

Seniors and Housing Supports in Guelph & Wellington County

HIGHLIGHTS

There are options for housing for seniors in Guelph and Wellington...

- However limited space and long waitlists are often barriers to access.

As of 2008 Guelph and Wellington have 2,754 social housing units...

- Waitlists for subsidized housing range from 3-9 years for the City of Guelph and 2-5 years in the County of Wellington

There are 12 long-term care facilities in Guelph and Wellington...

- As of June 2007, 99% of the long-term care beds in the Waterloo-Wellington region were occupied
- Individuals waited, on average, 84 days to get a bed from the time of applying.

As individuals age, their health issues and needs will change. Their physical and/or mental health may deteriorate making it more challenging to do things that they used to do without assistance. They may face new barriers related to mobility, socialization and accomplishing daily household tasks.

With the right supports many seniors can continue to live healthy and meaningful lives, while residing in their own homes. In contrast, individuals who can no longer care for themselves as they could previously may require ongoing assistance such as the type of care they would receive in a long-term care facility.

When we asked representatives from local organizations about challenges that their clients face in the community, several of them noted that there is a lack of available resources for their clients and their caregivers. They also noted that because of a lack of available and appropriate in-home supports, some seniors move to long term care

facilities earlier than they would have to if they had access to in-home supports.

SENIORS ARE ON THE MOVE

If individuals are unable to continue living in their homes, they may be required to move to a long-term care facility or a more manageable environment. Moving to a long-term care facility or to another dwelling because of declining health can have a negative impact on an individual's perceived level of independence and can contribute to significant feelings of loss¹. It is important to ensure that services are in place to assist such individuals with their transitions, both physical and mental.

There are numerous reasons why elderly individuals relocate. Some may require more care and move into a long-term care facility or move in with family members; others may choose to downsize to a more suitably-sized house, condo, or apartment. Between 1999 and 2004, 240,000 Canadians aged 65 and older moved from one place to another². When moving however, most seniors do not relocate too far away from their original location. Three quarters of the seniors who moved in 2004/2005 relocated within 50 kilometres of their previous dwellings. The composition of individuals who move is also varied. Seniors who are married or living in common-law relationships had a 7% moving rate whereas 12% of those who were widowed relocated³. Thus, individuals who live alone are more likely to move than those who are coupled, possibly because they are no longer comfortable in their current houses or they can no longer manage or afford to live there alone.

IN-HOME SUPPORTS

Recent studies conducted through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care concluded that 85% of individuals who are 65 years of age and older wish to continue living at home as they age⁴. Providing support in the homes of seniors is therefore crucial to preserving their well-being and quality of life.

In 2006, 1,197,710 Canadian seniors (approximately 28% of all seniors) aged 65 and over were living independently; 72% of them were women⁵. Since individuals' health declines as they age, it is important to ensure that those who continue residing in the community receive the supports that they require to live safely.

The Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) provides many in-home supports. CCAC's "are local organizations established in 1996 by the *Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care* to provide Ontarians with better access to government-funded community-based health services, and to facilitate the placement process into long-term care homes"⁶. The CCAC is funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care^{7,8}. (For more information on CCAC's services see <http://www.ccac-ont.ca/Content.aspx?EnterpriseID=3&LanguageID=1&MenuID=52>)

A report on the status of long-term care services in the Waterloo-Wellington region indicated an increased demand for CCAC services in the area. In the 2005-2006 year, 33,977 individuals were served by the Waterloo Wellington CCAC, up 3,407 people from the previous year. Currently, additional funding that is provided to the Waterloo-Wellington CCAC is targeted towards the Personal Support Worker (PSW) workforce, as this is the area with the largest amount of service demands. Further funding will be required to keep up with the increased volume of services needed each year^{9,10}.

Roundtable discussions with local services providers yielded concerns about individuals who do not qualify for the government funded in-home supports and are therefore required to seek assistance from the private sector. This is not a feasible option for seniors who have low-incomes and are unable to afford to pay for services.

RESPITE CARE

Respite services bring workers into individuals' homes to provide care or support for individuals to attend out-of-home day programs in an attempt to relieve primary caregivers of their duties for a short period of time¹¹. Additionally, some institutions offer beds and overnight stays for individuals who require significant care, thus giving caregivers an opportunity to have a longer break¹². The CCAC provides much of the home-based respite care available for those individuals who need it. When requiring overnight respite relief, individuals contact the CCAC and

facilitate an arrangement with one of the identified institutions. Other forms of respite are provided through St. Joseph's Health Centre, Community Living, and Hospice Wellington.

Representatives from local organizations are concerned about the lack of available respite services for caregivers who are providing assistance to loved ones residing at home. As highlighted in *Profile 1: Seniors Demographic and Changing Social Trends*, providing care for a loved one can be a very arduous task. Increasing the amount of respite services will benefit both those receiving the care and those providing it¹³. If families are appropriately supported in their care giving role, it is thought that the long-term care wait list will decrease, as fewer individuals will require this extended form of care¹⁴.

RETIREMENT HOMES

Individuals who require minimum to moderate care and wish to live independent lifestyles may opt to move into a retirement home. Retirement homes are privately owned, run independently, and are geared towards those who require little support and who wish to have access to certain services and social activities¹⁵. Upon applying to a retirement home, an administrative process assesses the applicants to ensure that they are suitable for the type of lifestyle offered by the home and do not require care that exceeds that which is provided by the facility.

