Aging at home: Convergence of housing and health policies

Presentation at Centre for Research in Social Justice and Policy

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Overview

- Aging population: Global, national and provincial trends.
- Intersection of aging, health and housing.
- Housing policies in Ontario.
- Health policies in Ontario.
- Supportive Housing for Seniors: Convergence of Housing and Health Policies.
- Research Project: Supportive Housing for Seniors in Iroquois Falls.
Aging Population: Global, National and Provincial Trends
Aging Population: A Global Phenomenon

- Population aging is one of the most significant trends of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

  - A population is classified as aging when older people become a proportionately larger share of the total population.
Aging Population: Canada

- As per the census of 2011, the Canadian population is aging.

- In 2011, an estimated 5 million Canadians were 65 years of age or older accounting for 14.4% of the total population.

- As early as 2015, the proportion of seniors in the population will surpass the proportion of youth.
Aging Population: Ontario

Acceleration of population aging in Ontario:
- Seniors account for 15% of total population.

Major reasons for population aging:
- Increased life expectancy.
- Declining fertility rates.
- Aging of baby boomers.
Aging Population: Ontario (Cont’d)

- Rural and urban differences in population aging.

- Differences along north and south gradient.

- The oldest age structure in north-eastern Ontario with huge implications for health care and housing systems within the province.
Intersection of Aging, Health and Housing
Aging and Health

- The process of aging itself is associated with greater vulnerability to chronic physical and mental health conditions.

- Commonly reported physical conditions
  - Diabetes, heart disease, cancer, arthritis.

- Commonly reported mental health problems
  - Dementia, depression, anxiety, addiction to prescription drugs, alcohol abuse.
Aging and Housing

- Despite declining health and functioning levels, many seniors prefer to live at home.
- Some seniors face barriers in meeting their core housing needs in terms of:
  - Affordability
  - Accessibility
  - Suitability
- Unmet housing needs are the result of differential access to income and wealth.
Need for Affordable Rental Units

- Among seniors who do not own their homes or those who cannot afford to keep them, down-sizing and moving to affordable rental units becomes a necessity.

- Barriers in securing affordable housing:
  - High rents in private markets.
  - Declining vacancy rates in certain communities.

- Consequently, seniors require access to social housing so that they can live and age safely in a home environment.
Seniors and Social Housing

- In Ontario, as in other parts of Canada, there is a severe shortage of social housing resulting in long and ever growing waiting lists.

- Seniors account for one-quarter of all people on the wait-lists for social housing.

- The situation is particularly grim in many rural and north-eastern communities.
Seniors and Health Care System

- On the other hand, the health care system is grappling with the rising costs of sustaining long-term care facilities, the acute care system and emergency services for the rapidly aging population.

- Necessary to devise cost-effective and sustainable housing and care solutions that support seniors’ ability to remain at home longer.
Social Housing with Integrated Health Care

- The development of fully accessible social housing with integrated health, home and support services is essential.

- This presentation explores the convergence of housing and health policies in the context of aging population and the housing and health care needs of the seniors within the province Ontario.
Housing Policies in Ontario
Social Housing

“Social safety net” for low-income tenants who cannot afford market rents.

According to Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), social housing refers to any housing for which the owner receives a subsidy.
Types of Social Housing

- Four types of social housing
  - public housing owned and operated by a municipality, non-profit housing, co-operative housing, and privately owned housing where the landlord receives a government issued rent supplement for low-income tenants.

- Tenants pay rent-geared-to-income and do not spend more than 30% of their gross annual income on rent.
Goals of Social Housing

- Provision of affordable rents for low and modest income households.
- Replacement of deteriorated or low-quality housing, preservation of affordable rental buildings, and creation of mixed-income neighbourhoods.
- Construction of new rental housing, especially when private developers do not build moderately priced new rental housing.
- Establishment of supportive housing (i.e., housing with support services).
History of Social Housing

- Development of veterans’ housing following World War II.
- Development of public housing by Ontario Housing Corporation in 1960s-70s.
- Federal government off-loaded administration and funding of social housing to provincial government in 1999.
- Devolution of social housing responsibility to 47 service managers, while retaining the responsibility for supportive housing in 2001.
Canada Ontario Affordable Housing Program (AHP)

- In 2002, the federal government signed an agreement with Ontario pledging $245 million over 5 years to build 10,500 units of “affordable housing.”
- In 2003, the federal government announced another $115 million.
- From 2003 to 2005, the pilot phase of the program was completed.
Canada Ontario AHP-Economic Stimulus Package

In 2008, a combined investment of over $1.25 billion for social and affordable housing was announced.

The objectives:
- Generate affordable housing by building new social housing or improving the existing units.
- Stimulate the economy by creating an estimated 23,000 jobs over the course of the program, while strengthening local economies across the province.
Definition of Affordable Rental Housing

- A unit for which the rent does not exceed 30% of the gross annual household income.

OR

- Rent is at or below the average market rent of a unit in the regional market area.
Ontario’s Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy

- In 2011, the province launched the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy and the Housing Services Act.
- Under the new model, the province retains leadership role as a steward of the system, while providing flexibility to service managers to respond to unique local needs.
- Thus, the administration of social housing is devolved to the local or municipal level.
- Homelessness
- Emergency Shelter
- Transitional Housing
- Social Housing
- Supportive Housing
- Subsidized Housing
- Private Rental Market
- Homeownership
Health Policies in Ontario
Aging at Home Strategy

- Seniors are proportionately higher users of hospital and physician services as well as long-term care facilities.

