* that there are many ways the building industry can design all types of residential uses to accommodate seniors' needs and other accessibility needs to ensure people can live in their homes for longer. He says most improvements that are needed to achieve this are simple and inexpensive, such as constructing wider main

doorways in houses, installing towel bars in bathrooms that can double as grab bars, and building level, zero-step entryways to residences.

"I think the building industry has a huge opportunity," says Listou. "You're building targeted housing for seniors, [and] that's great. But at the same time, make sure every other home, everything that's touched, is improved. So then, the demand for seniors' housing will go down because people can effectively stay in their homes longer."

Listou says making improvements like this also significantly reduces the risk of seniors falling, which is a main cause of emergency treatment needs at hospitals. He adds that such improvements would help not just seniors, but all individuals with accessibility concerns, including visitors to a residence. He says it would be easy for the housing industry to market such improvements to homes as simple convenience amenities that would help all homeowners throughout their time in a residence, in addition to permitting them to stay there longer.

"One thing that is coming up over and over again in

conversation and through research is that 80 per cent of the population currently are probably going to remain in their current home and live their life out in their home," **Living in Place Network** business development manager **Linda Kafka** told *NRU*. "We're not slipping and changing homes, and the older you get, the more likely you're just going to stay put, and it's not just because of the challenges of moving and finding a new place and all of those, it's because we like the communities that we've chosen to live in."

The RCCAO report says that Ontario's goal should be to build up a comprehensive health care system which only needs expansion to include new technology and research opportunities, rather than to address the under-capacity of beds or facilities to house aging seniors and other patients, and that hospitals should focus on providing short-term, intensive care rather than long-term, chronic care. Fenn says he agrees that improvements to new and existing housing stock are one of many ways housing that accommodates seniors' needs can be provided.

"This is not a problem that

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This is not a problem that begins at the hospital door, and it's not a problem that ends at the hospital door.

- Michael Fenn

IN BRIEF

[Lieutenant Governor's 2019 Ontario Heritage Awards recipients](#)

The Honourable **Elizabeth Dowdeswell** and the **Ontario Heritage Trust** presented 25 recipients with awards for their exceptional contributions to heritage conservation in a ceremony at Queen's Park on February 20. The awards recognize individuals, groups and communities for significant cultural and natural, tangible and intangible heritage contributions.

Two GTHA projects were recognized for Excellence in Conservation.

The **Parkwood National Historic Site Greenhouses Conservation Project** in Oshawa was one. When first established in 1915 as the home of industrialist Colonel Sam McLaughlin, the site included five greenhouses, with additional structures added and demolished in succeeding decades. The conservation project sought to conserve the surviving

greenhouses through repair and restoration, but ultimately, had to dismantle, repair and reconstruct the structures. More information about the Parkwood National Historic Site can be found [here](#).

Voices of Freedom Art Park and Digital Interactive Exhibition was another. Located in a significant part of the Old Town, Niagara-on-the-Lake, the experiential art park was designed to educate, engage and challenge visitors about Black History. Combining structural art with contextual historical narratives available through a downloadable app, the project includes a walking tour of significant historical sites and buildings, complemented by research on the Black history of

The Parkwood National Historic Site Greenhouses in Oshawa.

SOURCE: ONTARIO HERITAGE TRUST

Voices of Freedom Art Park and Digital Interactive Exhibition in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

SOURCE: ONTARIO HERITAGE TRUST

the town and a corresponding Ontario curriculum-based education program for Grade 3 to 12 students. More information about the park and interactive exhibition can be found [here](#).

Among the individuals and groups recognized for Youth Achievement were students **Deon**

Singh (Brampton), **Grace Gong** (Mississauga) and **Holy Trinity School Grade Seven Richmond Hill Heritage Architecture Artists** (Richmond Hill).

A list of all of the 2019 Ontario Heritage Awards recipients can be found [here](#). 🌸



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begins at the hospital door, and it's not a problem that ends at the hospital door," says Fenn. "It's a problem that, really, if it's going to be resolved, has to be resolved by reducing

the number of people who are going to the hospital, and then finding a way to, when people are stabilized and medically ready to be released from hospital, finding

accommodation for them that suits their circumstances."

In an effort to address the hallway health care crisis, the **Ministry of Health** announced February 25 that the *Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act* is being introduced to amend and modernize the *Home Care*

and *Community Services Act, 1994*. The proposed legislation is intended to improve coordination of health services and allow patients and health care providers more flexibility in determining how best to care for an individual. 🌸