

AGING MATTERS

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PRIORITY AREA: ACTIVE AGING & WELLNESS



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Goal:

To create and sustain an enabling environment that promotes and supports optimal health for all Manitobans across their life course.

Background:

- Health is a resource for everyday living. Active aging is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age (WHO – Active Aging: A Policy Framework 2002). Wellness is the full integration of optimal states of mental, physical and spiritual well-being.
- Although trends show a major decrease in mortality in Canada, they also point to an increasing overall burden of disease, widening the gap between years of life and years of life with good health. Canada is experiencing a persistent high prevalence of preventable chronic disease risk factors. Approximately four in five Canadian adults have at least one modifiable risk factor for chronic disease (self-reported tobacco smoking, physical inactivity, unhealthy eating and harmful use of alcohol).

While Manitobans are living longer, it is important that they live longer in good health through prevention and delay of onset of chronic disease, frailty and disability and extend their functional ability for everyday living and independence for as long as possible. Promoting and supporting optimal health for life is more than the responsibility of individuals. It requires an enabling environment that informs, promotes and supports healthy choices and behaviours that contribute to physical, social and mental wellness, independence and quality of life.

Statistics from CANSIM (2014) show in the population 65+ years of age, only 51.7% of males and 37% of females were active enough to meet the Canada Physical Activity Guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity. There is much room for improvement. It takes a cohesive commitment by the community-at-large to support opportunities for active aging and to create and sustain an enabling environment that will benefit everyone.

With more Manitobans living longer, it is time to change the way we think about aging and time to create and enhance opportunities to engage the aging in Manitoba toward optimal health for all. A healthier older Manitoban population requires the shedding of stereotypes about aging and older people. It requires a more inclusive approach that encourages older Manitobans to be participants on a variety of levels, including the planning of programs and policies that affect them. A healthier Manitoba population will benefit from the rich experience and skills that older Manitobans can contribute.

The Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation have developed a Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada: Let's Get Moving. This document provides a framework for moving forward in creating an enabling environment for health, active aging and wellness in Manitoba. It identifies the cultural norms, spaces and places, public engagement, partnerships, leadership and learning required to achieve a more active and engaged population. It also identifies key areas of convergence that weave through all levels of systems and organizations relating to active lifestyles (Canadian Sport Policy, Framework for Recreation in Canada, Active Canada 20/20 and initiatives to promote supportive environments for healthy weights):

Actions:

- Advocate for dedicated capacities and mechanisms that support an open and ongoing dialogue with government and non-government organizations and agencies toward coordinated and collaborative approaches for active aging in Manitoba.
- Collectively create and sustain enabling environments for active aging for all Manitobans including: access to credible healthy aging information, programs and services that are age & ability appropriate and policies that promote and support meaningful engagement of older Manitobans across their life-course.
- Promote and support, through policy, the inclusivity of older Manitobans in all planning processes affecting their health toward the following:
 - Adopt a life-course approach – engagement throughout one's entire lifetime
 - Improved access
 - Equity and diversity
 - Support physical literacy (across the life-course)
 - Encourage participation at any age – ageless engagement opportunities relating to:
 - Active for life ○ Sport for life ○ Physical Literacy for life ○ Positive role models for life
 - Advocate for supportive community design (built environment/enabling environment) that encourages regular physical activity, social engagement, connections with community and ensures safety and security of older adults in their community.
 - Encourage ongoing engagement of older Manitobans through volunteerism to support them in remaining active contributors and resources to their families, peers and community throughout their entire lifetime.
 - Make active aging the norm and cultural trademark of living in Manitoba.
 - Promote the positive and inspiring aspects of growing older in Manitoba.

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