



JANUARY~FEBRUARY~MARCH 2018

Volume 23 - # 1

NEXT DEADLINE: MARCH 23, 2018

# Affordable today.



# Affordable tomorrow.

Why co-op and non-profit housing  
is (still) Ontario's best investment

**ONPhA**  
ONTARIO NON-PROFIT  
HOUSING ASSOCIATION



Co-operative Housing  
Federation of Canada  
ONTARIO REGION

**LINK** is published quarterly  
as of January 2018.

The next **LINK** deadline for submissions  
is **March 23, 2018**.



Your **LINK** Team:

Editor/Coordinator: Bob Harrison Drue  
Contributors: Tom Maunder,  
Karin Williams and  
Ursula Carter  
Distribution/Events Photographer:  
Mitch Lambert

since 2006, while it remained steady in the majority of provinces. (Territories are close to, or higher than Ontario, but have remained steady or decreased since 2006.)

The data underscores the message we continue to bring to Queen's Park and Parliament Hill: **protect existing affordable housing, and build more, including housing co-ops.** CHF Canada is looking forward to working with all levels of government as the National Housing Strategy is released.

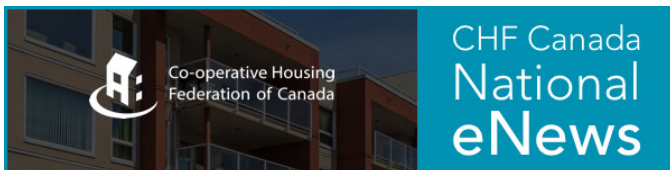
Other key Ontario facts re: Core Housing Need:

- Toronto leads the top ten municipalities with the highest percentage of households;
- Eight of those top ten are cities in Ontario;
- One in seven Ontario households are in core housing need;
- One in five Toronto households are, and
- One in three Toronto rental households are.

### ONTARIO VACANCY RATE DROPS TO THE LOWEST LEVEL SINCE 2000

CMHC released its 2017 Rental Market Reports, including Ontario Highlights. Their key findings:

- Ontario vacancy rate is at its lowest level since 2000
- Lower vacancy rates pushed rents above provincial guideline increases



### CORE HOUSING NEED: DEFINITION

A household is said to be in 'core housing need' if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three housing standards).

### CORE HOUSING NEED DATA RELEASED

CMHC and Statistics Canada released the latest data on Core Housing Need. Not surprisingly, Ontario leads the provinces. Ontario has the highest percentage of households in Core Housing Need; Ontario's percentage increased

- Lower vacancy rates resulted in low turnover rates, particularly in Toronto and Peterborough.

A report on the GTA market shows a grim reality for renting households, with CMHC noting that various factors “rising costs of home ownership and lack of new rental supply kept vacancy rates at historic lows.”

With demand outstripping supply, “the urgency of implementing the National Housing Strategy has never been more clear,” says Harvey Cooper, Managing Director of CHF Canada’s Ontario Region. “Ontario’s co-op housing sector is ready to get to work.”

There are individual reports for a dozen Ontario cities online. You can browse the CMHC Rental Market Reports for Major Centres to look at average rent and rent increases in your area.

### **CHF CANADA AND ONPHA LAUNCH 'AFFORDABLE TODAY- AFFORDABLE TOMORROW'**

At the start of National Housing week, CHF Canada and Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) launched ‘Affordable today. Affordable tomorrow’.

They make the case for investing in co-op and non-profit housing today to create a legacy for the next generation. “The government investments of 30 and 40 years ago demonstrate this,” says Harvey

Cooper, Ontario Region Managing Director. “The co-ops and non-profits created then are a vital link today in our affordable housing stock. Our co-ops across Ontario create vibrant communities.”

### **HOUSING CO-OPS WELCOME NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY**

A few weeks ago, the National Housing Strategy was announced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Minister Responsible for CMHC Jean-Yves Duclos at events in Toronto and Vancouver.

In its news release, CHF Canada welcomed the Strategy which includes provisions to protect low-income members of housing co-operatives and to build new affordable housing for Canadians in need.

After a decade of work by CHF Canada and housing co-ops across the country, we can breathe a little easier knowing that 20,000 low-income households have a home for years to come.

CHF Canada’s number one priority has been to protect low-income co-op households. Over the last two years, we have been in continuous talks with the Minister Duclos and his staff; and we have had over a hundred meetings with Members of Parliament from across the country to articulate the need for a solution to keep vulnerable members in their homes.

A successful solution for low-income members had to meet three criteria:

**Does it feature the same breadth and depth of support as currently exists?**

Does it provide support to the same number of people and is it providing the same amount of housing assistance?

**Will it be implemented in a timely and seamless manner?**

Will there be a gap period between the end of their co-op's operating agreement and the start of a new program, or will low-income members receive uninterrupted support?

**Is this a long-term solution?**

We have advocated for 10-years of assistance to low-income households.

The Strategy meets the following criteria:

- The Strategy is set to assist the same number of households as are currently assisted today.
- Low-income households will receive uninterrupted support through the duration of the Strategy
- Funding for the National Housing Strategy has been budgeted through 2028. Our sector is ready to pivot from 'protect' to 'grow'. Through the National Housing Strategy, the federal government has provided some tools by which we can do that:

- The Strategy will include tools for the construction of 100,000 new units with an affordability component.
- The federal government will support the expansion of community housing, with a target of building 50,000 new units.
- New grants and loans will be made available to finance new construction.
- Surplus government land will be made available for the creation of new affordable housing.
- Co-ops will be able to prepay their high-interest CMHC-held mortgages while fully protecting housing assistance for low-income members. This will help co-ops, including Section 61 program co-ops, to facilitate asset repair and renewal as well as the construction of new units through new financing at more reasonable rates of interest.

