

COVENANT COURAGE

Action for Better Aging



Roadmap for Action



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Introduction

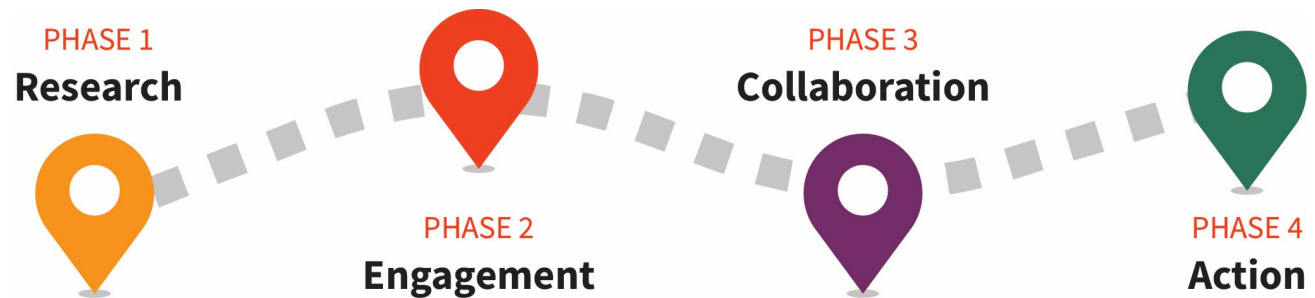
Canada is at a crossroads. In less than a decade, one quarter of Canadians will be over 65 and living longer. As Canada's population ages, there is an urgent need to reimagine aging to meet the expectations of a growing population of older adults.

Canadians have made their wishes clear. We want to stay in our homes and communities as we get older. We want the opportunity to maintain our freedom, self-worth, identity, and comfort. We want to play active roles in our community and have the independence, choice and supports we need to live full lives connected to everything we love.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed how far we are from this goal. Numerous reports have shown that Canada is not realizing this vision and our approach is lagging behind the world in innovation and sustainability. Our systems, economy and society will be overwhelmed by growing demands in the decades to come.

About COURAGE

COURAGE: Action for Better Aging was launched to start a social movement for change and to mobilize a coalition to reimagine aging and spark innovation. Led by SE Health and the Covenant family, **COURAGE** began with an exploration of what Canadians think about aging and what support they are looking for.



PHASE 1

In Phase 1 of the initiative, a discussion paper, [“The Path Forward for Aging in Canada”](#), was developed to provide background analysis of the current situation and an evidence-informed review of the trends and innovations in five different areas for change and action. A website and social media activities based on these themes provided information for the public and key questions for discussion and consideration.

PHASE 2

During Phase 2, **COURAGE** engaged Canadians and organizations with an interest in aging across the country through interviews, focus groups and conversation circles, presentations, meetings and an on-line survey. **COURAGE** hosted 122 engagement activities including over 800 contacts with a broad cross-section of individuals from across Canada. Seventy organizations participated in interviews or presentations – representing health, social services, research and education, advocacy, industry, community and older adults’ group. Focus groups, conversation circles and the survey were comprised of 83% of older adults. Many focus group participants also identified themselves as past or current caregivers for older adults.

Exploring a broad spectrum of topics impacting aging, they provided information, perceptions and experiences based on their experience, expertise, and knowledge. This information was collated and themed in a [“What We Heard and Insights Report”](#).



The input and insights in this report was considered by the COURAGE Key Recommendations Advisory Group in selecting priorities to be considered at a national action Summit. These included:



**Canada's
Aging
Plan**

Create a national aging policy statement with the intention of creating one for Canada.

**360
Living
Models**

Design a model where housing, health, social and lifestyle needs are intertwined and can be advanced together.

**Building
Bridges**

Accelerate and sustain the connection of existing community initiatives.

**Unite
Change-
makers**

Ignite a grassroots movement to amplify efforts that empower current and future adults, families, and caregivers.

