

Growing Old in Burlington:

A report on seniors trends and issues

Report Highlights



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**Prepared by:
Halton Social Planning Council**

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Summary of Profile

According to Statistics Canada **2001** Census data:

- Twelve percent of the Halton population or **44,770** persons are seniors (65 years of age or older).
- Compared to the other municipalities within Halton, Burlington has the highest percentage of seniors in its population at **14.1%** (**21,235** persons).
- Over half (**56.9%**) of Burlington seniors or **12,080** persons are aged 65 to 74 years of age.
- The majority of seniors (**57.1%**) are female but the gender gap between males and females increases with age. In the 85 years and over age range, 69.6% are female.

According to The Ministry of Finance report *Ontario Population Predictions 1999-2028*:

- By **2028**, the number of Halton residents who are 65 or older is expected to increase **186.3%** to **128,170** persons.
- It is expected that **17.5%** of Halton's population will be within this age group by **2021**, increasing to **19.9%** by **2028**.

According to Statistics Canada **1996** Census data:

- In Burlington, **60.0%** or **6,625** seniors were born in Canada and **39.5%** or **10,150** seniors are immigrants. The majority (**95.7%**) of Burlington immigrants aged 65 and over came to Canada before 1986.
- The majority of seniors (**53.2%**) have incomes of less than **\$20,000** a year and **17.7%** (**2,970** seniors) live below the low-income cut-off. Poverty is higher in Burlington for older seniors with **23.2%** of seniors aged over 74 years of age with low incomes.
- The majority (**67.7%**) of Burlington seniors live as a couple, **25.7%** of seniors live alone and **5.6%** of seniors live with relatives.

Summary of Issues

- People are living longer and the **population is ageing**, the 65 and over age group is increasing within the population. The need for all services for seniors particularly for **health services** will increase dramatically over the next few decades.
- Issues concerning **elderly women**, such as adequate income and **widowhood** will also become increasingly important since the majority of seniors are female.
- A large proportion of seniors are **living alone**. For some this means solitude and isolation.
- As the growing Burlington population becomes more diverse, providing services for the **multicultural** community will become more of an issue. Multicultural seniors have specific issues such as language barriers that must be addressed by our community in order to build an inclusive city.
- Despite most seniors receiving government incomes, **poverty** among seniors is an issue. Burlington has a higher poverty rate than the provincial poverty rate for seniors. One in five Burlington seniors live in poverty and the rate of poverty increases with age.
- **Housing** for seniors is an issue. Housing providers need to be aware and increase efforts to plan for the housing needs of senior residents. The need for more subsidized housing for seniors is clearly identified.
- The need for adequate funding of **home care** and **home support services** for seniors are clearly identified, as well as increased availability and planning for hospital release of elderly patients. The lack of such services is stressful for seniors, families and caregivers.
- Health related **costs for prescriptions** and **dental care** are identified as an issue that is creating hardship for Burlington seniors.
- **Transportation** is identified, along with cost, as a major issue and barrier to services for seniors. The key informants stress the need for more public transit and community bus services.
- Awareness of the issues of **elder abuse** needs to be addressed. A community education and awareness program is necessary.