Growth and co-op autonomy have both been part of our advocacy efforts to government. Housing co-ops collectively own over \$5.6 billion in assets and are well-positioned to create new supply. Our sector is embracing growth to meet the changing needs of co-op members and to provide new members with an affordable place to call home.

The Strategy provides our sector with welcome relief to protect the homes we have, and tools to usher in a new era of co-op housing growth in Canada.



## **CHRISTMAS IN GOA**

In November of 1994, I quit my job, got on a plane and flew to India where I spent nine months immersing myself in the culture, history and fabulous architecture of this exotic and colourful country.

In Delhi, I hooked up with my friend Christine and we travelled south to where the weather was more tropical. We thus found ourselves in Goa in mid-December. Goa is the only state in India that is Christian – consequently it's the only state that officially celebrates Christmas. It was colonized by the Portuguese in 1510 so they could control the spice trade. They didn't leave until 1961 - as a result, Goa still has a more European flavor than the rest of Hindu and Muslim India.



Goa's biggest draw is undoubtedly its uninterrupted stretch of golden sand beaches. This shimmering strand extends all along the Arabian Sea - each of the various beaches have developed their own reputation since the hippie days of the sixties. The weather is almost always perfect - in December, the temperatures usually range from 26 to 32 degrees Celsius.

Known also for its Christmas revelry, Chris and I decided to spend Christmas and New Year's in Goa.

We checked into an economical Indian hotel which was close to the beach and settled in for a two-week stay. There were only about 30 other westerners sharing our beach, thus a spirit of camaraderie quickly developed between us.

Chris and I soon settled into a daily routine - mornings were often spent in town exploring the sites; in the afternoons we stayed on our beach - swimming, sunning and socializing with our neighbours or bicycling along the beach while trying to avoid hitting dozens of crabs who scurried away at our approach. Luckily, we never hit any of them.

Our walks in Goa were made more delightful by the Christmas lights and decorations everywhere. Glittering Christmas trees lit up many street corners and the shops and market places were decorated with tinsel and buntings – festive decorations made from cloth or paper. There were even Christmas carols coming out of the speakers in the market place. All the churches had charming nativity scenes in front and beautifully decorated Christmas trees inside. It felt rather strange to be in an India with Santa Clauses, Christmas trees, and manger scenes. Clearly, Christmas in Goa was taken very seriously.

As it happened, Goa was also celebrating the Feast of St. Francis Xavier and was filled with thousands of pilgrims from all over India. Though essentially a Christian event, the festival attracts all manner of folk, regardless of caste or religion. Much to our relief, most of the pilgrims stayed in designated areas far from our beach. Nevertheless, Chris and I were curious about the event and braved the crowds one morning just to check out the festive shenanigans.

The body of St. Francis had been laid out in a silver casket in the Church of Bom Jesus and tremendous lineups snaked around the church, waiting to get in to pay their respects. Chris and I managed to persuade the guards to let us inside, so we could view the interior. The Church is more than 400 years old and is rich in art, architecture and history. The relics of St. Francis are enshrined there permanently.

After a good look around, we made our way to the festival grounds where dozens of stalls sold food, as well as trinkets and religious artifacts. Statues of the saint, rosaries, scapulars and various icons were displayed in a colourful profusion. But what got our attention were the numerous plastic arms hanging from the front of the stalls. Apparently, in 1614, the pope had instructed that St. Francis's right arm be chopped off and sent to Rome. The arm supposedly

represents St. Francis's healing power.

A couple of hours later, we hightailed it back to our beach, grateful that few of the pilgrims were inclined to venture very far from the fair grounds.

The next few days Chris and I continued with our exploration of the town of Goa and the surrounding district. We visited the Museum of Christian Art which contained a collection of statues, paintings and sculptures. Many of the works of Goa's Christian art made during the Portuguese era were produced by local Hindu artists. The 16th century Se Cathedral is the largest church in Asia. It looked rather lopsided due to the loss of one of its bell towers in the 1776 earthquake. Above the main altar were six panels carved with scenes from the life of St. Catherine, to whom the cathedral is dedicated. There's an image showing her being carried off by angels after being beheaded. After our immersion into Goa's somber religious history, it was a relief to enter the liveliness of nearby Anjuna's weekly flea market. The market was created in the 60's by hippies getting together to smoke jumbo joints, compare experiences on their travels and sell jeans or handmade jewellery to help fund the rest of their stay. Nowadays things are more mainstream, and the merchandise comes from all over India – sculptures and jewellery, courtesy of Tibetan and Kashmiri

traders; Gujarati tribal women selling tee-shirts; richly colourful saris, bags and bedspreads from Rajasthan, and sacks of spices from Kerala. Persistent tribal girls from Karnataka plead with passersby to 'come look in my shop'. The market is crowded with the usual busloads of tourists, backpackers and even a sprinkling of remaining hippies.

A short bus ride took us to the pretty city of Panjim. Grand colonial-era

buildings rub shoulders with arty boutiques, bookshops and backstreet bars. But it's the tangle of narrow streets in the old Latin Quarter that really steal the show. The late afternoon sun lights up yellow houses with purple doors and around each corner we found ochre-coloured mansions with terracotta-tiled roofs and wrought iron balconies. We made a stop at the quaint Café Bodega for lunch and enjoyed delicious masala dosas - a thin crisp crepe, stuffed with spiced up potatoes and lentils.

On Christmas Day, Chris and I walked down to the beach, swam in the warm tropical sea and basked in the mid-day heat. As the afternoon wore on, many of the other beach residents joined us. Everyone was in the holiday spirit and we chatted happily, recalling past Christmases in different parts of the world. We were all looking forward to the



Christmas dinner at the hotel, scheduled for later that day. Our hotel was beautifully decorated with a huge Christmas tree in the lobby, complete with nativity manger scene. Strings of twinkling fairy lights lit up the hotel façade and the two palm trees on both sides of the

entrance were densely wrapped around with lights.