PHASE 3

In Phase 3 of the initiative, a virtual Summit, “**SYNERGY: Creating a New Vision for Living**” was held on December 6, 2022. Using the concept of [Impact Networks](#), the Summit brought 181 changemakers (Appendix) from across Canada, including 27% who self-identified as an older adult, together to offer their wide-ranging expertise, advice, and experience with a common sense of purpose.

The half-day event was designed to spark inspiration, innovation, and insight through concurrent focused and facilitated discussions with small working groups related to the four priorities noted above. The “**SYNERGY: Creating a New Vision for Living Summit Report**” was crafted to capture a record of the day’s activities.

PHASE 4

This report informs Phase 4 of the initiative, which focuses on highlighting recommendations for action. The objective of this phase is to bring a Roadmap for Action to the COURAGE impact network for endorsement. The report will provide the foundation for awareness and advocacy strategies as well as more detailed action planning.

The COURAGE journey combines the knowledge of literature reviews, environmental scans, and stakeholder engagement and expertise to create recommendations for the path forward. Four recommendations and sixteen actions propose collective opportunities that can enhance Canada’s response to reimagining aging.

Recommendations

Throughout the journey of **COURAGE**, impact network members have been clear – any recommendations coming forward must be action-oriented. Recommendations need to span the continuum of short term to long term and must encourage and provide flexibility for participation.

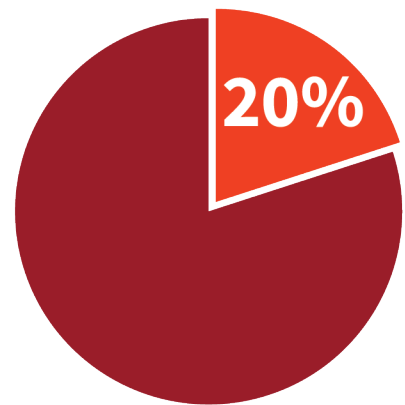
Canada's Aging Plan

According to 2021 Census data, adults over the age of 65 make up 18.5% of the population. The projections are that it will rise to just over 20% by 2026, making Canada a super-aged country.ⁱ Despite this, there is no national plan to address this demographic change.

Healthy aging is a global priority with the United Nations designating 2021 to 2030 as the Decade of Healthy Ageing. Countries like Singapore, Wales and New Zealand all have plans to support their older population and create age-friendly societies.ⁱⁱ

These plans include a life-course and rights-based approach to aging. Key themes reflect the pillars from the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing as well as the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing:

- Older persons and development (e.g., education, work, intergenerational solidarity).
- Advancing health and wellbeing (e.g., mental health, training providers and health professionals).
- Age-friendly environments (e.g., housing, transportation).
- Combating ageism.
- Integrated care.
- Long-term care.



By 2026, Canada will become a super-aged society, where 20 percent of the population will be 65 and over.

ACTION 1

Develop a National Aging Strategy supported by substantial and sustained funding. The strategy should take into consideration:

- What meaningful quality of life looks like for current and future older adults . This needs to come from the community – both the organizations that focus on aging and from older adults and those around them.
- The need to address ageism and challenge our societal biases around aging and needs.
- A person-centered approach, reflecting the diverse needs and perspectives of Canadians from different ages, abilities, circumstances, cultures, language, traditions and viewpoints.
- Acknowledgement of the importance of the social determinants of health.
- A needed shift in thinking and goals from healthy aging to successful aging to recognize a commitment to wellbeing at all levels of health and ability.

In the development of this strategy, there are opportunities to leverage existing work such as:

- [United Nations’ Decade of Healthy Ageing: Plan of Action](#)
- [National Institute on Ageing’s National Seniors Strategy 2020](#)
- [National Institute on Ageing’s report - Ageing in the Right Place: Supporting Canadians to Live Where They Want](#)
- [AARP’s report - The Netherlands: The 2018 Aging Readiness and Competitive Report: Small Innovative Economies](#)
- [Stanford Centre on Longevity’s The New Map of Life](#)

ACTION 2

Facilitate jurisdictional collaboration – municipal, provincial, federal – focused on a shared health issue. Create a secretariate to help municipalities, health care and social service delivery work together on housing and community options.

