



EDMONTON
SENIORS
COORDINATING
COUNCIL

Closing the Gap

Securing Senior's
Assisted Transportation

Assisted Transportation is Essential



A 2019 Older Adults Needs Assessment¹ found that 79% of Edmontonians over 55 want to age in their own homes, in their own community. Older adults, their families, their neighbours and the broader community all benefit when older adults are supported to stay in their own homes longer.

Community-based care and support helps make aging in community possible. By partnering with community-based seniors-serving organizations, improving integrated team-based care and enhancing accessibility, responsiveness and quality of community-based services, British Columbia has achieved encouraging results – the number of people over 75 with chronic disease who were admitted to hospital dropped from 3,273 in 2016-17 to 3,060 in 2018-19.

Aging in community is only feasible if older adults have access to essential services, including appropriate transportation. If an older adult can no longer drive or maintain a personal vehicle, they need accessible and affordable transportation to pick up groceries, attend medical appointments and avoid health-threatening social isolation. Seniors' assisted transportation organizations also acted as a lifeline during the pandemic for older adults who had few supports. They provided grocery delivery and ran errands to prevent clients from having to go out, which limited their risk of exposure to the virus.

1 City of Edmonton & ESCC (2019). 2019 Older Adults Needs Assessment Highlight Report. Retrieved from: <https://seniorscouncil.net/uploads/files/Older-Adults-Needs-Assessment-2019-Highlight-Report.pdf>



Unmet Need: Affordable Door- Through-Door Support

Many older adults can use public transit, including specialized services like Edmonton's DATS (Disabled Adult Transit Service), to get where they need to go. However, even with a mobility device, some older adults facing health and mobility challenges aren't able to get to a bus stop and need more support than DATS can offer.

Older adults who require "door-through-door" support – which includes not only home pickup but assistance in completing an appointment or errand - have few options for transportation. Private driving services offer a solution for those who can afford them, but the cost of these services is prohibitive for some of the most vulnerable, low-resource older adults in our community.

A lack of appropriate transportation puts older adults at serious risk. Particularly for those who need regular medical procedures to maintain their health, the inability to access medical and community services can be life-threatening.

Filling the Gap

Volunteer-Based Assisted Transportation

Giving back to the community is deeply engrained in Alberta's culture. It's not surprising that volunteers have stepped up to make sure older adults can get where they need to go, regardless of income.

Right now, a small number of non-profit organizations provide affordable door-through-door transportation using volunteer drivers. Volunteers at just one Edmonton organization, which serves approximately 800 low-income older adults, drove 27,000 hours in 2019. At minimum wage, this gift of time would be worth \$405,000.

Volunteer-based organizations provide essential services at exceptional value. Of all the ways we could meet low-resource older adults' transportation needs, volunteer-based services are by far the most cost-effective.

While volunteer drivers give their time freely, volunteer organizations still have some essential operating costs. Volunteer recruitment, screening, training and coordination, along with reimbursement of fuel expenses, are necessary to keep volunteer-based assisted services running.





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one Edmonton
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There is currently no consistent funding mechanism to support assisted transportation for low-resource older adults. Volunteer-based organizations have survived so far through a patchwork of grants and one-time infusions of program funding, often designated for a specific purpose rather than regular operations. These organizations also vigorously pursue fund development and corporate sponsorship opportunities, but despite these efforts, financial insecurity is threatening their operations.

These organizations provide an essential service for vulnerable and at-risk older adults. They have survived so far by piecing together funding from scattered sources, but it is time to recognize the need for sustainable funding.

Investing in Assisted Transportation

For non-profit assisted transportation services to survive over the long-term, we need a reliable funding mechanism.

Leveraging Albertans' eagerness to contribute to civil society is by far the most efficient way to meet older adults' assisted transportation needs. A small annual investment in volunteer-based non-profits goes a long way – \$200,000 a year would allow an organization serving Edmonton and its surrounding communities to continue serving the clients who rely on its program.

\$200,000 is less than half the annual value of that organization's volunteer hours. Partnership with non-profit organizations stretches investment further, multiplying the impact of every dollar to provide essential services to more Albertans.

Older adults' needs transcend boundaries between orders of government. While the responsibility for transit services generally sits with municipalities, older adults' assisted transportation has direct impact for Government of Alberta ministries, including Health, and Seniors and Housing. We urgently invite multiple orders of government and community stakeholders to take part in solving the need to stabilize non-profit assisted transportation services.





Stabilizing funds for
non-profit assisted
transportation services is

**an investment
worth making**

Be Part of the Solution

Contact the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council

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