At 6 o'clock we all gathered together in the lobby dressed in our finest beach garb.

Two long trestle tables had been set up outside with decanters of red and white wine spaced out along the tables. Next to each plate was a gift bag of party favours, which included colourful paper crowns to wear during dinner – compliments of the hotel. Additional guests arrived from another beach, so there was a large group of us ready to do justice to the Christmas meal. We all introduced ourselves and everyone was soon feeling like the best of friends.

Christmas is a time when diets fade away, and we accept that we're going to eat and drink as much as physically possible. This is especially true for India, where food is an important part of any festival. With the traditional Goan fish curries and fresh seafood to gorge on, a holiday in Goa opened a whole new food experience for many of us. In addition to the seafood, a rich array of traditional Indian foods was also



served - biryani - an aromatic rice dish cooked with several spices and marinated mutton; makhani dahl – mixed lentil curry with lots of butter and cream, served with naan bread; tandoori chicken - marinated with yogurt and spices and roasted in a clay oven; pakora – eggplant, potatoes, cauliflower and chili peppers dipped in flour and deep fried, and of course samosas - fried triangular shells stuffed with spiced up potato, green peas, mutton or shredded beef and served with a mint chutney.

When we finally felt full to bursting, out came the beautifully decorated platters filled with an array of colourful and lip-smacking sweet treats. Despite the groans, we all managed to consume a sizable portion of the sweets.

Later on, at the beach, people spread out their blankets and settled themselves for an evening display of fireworks lighting up the night sky. New Year's at the hotel was celebrated in much the same way, with a lavish dinner and fireworks on the beach.

Several days after the New Year celebration, Chris and I left this unique part of India, where East meets West, and boarded a train back to Bombay. As I sat watching Indian life pass by, I was grateful to have experienced the holiday season Goan style; a spicy blend of relaxation and warmth, mixed

together like a delicious cup of chai tea.

Ursula Carter ~ 51 Alexander

---

Want an energy-packed, protein-rich snack that's good for you? **GO NUTS!** A handful provides valuable vitamins and minerals along with a good dose of fibre. Nuts add crunch and texture to sweet and savoury dishes. Chopped finely, they're a delicious coating for oven-baked fish or chicken. For your health, reach for nuts instead of a sugary snack.

Nuts in the shell are the cheapest, and to prevent oils in nuts from going rancid, store shelled nuts in the fridge for up to four months, or in the freezer for up to eight months.

Toasting nuts intensifies the flavour, so it's possible to use less in a recipe and still end up with a tasty dish. They're very easy to toast: in a preheated 350-degree (F) oven, place nuts in a single layer in a shallow baking pan and bake five to ten minutes. Be sure to stir or shake them around every couple minutes.

Reasons to love 'em:

**HELP ALLEVIATE ARTHRITIS** and lower risk for heart attack and stroke with walnuts' high content of omega-3 fatty acids.

**DEFEND AGAINST SOME FORMS OF CANCER** and cardiovascular disease with the plant sterols in pistachios.



**WARD OFF CATARACTS** with the high-level concentrations of Vitamin E found in almonds and hazelnuts.

**PROTECT AGAINST AGE-RELATED MEMORY LOSS** and improve recall with cashews' robust magnesium content.

## HAVING TROUBLE WITH HEARING, ARE WE?

I don't know about you folks, but I often get asked this question by Members of City Park. The tone in which this question is asked varies: pitying, condescending, sarcastic, or frustrated. Somehow, my loss of hearing is my fault and I need to do something about it. It is my contention that hearing loss is everyone's **ACCESSIBILITY** issue, and it needs to be addressed by the 'powers-that-be' and the Members at City Park. Accessibility is not just a matter of ramps; it is also a matter of hearing and seeing.

City Park has a sizeable proportion of seniors who may be experiencing some degree of hearing loss. This hearing loss limits accessibility to necessary information and human contact. It is this social contact component which is crucial in alleviating many other situations.

What causes hearing loss?

The primary cause is aging. As we age, we lose our ability to hear sounds at either end of the sound spectrum. Another cause is prolonged exposure to excessive loud sounds. Based on that piece of information, everyone at City Park should be stone deaf. We are 'blessed' with leaf blowers, idling buses and pneumatic drills and saws. We are told that it is the price to pay for living in Toronto. I no longer buy the 'Put Up or Shut Up' philosophy, and feel we must push back. Seniors tend to be over-medicated and certain medications can exacerbate hearing loss. Viral infections and heredity also play roles in hearing loss.



What are the signs of hearing loss?

Speaking too loudly, asking for words to be repeated, straining to hear, misunderstanding information, favouring one ear, believing all other people mumble (very true!), increasing volume on the television and/or radio, ringing or buzzing in the ears, and giving the appearance of being 'out of it'. If you have some or all of these symptoms, ask your doctor to arrange a hearing test or call the Canadian Hearing Society at 416-928-2500.

What can City Park do to help provide auditory accessibility? They can make sure our Office Staff have

specific training to serve seniors and implement guidelines for the staff. Budget more time for dealing with seniors. Do customer service representatives speak reasonably unaccented English? Periodic checks on the clarity of public address announcements. Does the microphone work at Co-op meetings? Do presenters enunciate clearly? Is there special seating for Members with hearing challenges? Does City Park have trained 'signers' on staff?

To hear clearly, is to connect clearly, and isn't that what the Co-op movement is all about?

Tom Maunder ~ 51 Alexander



**'WORDSCAPES'** is a modern word game that combines the best of word searching and crosswords for tremendous brain

challenging fun!

You'll never experience a dull moment after you try this most addicting word puzzle game! Play this crossword puzzle once and you won't be able to put it down!

