

Seniors Advisory Committee, Presentation to TGM Council, October 29, 2018

Madame Mayor, Councillors, Staff and the Gallery

We last presented to Council on December 4, 2017. I'm honoured to present again on behalf of your Seniors Advisory Committee. I'm Jim Libbey. Other members here tonight are: Wendy MacFarlane, Ward 3, Gail Murphy, Ward 2, Susan Allen, Ward 1 and Robert Lavalee, Ward 1.

We'd like to start by reminding ourselves again of the context for the work of the Committee. The median age of the folks in the Township significantly exceeds that of the County and even more significantly exceeds that of the Province. There are about 1,200 of us 55 or older; of those, 600 or so are older than 65. This is a diverse group in terms of health, wealth, mobility, degree of engagement in the community, computer literacy and so on.

Many less able seniors require various supports from family members, friends, caregivers and health professionals. We use the word, "supporters", to denote this important group.

In December 2017, we established Communications as our priority for 2018. This issue impacts all other priorities, including social participation, health services, transportation, and housing. We undertook to "develop a way to get relevant information to isolated and disabled seniors", in part by engaging their supporters as volunteer intermediaries, who will bring relevant information to the seniors they support and discuss it in person.

Your Committee now recommends a Seniors Communication Program with two components: a booklet called "Community Services for Older Adults", and the service, "Personalized Information for Seniors and Their Supporters".

The 77-page booklet was developed primarily by Robert based on one used in the City of Temiskaming Shores. Trillium has supported such booklets and the approach is promoted by the Ontario Age-Friendly Communities Outreach Program. It can be produced in house and efficient approaches to distribution will minimize costs.

The "Personalized Information" component addresses explicitly the need to get information to isolated and disabled seniors by engaging their supporters in the process. It breaks through the barriers of lack of computer skills, no internet and so on by offering supporters the opportunity to sign up for emails that will deliver relevant information in a timely way. The supporters then discuss the information in person with their seniors. This results in greater likelihood of action and strengthening of these highly valued relationships. Three key features are: Supporters can select from a menu of relevant topics, such as events taking place in the community and developments in health services, transportation, and housing. Second, although designed for isolated seniors, in fact any resident can sign up for the service. Third, it is possible to use other communication channels, such as voice mail and messaging.

The approach to delivering the Seniors Communication Program has been reviewed with staff. We look forward to bringing it to the new Council early in 2019.