360 Living Models

The 360 Living Models recommendation - design a model where housing, health, social and lifestyle needs are intertwined and can be advanced together – is comprised of two directions of action. The first action relates to the creation of a community hub blueprint and the second is related to sustainable funding models.

COMMUNITY HUB BLUEPRINT

A core theme in the concept of 360 living is that the needs of individuals and communities are unique and one size does not fit all. We need to look at a range of models to develop a blueprint that can build on and adapt to the different strengths of each community. Examples include but are not limited to: Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), cohousing and home sharing models, PACE model, OASIS model, Toronto Seniors Housing Integrated Service Model, and The Green House Model.

ACTION 3 Create a community hub blueprint of essential design elements, common language and metrics which can be adopted nationally.

ACTION 4 Invest resources that haven't been allocated for initiatives related to aging. Turn empty spaces into respite or community support spaces; reduce red tape and regulations that are barriers to multi-use, integrated programs and services care.

ACTION 5 Create an inventory of 360 Living Models.

ACTION 6 Identify mechanisms to spread, scale and customize the blueprint.

ACTION 7 Establish funding for technology, enabling people to live at home.

ACTION 8 Create incentives to advance the integration of technology into construction and development of homes and congregate living settings.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODELS

It's important to view the different social and practical supports that adults depend on to live in the community as essential services that are necessary for health and wellbeing. Articulating the value of these services to society is key to moving from a patchwork approach to a model with adequate funding and sustainability that supports co-operation over competition. There needs to be a concerted effort and resources placed on exploring and moving towards more sustainable funding models.

ACTION 9 Rebalance where money is spent on health, housing, and community supports. Formalize the role of community-based supports as a sector and invest a larger share in community with a cost-benefit model. Set up and monitor accountability mechanisms and returns on investment related to outcomes and outputs.

ACTION 10 Consider creating a funding envelope specifically for 'aging' issues – at the federal/provincial/territorial levels. This would be sourced from a variety of ministries.

ACTION 11 Shift the thinking of "home care" to "home and community support/access". Funding should be expanded to include social needs and incorporate consumer-directed options with more flexibility.

Building Bridges

Building an impactful and sustainable “Network of Networks” requires a clear purpose and defined vision. A plan to move this vision forward needs a clear focus and specific objectives, such as to learn from each other, work to solve a specific problem, or to advocate for a certain issue. Clarity is key to meaningfully and authentically involving those who will be directly impacted, including communities, caregivers, and partners, in setting the vision and contributing to the development of efforts of the network.

ACTION 12 Establish a “Network of Networks”. With a vast number of programs, people and agencies, there needs to be focused effort to accelerate and sustain the connection of community initiatives. The “Network of Networks” could undertake key activities such as:

- Complete and maintain an inventory of existing coalitions, networks, and channels.
- Facilitate or formalize interconnections or relationships to leverage capacity that already exists.
- Work together across sectors, to seek innovative sources of multi-year funding and secondments of expertise and leadership to come together in an intense way to solve problems.
- Act as a knowledge broker and conduit for collaborative communication.
- Foster intergenerational relationships through community engagement and explore neighborhood solutions.

There are several best practices that can be leveraged, including but not limited to those from: Healthy Aging CORE Canada, Healthy Aging Alberta, Healthy Aging CORE BC, Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing, Centre for Aging and Brain Health, Indigenous Model of Elders, and Age Concern Canterbury.

ACTION 13 Increase funding, in both hours and compensation, for all workers in the seniors’ serving workforce.

ACTION 14 Invest in the learning and development of all workers, volunteers, family members and caregivers who serve older adults.

ACTION 15 Support aging awareness, planning for aging, and support for older workers and volunteers.