- Escape and stimulate your mind by visiting the beautiful destinations of Wordscapes!
- Get your word hunt on with over 3,700 puzzles!
- Challenge your brain – this word

search starts easy and becomes challenging fast!

Wordscapes is a perfect fit for fans of popular word games, by combining the best of word search games and crossword puzzles.

It is available on both Apple and Android platforms and across all devices. It has become a daily addiction for me and I haven't spent a penny on it yet! ~ed.

---

### **DOG AND CAT OWNERS ARE KILLING THEIR PETS WITH KINDNESS**

Dogs and cats, much like humans, are facing an obesity epidemic and are at risk of being killed with 'kindness' from their owners, which can cut several years off their life.

A shocking 90% of owners don't know the healthy amount of calories that their pets should be consuming.

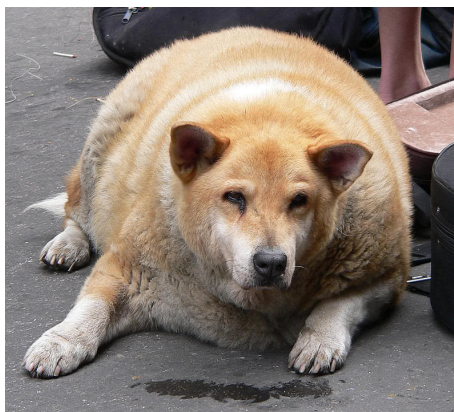
Nearly one in three owners (29%) fail to measure out the portions of food, and one in five can't tell if their dog or cat is overweight, a survey by pet food manufacturer, [tails.com](http://tails.com) found. Vet Sean McCormack in the UK has warned that dogs can get diabetes, arthritis and joint problems from eating too much, reported the [Daily Mirror](http://DailyMirror). He said: "We are in danger of killing our dogs with kindness. Depending on the breed,

overfeeding them can cut life-span from 14, to just 10 years." McCormack stressed the significance of portion control and to measure out their meals with a scoop or a set of scales. He also suggested a feeding program depending on the pooch's age, activity levels and breed.

Even more, 13% of pet owners are lying to their vets about their dog's eating habits. Although the vet usually weighs them and is a key source for advice for worried pooch lovers, owners also have to be aware of the areas that they need to focus on, such as ribs, waist and tummy. McCormack recommends checking pets regularly, and start by feeling the dog's ribs by running their fingers over them.

They should be easy to feel under the skin and only covered by a thin layer of muscle or fat. However, if they are visible, then that is a sign they could be underweight.

He added that from the side, the tummy should tuck up from the bottom of the rib cage and then up to the hip or groin area. The stomach should not hang down too low, or as the same height as their chest. For the waist area, McCormack said that from above, it should taper from behind the rib cage to the hips.



However, if it is wider and the pooch is barrel-shaped, it is overweight.

He is also warned of the risks of feeding dogs human food: particularly nuts, chocolate, raisins and grapes that can be toxic for animals.

He said: "It's tempting to treat your dog but just because they're giving us puppy dog eyes doesn't mean they're hungry.

"We need to try to resist this. Make sure they are walked regularly so they don't gain weight."

(from <http://www.essexlive.news>)

### SCIENCE SAYS OLD PEOPLE HAVE A SMELL, AND HERE'S HOW TO FIX IT

There are a lot of things that start to become more and more of a concern as you get older. Your joints aren't moving quite as well as they used to, you find yourself getting tired more often than you once did, and even your memory starts to go a little bit at a time. Suffice it to say, it can be pretty stressful.

Of course, something that all of us are more than aware of is the concept of 'old people smell.' It's hard to describe on its own, but just about everybody can think of it, especially if they've dealt with aging



relatives before. Many describe it as 'musty' or 'medicinal,' but ultimately, it's something most people find really unpleasant.

Fortunately, researchers have isolated several of the causes of 'old people smell,' and as a result, here's a handy guide of tips to minimize how much of it you develop...

**LIVING IN CLOSED SPACES:** As we get older, we tend to live in smaller environments with minimal fresh air coming in, hence the increase in that 'musty' smell that people mention. Keep windows cracked open to keep the air flowing!

**NOT CLEANING REGULARLY:** Whether it's your house or your own body, as those joints start to seize up and keep you from moving, it becomes harder and harder to clean. The result? You guessed it, buildup of mold, bacteria, and odour. Do your best to clean as best as you can, or see if friends or family can help you out!

**LAUNDRY NOT BEING DONE:** Again, blame everything getting harder to do on this one, but as you begin to wash your clothes less regularly, the more stale and 'old' they'll begin to smell. Try washing some of your clothes you haven't worn in a while.

**DEHYDRATION:** This is a big one; As we age, our body gets worse at retaining water, but we also don't notice we're dehydrated as much.

Make sure you're always drinking lots of water!

**LACK OF SALIVA:** If your breath is contributing to your odour, it's likely because your mouth is producing significantly less saliva, especially if you have dentures. Be thorough in cleaning your mouth, and use mouthwash!

*(shared.com)*

---

### WHAT IT COSTS TO RENT AN APARTMENT IN MONTREAL VS. EVERY OTHER CANADIAN CITY

You'll probably want to live in Montreal.

If there's ever been a reason to live in Montreal, it's the cheap rent. A Montrealer's monthly lodging expense has historically been lower than other major Canadian urban centres, and that hasn't changed in 2017.

New data from apartment-finding website [rentseeker.ca](http://rentseeker.ca) has shown Montreal to be one of the most affordable cities for renters in Canada. And when it comes to cities you'd actually want to live in, Montreal definitely takes the cake as the cheapest.

Renting a 1-bedroom apartment in Montreal, on average, costs about \$698. That's a far cry from the \$1,326 it'll cost you in Toronto, or the \$1,223 per month you'd pay in Vancouver.



