

February 22, 2023

**MANITOBA GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS SENIORS TO
LIVE HEALTHIER, MORE CONNECTED, INDEPENDENT LIVES**

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**Diverse Programming Investments Complement Key Initiatives in New Seniors Strategy:
Johnston**

With the release of *Manitoba, A Great Place to Age: Provincial Seniors Strategy*, the Manitoba government is highlighting several initiatives that will support more Manitobans at home and in the community to live fulfilling and empowered lives, Seniors and Long-term Care Minister Scott Johnston announced today.

“The seniors strategy is a guide for the Manitoba government to address the challenges faced by some older adults, their families and caregivers, to support all Manitobans in their aging journeys, and to value the significant contributions older adults have made and continue to make in our province,” Johnston said.

Expanding the Self and Family Managed Care (SFMC) program is one of the initial investments included in the strategy, noted Johnston, adding that Manitoba seniors will have improved access to the SFMC program, which offers flexibility and autonomy to directly arrange home-care services that support seniors in maintaining independence.

“Throughout our extensive, provincewide public consultations on the seniors strategy, one of the key themes we heard is that older Manitobans value being able to live independent, vibrant and fulfilling lives in their own homes for as long as safely possible,” said Johnston. “The expansion of the Self and Family Managed Care program will enable more older adults to age actively in their communities, with convenient access to the comprehensive services and supports that meet their unique needs and enhance their quality of life.”

The program’s annual funding is increasing by \$12.6 million in 2022-23 and a further \$1.3 million in 2023-24 to \$13.9 million. The increased funding will enhance benefits for 1,200 current clients and expand capacity to service more clients, added Johnston.

Palliative care services are receiving \$1.3 million in 2023-24 to support the first phase of expanding Manitoba palliative care services, starting in Southern Health-Santé Sud. The expansion will enhance access to palliative care for people affected by life-limiting illness at home. The program will increase support for caregivers in all settings, improve the delivery of inpatient palliative care, and enhance training and awareness of palliative care for health providers. The regional health authority will also reach out to First Nations communities to provide access to specialty support.

Rainbow Resource Centre's Over the Rainbow (OTR) program is receiving \$100,000 in 2022-23 and \$200,000 in ongoing funding in 2023-24. This program serves 55-plus seniors who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ and is aimed at reducing social isolation while enabling 2SLGBTQ+ seniors to age in place in a supported, community environment. The funding will also support the development of training for senior-serving facilities and organizations throughout Manitoba.

Habitat for Humanity Manitoba is receiving \$450,000 in 2022-23 to accelerate its ability to modify, renovate or rehabilitate existing housing for older Manitobans. The program is designed to assist low-income homeowners who require assistance in home modifications they cannot afford and who may not have the ability to co-ordinate services themselves. The program will help seniors stay in their homes longer, the minister noted.

The seniors strategy framework categorizes numerous other action-oriented initiatives across seven strategic focus areas:

- safe, inclusive, accessible communities;
- navigation;
- high-quality services;
- financial security;
- reducing ageism and ableism;
- Indigenous engagement and co-design; and
- collaboration and accountability.

“Our government’s plan is based on the vision that older Manitobans are valued and empowered to live healthy and productive lives in our communities, making Manitoba an ideal place to age,” said Johnston. “This new seniors strategy maps out a plan to support older Manitobans through filling gaps in services, making it easier to navigate services and supports, finding affordable options, supporting unpaid caregivers, and reducing ageism and ableism.”

To ensure the strategy responds to the diverse needs of older adults provincewide, the Manitoba government launched a comprehensive, inclusive public engagement process. The process included:

- a minister's tour with roundtables in 13 communities including rural and northern Manitoba;
- 41 interviews and focus groups with older adults, caregivers and senior-serving organizations;
- 61 discussion groups facilitated by 30 community engagement networks with over 900 participants;
- public surveys on the EngageMB platform that received over 10,000 responses;
- relationship development with Indigenous governments and Indigenous-led organizations; and
- workshops with partners from across government.

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A minister's advisory committee comprised of skilled experts in the field of aging also provided critical advice and insights to guide the development of the strategy.

"This strategy follows extensive and provincewide engagement and feedback to government and the adoption of person-centred values," said Connie Newman, minister's advisory group chair and executive director of the Manitoba Association of Senior Communities and Age-friendly Manitoba Initiative. "Person-centred values means that I will be listened to and my needs will be addressed as a person. The strategy is broad in scope and will address many aspects of aging in Manitoba, such as inclusivity and respect for the contributions of older persons and elders. It will also bring about improvements in system navigation, making it easier to find information and access the services and supports we need."

The minister noted that details on additional investments and programs in line with the seven strategic focus areas will be announced in the coming weeks.

To read *Manitoba, A Great Place to Age: Provincial Seniors Strategy*, visit: https://uat.gov.mb.ca/seniors/docs/seniors_strategy_2023.pdf.

To read the *What We Heard* report on the results of the seniors strategy online engagement, visit: https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/openmb/what-we-heard-manitoba-seniors-strategy-final-summary.pdf.