Unite Changemakers

Canadians need to have a meaningful social conversation about aging that emotionally engages them and awakens everyone to the problem and impact of ageism. A Canadian survey found 63% of older adults surveyed felt that they had been treated unfairly based on their age.ⁱⁱⁱ

Some common stereotypes about older adults include:

- Older adults lack technological skills or cannot learn how to use technology.
- Most older adults have dementia.
- Most older adults live in long-term care homes.
- Older workers are resistant to change.^{iv}

There needs to be a shift in language and core perceptions of Canada’s aging population from a focus on cost to a focus on value exchange in the prosperity of society. There will be no meaningful change without the voice and partnership of the people it will impact – older and younger adults, their families, and key circles of support.



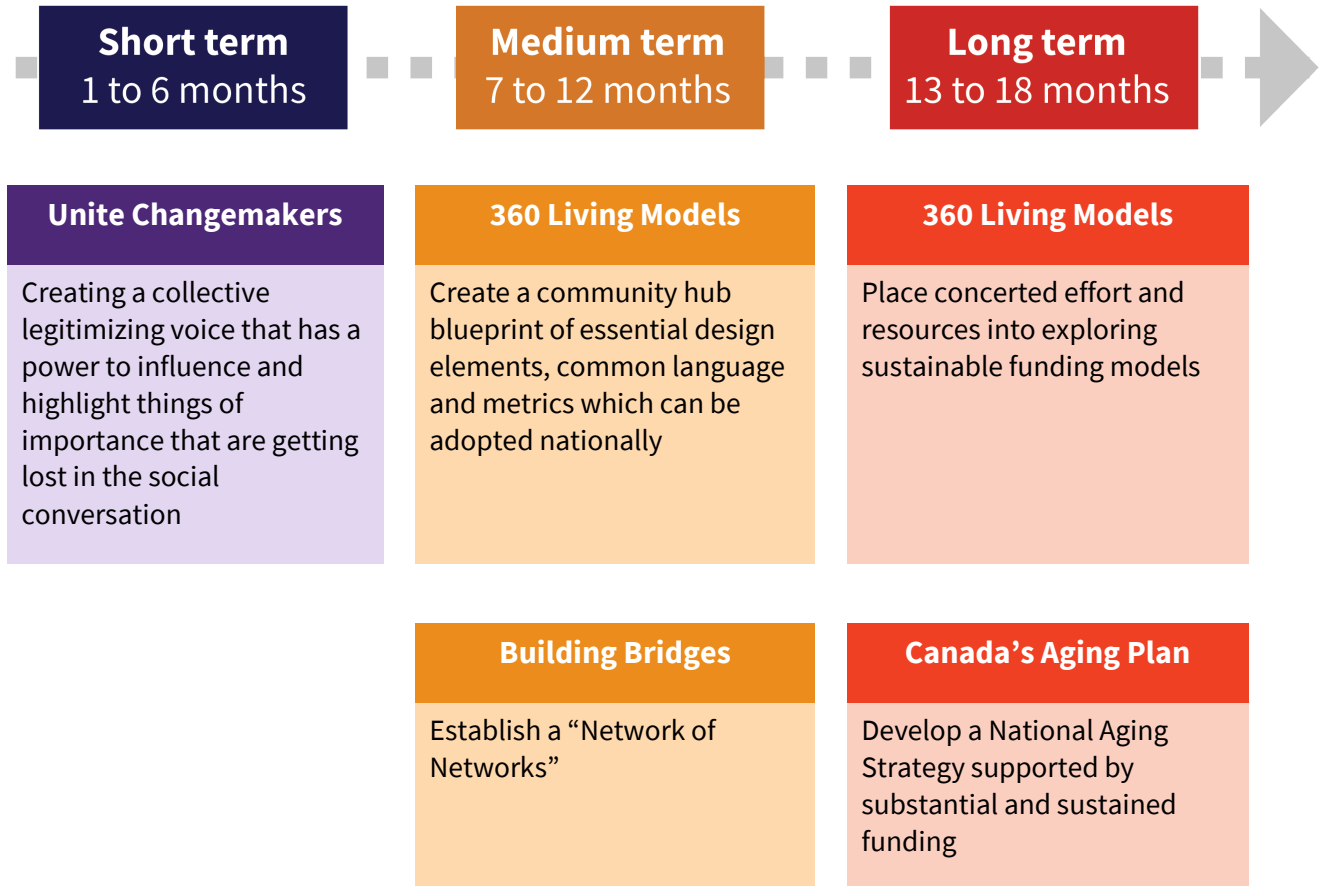
ACTION 16

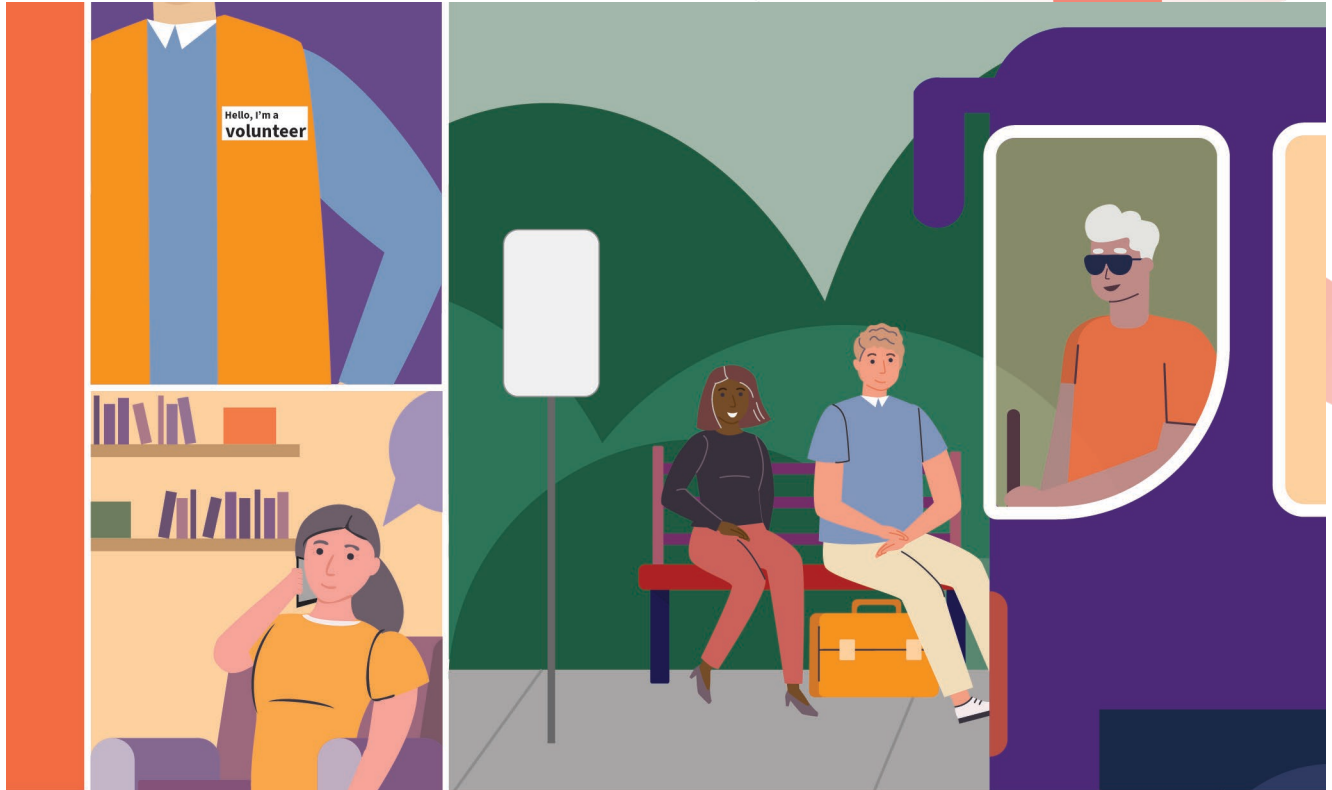
Create a collective legitimizing voice that has the power to galvanize Canadians and influence change. Key activities of the collective could include:

- Raise public awareness and discourse through a provocative approach that exposes harmful assumptions, demystifies aging, and brings social value and benefits to light.
- Map current grassroots groups and cross-sectoral opportunities. Identifying and connecting with advocacy groups, ethno-cultural communities, and networks whose goals are aligned with a better approach to aging could provide opportunities to leverage efforts towards common goals.
- Foster genuine relationships and opportunities for connectivity as we’re all agents of change.
- Create a toolbox for engagement.
- Develop and implement informal and formal ways of mobilizing messages.