Vacancy rates for 1-bedroom units in Montreal are set at about 3.3%, meaning there are actually units available. Finding an apartment in Toronto or Vancouver is far harder, with vacancy rates of 1.1% and 0.9%, respectively.

But there are more cities in Canada than just the 'big three' of Montreal, Vancouver, and Toronto. But even when factoring in all of Canada's other urban centres, Montreal still comes out as one of the most affordable options.

See the numbers for yourself below, where we list out the cost of a one and two-bedroom apartment unit in some of Canada's most popular urban living destinations. For a full breakdown of Canada's rental options, including prices on studio apartments and vacancy rates, check out the [www.rentseeker.ca](http://www.rentseeker.ca) infographic.

#### Yellowknife:

- \$1,453 - 1-bedroom apartment
- \$1,699 - 2-bedroom apartment

#### Toronto:

- \$1,326 - 1-bedroom apartment
- \$1,579 - 2-bedroom apartment

#### Vancouver:

- \$1,223 - 1-bedroom apartment
- \$1,552 - 2-bedroom apartment

#### Calgary:

- \$1,025 - 1-bedroom apartment
- \$1,247 - 2-bedroom apartment

#### Edmonton:

- \$989 - 1-bedroom apartment
- \$1,215 - 2-bedroom apartment

#### Whitehorse:

- \$950 - 1-bedroom apartment
- \$1,096 - 2-bedroom apartment

#### Regina:

- \$935 - 1-bedroom apartment
- \$1,116 - 2-bedroom apartment

#### Halifax:

- \$881 - 1-bedroom apartment
- \$1,109 - 2-bedroom apartment

#### Winnipeg:

- \$880 - 1-bedroom apartment
- \$1,107 - 2-bedroom apartment

#### St. John's:

- 786 - 1-bedroom apartment
- \$941 - 2-bedroom apartment

#### Quebec City:

- \$699 - 1-bedroom apartment
- \$820 - 2-bedroom apartment

#### Montreal:

- \$698 - 1-bedroom apartment
- \$782 - 2-bedroom apartment

(*mtlblog.com*)

## **GREY MATTERS: SENIORS SHOULDN'T QUIETLY TAKE THEIR MEDICINE**

When it comes to pharmaceuticals, seniors tend to be super users. Two-thirds of those in long-term care facilities take 10 or more medications, according to a 2012 Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) report.

Even among active older Canadians, pharmaceutical use is high. A poll of 5,190 CARP members (Canadian Association of Retired Persons) in July revealed that, while 10% use no prescription medications, CARP members are prescribed four medications each on average and 5% take ten or more.

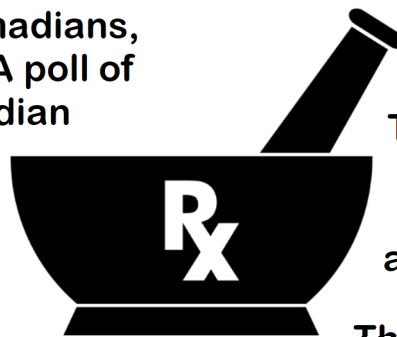
These medications can improve our quality of life or extend our days, but they can also bring side-effects and harmful drug interactions. Should we just quietly take our medicine?

The answer comes down to math and the difference between relative and absolute risks. Imagine that you have a one in 100 million chance of winning the lottery. If your chances double, you have a one in 50 million chance. Doubling your chances (the relative change) sounds like a lot, and we may be tempted to buy a lottery ticket. But even doubled, a one in 50 million chance is still a

heckuva long shot — so on reflection, we may prefer to save our money.

We need to assess our medications in the same way. Our doctors will prescribe medications because they decrease the risk we'll experience something nasty such as a seizure, uncontrolled pain, high blood pressure or other ailments. While the relative decrease in risk is often high, sometimes the absolute change isn't worth the side effects or

potential for negative drug interactions.



Take the case of Lipitor, a statin drug marketed by Pfizer to reduce your risk of a heart attack by 36 per cent.

That sounds like a highly significant reduction of risk. But is it? The fine print notes “in a large clinical study, three per cent of patients taking a sugar pill or placebo had a heart attack compared to two per cent of patients taking Lipitor.”

A 36 per cent relative decrease equates to a one per cent absolute decrease.

That doesn't sound nearly as compelling. It's even less compelling if we frame it in reverse. Imagine if the ad noted “taking a sugar pill or placebo will keep 97 per cent of people from having a heart attack, taking Lipitor will protect 98 per cent.”

No drug will give us immortality, but they can prolong our days. While the Pfizer ad is silent on the impact of Lipitor on our longevity, the British Medical Journal is not. A 2015 study published in the journal examined the impact of statins (like Lipitor) on longevity.



The study reviewed the results of 11 detailed studies of statins and longevity. Its conclusion: The median postponement of death for primary and secondary prevention trials were 3.2 and 4.1 days, respectively. The median is the midpoint, so about half of the folks studied had their lives extended by less than three or four days and the other half by more.

With pharmaceutical companies eager to sell drugs and doctors keen to avoid problems, the default is often defensive medicine — more treatments are recommended than we might want or need.

Does this mean you should stop taking Lipitor or other statins? Not necessarily. But it's important to talk with your doctor or pharmacist about the absolute benefit of all the medications you are taking and ensure that the benefits outweigh any side effects or drug interactions.

*(Grey Matters is a weekly column by Wanda Morris, the VP of Advocacy for CARP [carp.ca])*

## OUR OPERATING AGREEMENT WITH THE CITY IS ENDING. THEN WHAT?

City Park has an operating agreement with the City of Toronto. The agreement provides the Co-op with funding to cover: mortgage payments, RGI, maintenance, administration, replacement reserves, and more. The housing charges collected each month do not cover the Co-op's yearly expenses.