- In particular, 10% of seniors characterized as having the most complex health issues account for nearly 60% of annual spending on health care in Ontario.
Aging at Home Strategy (cont’d)

- Although various forms of supportive housing and assisted living arrangements have existed, the province launched the Aging at Home strategy in 2007.
- Funds were made available to Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) to provide home care and community care services to seniors to avoid unnecessary hospital services usage and premature placement in long-term care facilities.
The Objectives of Aging at Home Strategy

- Provide seniors with a continuum of supports that enables independence and dignified living in their homes.
- Provide a comprehensive plan for an integrated continuum of care that includes community support services, home care, supportive housing, long-term care beds and end-of-life care.
- Offer preventive supports to sustain the healthiest population of seniors possible.
In 2011, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care introduced the Assisted Living Services for High Risk Seniors Policy.

High-risk seniors are those individuals whose needs cannot be met in a cost effective manner through home and community-based services solely on the scheduled visitation basis, but who do not require admission to a long-term care facility.
Objectives of the Policy

- Address more fully needs of high-risk seniors so that they can remain safely at home.
- Expand cost-effective and accessible options for community care.
- Reduce unnecessary hospital utilization.
- Increase the number of high-risk seniors who are discharged from hospital without Alternate Level of Care (ALC) designation.
Objective of Policy (cont’d)

- Reduce the length of stay for high-risk seniors in hospital after an ALC designation.
- Reduce the wait-times to discharge destination for high-risk seniors who live in the community.
- Increase the length of time high-risk seniors remain safely at home after hospital discharge.
Assisted Living Services

- Personal support services.
- Homemaking services.
- Security checks.
- Care-coordination services.
Ontario’s Action Plan for Health Care

- In 2012, the province launched the Action Plan for Health Care.
- This plan provides an impetus for the development of *Seniors Strategy* to establish best practices and policies to support the local delivery of health, social and community care services with a focus on helping seniors to stay healthy and stay at home longer.
As the provincial team began consultations with stakeholders, it became evident that the strategy should address issues beyond the health care needs of seniors.

Issues pertaining to housing, transportation and social inclusion were recognized as inextricably linked to health and well-being.
Action Plan for Health Care (cont’d)

- One of the recommendations of the provincial team was to integrate Assisted Living Supportive Housing units into the continuum of care to enable seniors age at home.

- Target population:
  - Seniors with one or two chronic conditions, overall stable health.
  - Periods of instability resulting in unnecessary and avoidable hospital visits due to their inability to access care in timely manner.
Health Promotion

Primary care

Home and Community Care

Assisted Living Services

Assisted living services in Supportive Housing

Acute Care

Long term Care

Retirement Home
Supportive Housing for Seniors: Convergence of Housing and Health Policies
Supportive Housing for Seniors

- A combination of affordable housing and health, home and support services that can promote “aging in place”.

- Bricks and mortar are funded by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), while care and support services are funded through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MHLTC).
Supportive Housing for Seniors (cont’d)

- The establishment of new supportive housing requires:
  - Increased coordination across ministries.
  - Simultaneous alignment of interests.
  - Availability of funds from both ministries.

- Supportive housing providers can be charitable organizations (i.e., religion-based), non-profit agencies, cooperatives or municipal social housing corporations.
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<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Features</th>
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<tr>
<td>Physical environment</td>
<td>Fully accessible, flexible, adaptable to meet the changing needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Services available at nominal or no charge to occupants</td>
<td>Home care, personal support, assistance with medications, wellness clinics, physiotherapy, occupational therapy etc. within home environment.</td>
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<td>“People-focused” management</td>
<td>Manager should personally know the tenants and their unique needs.</td>
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<td>Affordability &amp; choice</td>
<td>Different types of tenure. Rent is geared to the renter’s ability to pay.</td>
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Research Project: Supportive Housing for Seniors in Iroquois Falls
Background

- A community-driven supportive housing complex for seniors in Iroquois Falls was constructed in 2012.

- Two major sources of funding:
  - Seed money under the Canada Ontario Affordable Housing Program of the MMAH.
  - Fully funded care and support services under the Supportive Housing Program offered by MHLTC.

- Creation of supportive housing for medically high-risk seniors with low to modest income.
Objectives of Research Project

- Review and analyze processes involved in the establishment of the supportive housing.
- Document the housing model in terms of short-term and long-term consequences.
- Inform future applications of the model in other settings for different special needs populations.
- Ascertaining the experiences and perceptions of occupants about the housing complex prior to and following their move to new residence (i.e., supportive housing).
Research Methods

- A mixed-methods design.

- Seniors
  - Semi-structured interviews.
  - Structured and standardized quantitative measures (e.g., SF 36 Health Survey).

- Community stakeholders
  - Semi-structured interviews with local government officials, service providers.
Preliminary Analysis : Key Elements

- Identification of needs in the community.
- Unique and solid partnerships among multiple stakeholders.
- A strong commitment among partners to provide affordable supportive housing to seniors.
- Support from the broader community.
- Availability of seed money.
- Alignment of the priorities of MMAH and MHLTC.