As highlighted in the table at the end of this report, the Waterloo-Wellington Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) identifies 24 retirement homes in the Guelph-Wellington region (11 in Wellington County and 13 in the city of Guelph)¹⁶. Through the County of Wellington Social Services residents 50 years and older are eligible for subsidy at 10 retirement homes (4 homes in Guelph and 6 homes in the County of Wellington). Living in one of the homes that has an agreement with the County of Wellington Social Services, may be an option for individuals who have low incomes. Five of these homes also participate in the County of Wellington funded *Elder Abuse Emergency Placement* Program for older adults needing shelter because of issues of abuse or neglect.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Supportive housing is for individuals who wish to live in residences that provide assistance with meals, housekeeping, and/or personal care, or offer social and

recreational activities. The degree of assistance varies between facilities, as does the cost of living. Some supportive housing units are in apartment buildings, while others are in large houses. The first supportive housing units for seniors in the Guelph, Wellington and Waterloo area were opened by Guelph Independent Living on November 12th 2008. This facility has 20 units funded through the LHIN Aging at Home Strategy. Residents must be 55+ and have needs that could require an emergency on call person. Staff is available onsite from 7AM to 11 PM and accessible 24 hours per day¹⁷.

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

Subsidized housing is available for individuals who have low incomes and have difficulty finding the financial resources to pay for rent. Individuals who qualify for subsidized housing pay rent that is geared to their household income. Those who have lower incomes will therefore pay less rent than those whose earnings are greater. The number of subsidized housing units available in Guelph and Wellington will vary across time. As of August 2008 there were approximately 2,392 subsidized housing units located in Guelph and Wellington County. Of those units, approximately 1,027 are specifically for people 55+, senior citizens, or those living senior lifestyles¹⁸. Waitlists for subsidized housing range from 3-9 years for the City of Guelph and 2-5 years in the County of Wellington¹⁹.

¹ Hicks, T.J. (2000). What Is Your Life Like Now? Loneliness And Elderly Individuals Residing In Nursing Homes. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, 26(8), p. 15-19.

² Lin, J. (2005, Winter). The housing transitions of seniors. *Canadian Social Trends*, 79, 22-26. Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 11-008. Ottawa

³ Paetkau, S. & Pisko-Bezruchko, L. (2007, November 26). *Aging at home: Allowing seniors to live safely at home with dignity and independence*. Presentation. Retrieved July 3, 2008, from http://www.ccac-ont.ca/Upload/oaccac/General/253_Lynnda_Swan_2.pdf

⁴ Paetkau, S. & Pisko-Bezruchko, L. (2007, November 26). *Aging at home: Allowing seniors to live safely at home with dignity and independence*. Presentation. Retrieved July 3, 2008, from http://www.ccac-ont.ca/Upload/oaccac/General/253_Lynnda_Swan_2.pdf

⁵ Statistics Canada. (2008). *Earnings and Income of Canadians Over the past quarter century, 2006 census*. Catalogue no. 97-563-X. Retrieved July 3, 2008, from

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/income/pdf/97-563-XIE2006001.pdf>

⁶ Community Care Access Centre (2006) Retrieved July 2, 2008 from

<http://www.ccacnt.ca/Content.aspx?EnterpriseID=3&LanguageID=1&MenuID=1>

⁷ Waterloo-Wellington CCAC. (2006, December). *Home: Waterloo-Wellington CCAC*. Retrieved July 2, 2008, from [http://www.ccac-](http://www.ccac-ont.ca/Content.aspx?EnterpriseID=3&LanguageID=1&MenuID=1)

[ont.ca/Content.aspx?EnterpriseID=3&LanguageID=1&MenuID=1](http://www.ccac-ont.ca/Content.aspx?EnterpriseID=3&LanguageID=1&MenuID=1)

⁸ Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (2002). *Seniors' Care: Community Support Services*. Retrieved July 3, 2008, from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ltc/11_community.html

⁹ Paetkau, S. & Pisko-Bezruchko, L. (2007, November 26). *Aging at home: Allowing seniors to live safely at home with dignity and independence*. Presentation. Retrieved July 3, 2008, from [http://www.ccac-](http://www.ccac-ont.ca/Upload/oaccac/General/253_Lynnda_Swan_2.pdf)

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¹⁰ Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (2002). *Seniors' Care: Community Support Services*. Retrieved July 3, 2008, from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ltc/11_community.html

¹¹ Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (2002). *Seniors' Care: Community Support Services*. Retrieved July 3, 2008, from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ltc/11_community.html

¹² Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (2002). *Seniors' Care: Community Support Services*. Retrieved July 3, 2008, from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ltc/11_community.html

¹³ Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network. (2007, October 31). *Aging at home strategy: Directional plan*. Retrieved July 7, 2008, from

http://www.waterloowellingtonlhin.on.ca/uploadedFiles/Home_Page/News_Room/testnewsrelease/Aging%20At%20Home%20Directional%20Plan.pdf

¹⁴ Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network. (2007, October 31). *Aging at home strategy: Directional plan*. Retrieved July 7, 2008, from

http://www.waterloowellingtonlhin.on.ca/uploadedFiles/Home_Page/News_Room/testnewsrelease/Aging%20At%20Home%20Directional%20Plan.pdf

¹⁵ Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. (2007, May 11). *Seniors' care: Retirement homes*. Retrieved July 22, 2008, from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/ltc/14_retirement.html

¹⁶ Waterloo Wellington Community Care Access Centre. (2008, April 22). *Retirement homes information package*.

¹⁷ Guelph Independent Living (October 2008) *Personal Communication*

¹⁸ NOTE: This information was gathered by contacting providers of subsidized housing across the City and County of Wellington from May 2008-Aug. 2008.

¹⁹ Personal Communication (2008, May) County of Wellington