The operating agreement will end in 2024 when the mortgage is paid off and the subsidies will end with it unless the City comes up with a new funding model. The big question is "Where will the money come from?" and the answer is "Don't know".

The Board has been pro-active and has retained a consultant who is doing a study to prepare for 2024. The Board will also arrange to meet with the consultant in The Social Housing Unit of the City of Toronto. Two different people. I have no doubt that City Park is not high on the City's radar on this issue. Seven years is a long time to some bureaucrats (speaking as a career bureaucrat). When it comes to housing, it's a short time. The Board is taking steps to find out as much as possible and will ensure the Members are given facts.

The Capital Projects budget and projections for the next five years is an indicator of how expensive it is to keep the buildings in reasonable

repair. Day to day running of the complex is well beyond that. Take away the subsidies for everything I listed above, and you end up with a very different reality.

My own personal preference is to make everything accessible beyond what is required: install air conditioning, replace the fridges, stoves, plumbing, radiators, ceilings, walls, windows, etc. If you have a spare \$25-30,000,000 please call me.

Will all of that come to pass? I don't know. Then again, neither does anyone else. There was a song titled 'Domani'. It's Italian for 'tomorrow'. The lyric is "Let's forget about domani because domani never comes". It's amazing how quickly tomorrow is here.

I don't find any of this frightening. It is an opportunity to be engaged and to be informed and not ignore the reality.

We will get through it. Ignore the rumours.

Bob Fisher ~ 51 Alexander

### SCRUFFY

On a July day this past year, Katrina, aged 14, and her brother Zack, aged 11, from 484 Church, were walking along Wood Street when they noticed a fledgling lying helpless among the stones. They approached it and carefully lifted it into the palms

of their hands. It was alive and probably just stunned from a fall out of its nest. It looked like a crow, also called a grackle.



The two children brought it home and invented a concoction of milk and dog food and other ingredients (better to be kept secret by the two wizards)

to feed the scruffy little bird. It accepted it and went to sleep. And so it went, day after day. Zack kept close watch. The little bird, which they had by now called 'Scruffy', not only survived, but thrived.

The children luckily found the right environment for the feathered fellow. These two children already had a small menagerie at home. There is dad's bird, a blue-fronted parrot from the Amazons called 'Babe', and in a different cage sits a cockatiel called 'Buddy'. There are also two budgies called 'Frick' and 'Frack' [Update: Frack is no longer with us, and has been replaced by 'Blu']. 'Scruffy', the bird that survived because of the kindness of two children, felt at home and grew into a handsome crow or grackle (take your pick) with a blue shine to its feathers. The question often asked: Is it a raven, crow or grackle? Ravens can imitate human speech. Grackles are members of the



blackbird family. They often sound like a rusty gate.

In the late summer, when bees or even wasps came through the balcony door, 'Scruffy' picked them in one swoop and enjoyed the added protein. Around that time, the human family thought they might send it on its way to join others of its kind. The common grackle usually migrates to the southeastern United States or stays here.

But 'Scruffy' would have none of it and his flying skills were limited to the space of a living room. No, 'Scruffy' refused to take off; he would stay right here at City Park where the two children saved its life.

Karin Williams ~ 51 Alexander

### HIDDEN TREASURE: DEVO POND

With its large Precambrian boulders, Lake Devo (the pond's nickname) is part of a City of Toronto park designed in 1978 in the middle of Ryerson campus. It is partially funded by the Devonian group of Charitable Foundations of Calgary – lending the park its official name 'Devonian Square'.

Year-round it is used for a variety of activities: in summer as a lake-like pond, and in winter as a skating rink.

In early December as I was walking past the skating rink, I saw an amazing figure skater who was

breathhtaking. An athlete, artist and performer all melded into one.

Having skated at a figure skating club for 15 years... a long time ago... I instinctively knew that this girl was of either national, and/or international, calibre. My instincts



were correct - on both counts. Fortunately, I had my camera with me, and when she stopped for a moment, I waved to her. Instantly I went into

reporter/photographer/star gazing mode. A kid all over again!

We had a wonderful conversation and I was pleasantly surprised to see how articulate and humble she was. Having represented Israel at two World Figure Skating Championships, she has now retired from competing to pursue her studies full-time at Ryerson.

A wonderful, charming person, and I wish her all the best in her future.

It is unexpected pleasures like this that I cherish. You can too!

At City Park we are surrounded by many hidden treasures like this. Keep your eyes open and you just might find one... or more!

John Gordon ~ 51 Alexander

---

## **MOBILITY MATTERS... ALOT**

As many of you know, several Members of the City Park community have had serious falls. These falls can result in cuts, bruises, fractures, or concussions. A serious fall can cause ongoing pain, loss of mobility, and months of physiotherapy. The statistics are quite staggering: As previously mentioned in the Vol. 22 No. 1 issue of LINK at the beginning of 2017, one in three seniors fall each year, 90% of broken hips are the result of falls, and 40% of admissions to nursing homes are because of falls.

**Why are seniors prone to falls?**  
Weak muscles, side effects of medication(s), and slippery floors head the list.

**What can be done to reverse this trend?**

- 1) Stay active with flexibility and strength exercises.
- 2) Try and improve balance.
- 3) Avoid sudden changes in position.
- 4) Develop an exercise program that fits your needs and personality.
- 5) Review medications with your doctor or pharmacist. Do you need all the meds? Might any of them be affecting your balance?

6) Check your home for places where assistive devices may be placed... like grab bars in your shower.

7) If needed, get a cane. It won't bite you.

8) Improve your diet to include bone friendly foods like almonds, broccoli and salmon.

9) Investigate hip protectors, walkers and help phones/panic buttons.

