

AGING MATTERS

YOUR VOTE COUNTS

PRIORITY AREA: AGEISM



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Goal:

To enhance community and political awareness about the prevalence of ageist attitudes specifically as they relate to ageist attitudes within our society and to eliminate age based discriminatory practices.

Background:

Ageism refers to the stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination towards people on the basis of age. Although ageism can be directed at people of any age, it is most commonly directed at older adults. For the purposes of the Manitoba Seniors Coalition we will be focusing on ageism as it relates to older adults. Ageism manifests itself in beliefs that older adults are unproductive, useless, and a burden. Such beliefs can lead to variety of discriminatory actions, such as:

- The use of patronizing, demeaning language when interacting with older adults
- Biases in hiring and not providing re-training opportunities for older adults in the workforce
- Devaluing the contributions of older people to society
- Perpetuating the myth that older people are bankrupting social and health care systems

Canada's population is aging and there has been a significant change in the number of older adults. In 2016, older Canadians made up 16.9% of the total population of the country and 15.6% of the Manitoba population. Older adults now outnumber children for the first time. This trend is expected to continue. It is projected that approximately 23% to 25% of the Canadian population will be over the age of 65 years by 2036.

Despite the aging of the population, negative images of later life persist. Ageism or discrimination against individuals based on their age - is widespread and generally accepted. The stereotypical beliefs that give rise to ageism are deeply embedded in our society and are reflected in the lack of proactive policy development, funding allocation, program and service development geared to meet the needs of an aging population. Ongoing efforts to address sexism and racism have shown that it is possible to change social norms. It is time to stop defining people based solely on their age.

It is only when the systemic issue of ageism is addressed that there will be positive movement in the development of policies that meaningfully address financial security, housing, social inclusion, transportation and active living opportunities for older Manitobans.

We need to critically examine stereotypical beliefs about later life and take action to address ageism in order to support all Manitobans in aging well.

Recognizing that ageism is ingrained in societal structures and attitudes and that it gives rise to discrimination against older adults the Manitoba Seniors Coalition recommends the following specific measures to combat ageism. These recommendations are based on findings from Ontario's Discussion Paper Discrimination and Age: Human Rights Issues Facing Older Persons in Ontario, released in July 2000.

Actions:

- The provincial government evaluate laws, policies and programs to ensure that they do not contain age-based assumptions and stereotypes and that they reflect the needs of older persons.
- The provincial department of Education and Training, school boards and schools develop programs and activities that will encourage a better understanding and positive perception of older persons. Intergenerational programming between students and older persons is an integral part of such education.
- Professional faculties such as medicine, nursing, social work and nutritional sciences should better prepare graduates to work with older persons in a more supportive manner, without stereotypes and assumptions.
- Regulated professions and voluntary professional associations take steps to raise awareness among their membership about ageism and age discrimination and provide continuing education in this area, for example through courses and publications.

Additional Action Items May Include:

- Ongoing communication with the public, especially older adults, to identify and discuss ageism and how to combat it.
- Province-wide distribution of educational materials on ageism and age discrimination, preferably in written and audiovisual formats.
- Public education forums across the province.
- Education on ageism in the workplace.

Age & Opportunity- Support Services for Older Adults (A&O)

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Support Services for Older Adults