Craft a storytelling strategy. We need to propagate compelling messages, and identify the simple, urgent call that will resonate and spark dynamic dialogue with older adults, families, and communities.

Recommendations Timeline





Time for Action

The **COURAGE** Roadmap for Action is ambitious. It is reflective of the wishes of Canadians – to stay in our homes and communities as we get older; to have the opportunity to maintain freedom, self-worth and identity, comfort and to play active roles in the community; to have the independence, choice and supports we need to live full lives connected to everything we love. The time is now – to be bold, to change and to take action! The recommendations and associated actions span the continuum on ways to be involved - the need to change policy, to break sectoral silos, to look at living from a holistic lens, to connect great organizations and work, and to join forces to rally around a shared purpose.

As **COURAGE** enters the next phase of this journey, we call on Canadians to come together with a unified collective voice to join this movement, we call on all sectors to come together to play a role in creating this transformative change, and we call on governments to join forces in leadership.

Together, we can ensure that Canada joins other countries on the world stage in recognizing the importance of planning for all eras of aging. Together, we can build a better future, where we can all get older on our own terms.

Appendix

A: Participants

The Summit hosted 181 participants from across the country, including 27% who self-identified as an older adult.

AGE-WELL	CBI Health	Norquest College
Aging 2.0	Centre for Aging + Brain Health Innovation	Ontario Community Support Association
Alberta Association on Gerontology	Change Rangers	Options Open
Alberta Council on Aging	Christian Health Association of Alberta	PrairiesCan
Alberta Gerontological Nurses Association	Covenant Family	Price Waterhouse Cooper
Alberta Health	Covenant Foundation	Providence Health Care
Alberta Health Services	Deloitte	Provincial Geriatrics Leadership Ontario
Alliance for Healthier Communities	Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council	Queen's University
Alzheimer Society of BC	Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario	Sage Seniors Association
BC Association of Community Response Networks	En-AGE	SE Health
Canadian Medical Association	Government of Alberta	SeniorsNL
CanAGE	Halton Healthcare	Sheridan College
Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence	Healthy Aging Alberta	Simkin Centre
Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health	Healthcare Excellence Canada	Sodexo
Canadian Frailty Network	Health Cities	Tamarack Institute
Canadian Gerontological Nurses Association	Health Quality Council of Alberta	Team CarePal
Canadian Red Cross	HelpAge Canada	Telus
Catholic Association of Manitoba	Homecare Hub	United Way British Columbia
Catholic Health Alliance of Canada	International Longevity Centre Canada	University of Alberta
Catholic Health Association of Ontario	Joseph Brant Hospital	University of Calgary
Caregivers Alberta	Kaleidoscope XR	University of Victoria
Careteam	Kingston Health Sciences Centre	Wilfred Laurier University
CARYA	Manitoba Association of Seniors Centres	Wing Kei Care Centres
	Mount Royal University	Women's College Hospital
	National Institute on Ageing	YouAreUNLTD
		University Health Network
		Westend Seniors Activity Centre

End Notes

ⁱ Statistics Canada (2022). Population projection source: Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories: Interactive Dashboard (Statistics Canada).

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2022015-eng.htm>

ⁱⁱ AARP (2021). An analysis of government plans for healthy aging from around the world.

<https://www.aarpinternational.org/resources/healthy-aging/national-plans>

ⁱⁱⁱ Revera and the International Federation on Ageing (2012). Revera Report on Ageism. <https://ifa.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Revera-IFA-Ageism-Report.pdf>

^{iv} Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors (2022). Addressing the social and economic impacts of ageism in Canada: A discussion guide on ageism in Canada.

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/employment-social-development/corporate/seniors/forum/consultation-ageism/ageism-discussion-guide-en.pdf>