10) Join the 'exercise and fall-prevention' classes run by our Aging in Place Committee in the PMG.

Why come to the exercise class in the PMG? It helps to work out with company. The current group is a great bunch, and we have a lot of fun snapping our exercise bands. The classes are held Monday and Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The first hour is devoted to exercise, and the last half hour focuses on specific techniques to avoid falls. The instructors are trained professionals selected by the Province of Ontario and every 12 weeks a kinesiologist does a personal, confidential assessment of your mobility.

I try to attend all the classes and have been really impressed with the improvement shown by the participants. Some are so enthusiastic that they arrive ahead of time. Check it out and you might be pleasantly surprised.

Tom Maunder ~ 51 Alexander

---

## PRIDE OF HOME

I don't think I'm the only one who sees all the garbage floating around the city streets and in our neighbourhood. And even City Park. Our staff can only do so much. They already work very hard. In my estimation, the city of Toronto simply isn't keeping the place up. I've made calls and even pleas, but nothing changes.

So, what I do is pick up the detritus myself. When I see Wendy's cups etc., I pick them up and toss them. It's part of my daily ritual to pick up at least five. I also do it around the complex. We have the bins at our entrances, and it's pretty simple and becomes a matter of habit.

This is what my mom used to call 'being house proud.' And yes, we have staff. Yes, we pay taxes. But it simply isn't enough to complain about it. I would like to encourage all of us to take a few minutes and just pick up even one piece of trash and toss it. Might you consider this? I don't know if you'd be amenable, but perhaps in the spring, as a group, we could take a few hours and give our property and communal green areas a good cleaning. Our landscapers do a terrific job with the garden, but should they have to pick up the litter too?

Bob Fisher has written in the newsletter about the coming challenges. Surely if we show the city what good care we take of our



home and neighbourhood, this will show the city that we are a functioning co-op that lives up to the standards of co-operative living. Let's put in a little effort and show them what our homes mean to us, and how we're a good investment. How we're a co-op who works together and functions as a co-op is meant to. Together. With pride. Thanks for the time.

Cathi Bond ~ 31 Alexander

---

## THE IMPORTANCE OF RECYCLING RIGHT

Bad things happen when the wrong items and recycling get together. How bad? Bad enough that it can damage equipment, cause workplace injuries at the recycling facility and ruin otherwise perfectly good recyclables. Contaminated recycling is currently costing the City millions annually and last year more than 52,000 tonnes of non-recyclable material was incorrectly put in the Blue Bin. That's a big problem you can help fix.

The City is inspecting Blue Bins and those that are found to have a significant amount of non-recyclable material are being tagged and not collected. Homeowners with tagged bins are being given a Recycling Guide and notice indicating why the bin was not collected and instructing them to remove the contamination



before the next recycling collection day.

In the future, to help offset the costs associated with contaminated recycling, the City may require a cost recovery payment from those homeowners who set out contaminated recycling bins.

### The Top Blue Bin Offenders

**Food and organic waste** ~ Food scraps like apple cores, eggshells or expired leftovers belong in your Green Bin. When you mistakenly toss food scraps in your Blue Bin, food residue and particles get soaked up by paper and can ruin large batches of otherwise good recyclables.

**Containers with food** ~ Please empty and rinse food containers before tossing them in your Blue Bin. When you don't, the residue from items like jars and take-out containers get soaked up by paper and can ruin large batches of otherwise good recyclables. Put any food scraps in your Green Bin.

**Clothing and textiles** ~ Old clothes, shoes, blankets, and curtains don't belong in the Blue Bin. They can get caught in sorting machines, damage equipment and cause workplace injuries at the recycling facility. Instead, donate items that are in good condition to not-for-profit agencies or drop them off for reuse at Community Environment Days. If your items can't be donated, put them in the garbage.

**VHS tapes, chains, hoses and electrical cords** ~ These do not go in your Blue Bin. They can get tangled in sorting machines, damage equipment and cause workplace injuries at the recycling facility. Donate unwanted VHS tapes or see if your local electronics store has a recycling program. Throw unwanted cords, hoses and cables in your garbage.

**Hot beverage cups** ~ Disposable paper coffee cups are lined with plastic or wax and, unfortunately, can't be recycled at this time. Please place coffee cups in the garbage. Non-black plastic lids and paper sleeves should be removed and placed in the Blue Bin.

**Black plastics** ~ Black plastics of any kind, such as take-out containers and black garbage bags can't be recycled and should go in the garbage.

In December, City Park Members donated 143 bags of clothing to the Yonge Street Mission, 34 boxes of food for PWA, and raised over \$900!

Way to go folks!





## **AGEISM IS 'THE MOST SOCIALLY-INGRAINED DISCRIMINATION' – SAYS A B.C. ADVOCATE**

Ageism is one of the most pervasive forms of discrimination — and a lot of people are guilty of it, according to a senior's advocate.

October 1 marked the UN's International Day of Older Persons, a day that celebrates the contributions of the elderly members of society and raises awareness about their afflictions.

B.C. Senior's Advocate, Isobel MacKenzie, says ageism, a form of discrimination based on age, is one of many issues that affect seniors worldwide.

"We find ourselves still with a very pervasive discrimination — sometimes based on a very benign kindness," she said to host Gloria Macarenko on CBC's *B.C. Almanac*. It can be as simple as complimenting a senior for going to the gym every day.

"When we make those statements, we're signaling that we are thinking about [them] differently," she said. According to the Revera Report on Ageism, nearly two-thirds of Canadian seniors, 66 years of age and older, say they have been treated unfairly or differently because of their age.

Mackenzie says it's one of the most socially-ingrained forms of

discrimination, and it can be demeaning.

"I think what we have to be careful of is that we don't erode either somebody's sense of dignity, their sense of independence or their actual independence because we ascribe to them an infirmity based on their age," said MacKenzie.

British Columbia is considered the province with the oldest population in Canada. To celebrate the UN's International Day of Older Persons in Vancouver, several events empowered local seniors and raised awareness against ageism in the province.

One of them was the youth-led 'Age is More' program, which looks to bridge the gap between youth and the elderly through a series of short films based on the lives of local seniors, shot by young filmmakers.

Jean Begg, 88, was one of the characters featured in the project. "I think [all elderly people] should be viewed with compassion and care and interest," she said, adding that the program was a great opportunity for her to engage with youth. "It was great fun. I love the couple I was with, and we had good conversations — and I was fascinated to see the results of the film too."

To listen to the full interview, go to: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/programs/bcalmanac>

## A LIFETIME OF CHANGES FOR GAY SENIORS

At this point, it's fair to say that today's gay seniors have seen their lives change in ways that were unimaginable fifty years ago. Since the late 1960s, major advancements in gay rights, along with wider visibility and acceptance in society, have largely transformed the world for members of the LGBT community of every age. But even as the world has changed, the lessons learned by today's gay seniors are still applicable for anyone coming of age and becoming more comfortable in their sexuality.



Maybe that's why a video called "Seniors Give Gay Advice!," produced by vlogger Davey Wavey, struck a chord with so many viewers: *it's an emotional video that features several lesbian and gay seniors reflecting on the changes they've witnessed and participated in, ending with advice from one generation to the next on self-acceptance, finding a place in the LGBT community, and living in a world that can be openly hostile toward members of the LGBT community.*

While these gay seniors are only a few voices, their experiences and advice are an excellent starting point

in understanding and learning from members of the LGBT community who have witnessed decades of change.

### Positive and Negative Experiences of Gay Seniors

Many gay seniors, including the individuals featured in Wavey's video, share stories of discrimination, loneliness, and hostility based on their sexual orientation. *One man shares his story of a realtor refusing to show him a house because he's gay.* Elsewhere, gay seniors who came

of age in the early years of the AIDS epidemic have spoken about the panic of being diagnosed with a disease that was both misunderstood and feared throughout the community. It's easy to hear these stories and view the lives of today's gay seniors as a series of struggles and disenfranchisement, but at the same time, many gay seniors view society's progress through their lifetime as a story of hope:

- **Marriage Equality** – One of the gay seniors in Wavey's video, when asked to reflect on the changes he's witnessed, responds, "I never thought I'd live, in my lifetime, to see gay marriage."

- **Self Value** – Another of the gay seniors, after speaking about being unsure that anyone would ever love, value, or even hire her, ends by saying, “My life is pretty great now.”
- **HIV / AIDS** – Gay seniors who lived through the early years of the AIDS epidemic have seen vast improvements in treatment options and quality of life for HIV-positive members of the community.

While the phrase “it gets better” has become something of a cliché, it’s still very true for gay seniors, who have witnessed society moving from bigotry and fear toward acceptance and advocacy.

### Gay Seniors on Acceptance vs. Assimilation

Almost as long as there’s been a gay rights movement, there’s also been a fundamental disagreement about how the LGBT community fits into society. Even in the wake of the gay marriage decision, some parts of the community chafed at the idea that lesbians and gay men were expected to fit into mainstream society’s idea of relationships and commitment. In Wavey’s video, and in the stories of many other gay seniors, **the tension between assimilation and acceptance is still present.**

For many gay seniors, there is still the desire to find a space between being accepted for your differences and having them be ignored, and one

of the most striking moments of the “Seniors Give Gay Advice!” video directly touches on this dynamic: when asked for her advice to the next generation, one of the participants says, “*our queerness...that thing that sets us apart*, that can cause us to feel unwanted, unloved, rejected and alone in the world is a gift.”

### Making a Place for Gay Seniors in the LGBT Community

While Wavey’s video, along with many other stories and memories shared by gay seniors through programs like StoryCorps’ “OutLoud” series, are important to understanding LGBT history and progress, it’s also important to remember that gay seniors are still an important part of the LGBT community, and have needs and concerns that we still need to fight for in the ongoing discussions of gay rights.

- **Children** – Gay seniors are 4 times less likely to have children than the rest of the senior population. With seniors increasingly relying on their children for long-term care, this leaves gay seniors at a distinct disadvantage as they age.
- **Poverty** – Since many lesbian and gay seniors experienced employment discrimination throughout their lives, they are also more likely to experience poverty and a lack of retirement savings.



- **Health** – Studies have consistently shown that transgender, lesbian, and gay seniors have health concerns—both physical and mental—that go beyond the rest of the population’s, including higher HIV rates and instances of depression and isolation.

The stories shared by gay seniors, along with videos like “Seniors Give Gay Advice!” are valuable to the LGBT community, but we should also be careful not to treat the experiences of gay seniors simply as cautionary tales of the “bad old days.”

The lives of gay seniors are not a closed book, and the LGBT community can acknowledge the sacrifices and successes of previous generations by working to ensure that transgender, lesbian, and gay seniors are able to age with dignity, access to quality care, and services that recognize their unique needs and concerns.

(<http://smartgaylife.com/changes-for-gay-seniors/>)



LGBT seniors deserve quality care and services.

smartgaylife.com



*Photos courtesy of John Gordon~51 Alexander*

### SUBMISSIONS TO LINK

All Members are encouraged to submit material of interest to the Membership for consideration in LINK. All submissions should be **TYPED** or **CLEARLY PRINTED** and include your full name, building and apartment number. Articles can be dropped off to our Office or sent by email to [CityParkLINK@gmail.com](mailto:CityParkLINK@gmail.com)

*Thank you*

for reading this issue of LINK. If you are about to throw it away, kindly take it back to the rack at the front door so another Member can read it.