

Projecting the Housing Needs of Aging Atlantic Canadians

RESEARCH PROJECT OUTLINE

What will the housing needs of aging Atlantic Canadians be over the next 20 years?

What housing options need to be developed to meet these needs?

This project has arisen from the collective efforts of the **Atlantic Seniors Housing Research Alliance (ASHRA)**, a research alliance of 37 members encompassing all four Atlantic Provinces, and representing universities, seniors' organizations, housing developers, service providers, and government departments. Our experience has defined a collaborative project that addresses a critical set of issues facing aging Atlantic Canadians. Our work has already facilitated dialogue about these issues within provincial and regional settings.

Housing options available to Canada's rapidly aging population narrow as the everyday demands of living become more onerous and increasing assistance is required. Health status and income levels are important determining factors for the type of supportive housing options that will be available to an individual. Additionally, the needs and wants of contemporary seniors are very different from those of their parents and we know very little about how these differences will impact future living choices.

The project will address these needs through an Atlantic Canadian region-wide research alliance. ASHRA will build community-university research capacity respecting the elderly and housing from January, 2005 through December, 2009. This population faces special challenges and differs from that in other Canadian provinces in three main respects.

First, the elderly proportion of the Atlantic region's population is higher and growing faster when compared with trends in other provinces, resulting in a higher demand for a variety of housing options.

Second, the income level of the region's seniors is lower than the national average and housing solutions available in other parts of the country may not be financially feasible for many Atlantic Canadian seniors.

Finally, when viewed nationally a larger proportion of the Atlantic Provinces' population, including seniors, lives in rural areas. While a variety of urban area housing options are being developed, rural areas may need to devise different strategies.

Project Design

To project aging Atlantic Canadians' future housing needs from 2009 to 2029, we will begin with the current census Forward Sortation Area (FSA) data, combined with health state and wealth predictors, to construct a predictive geo-demographic model. A preliminary version of this model has been used successfully to predict assisted living demand in several communities in Nova Scotia.

The predictive model will then be enhanced by surveying Atlantic Canadian seniors. The Alliance members reviewed the CMHC "Seniors' Housing and Support Services Survey" and determined that it can be effectively revised to expand our understanding

of the special challenges and issues. Sixteen focus groups sited in urban and rural areas will then ask seniors how their health, income status, life transitions and other factors are likely to affect future housing wants and needs. The demographic projections, along with the qualitative information, will be compared with an inventory of the region's housing options and a review of successful seniors housing models from other countries.

The resulting analysis of available supply and anticipated demand will be presented in policy analysis documents designed to assist government policy makers, housing developers and community organizations in planning for seniors' housing needs. The involvement of four provincial Seniors Housing Stakeholder Groups throughout the project, and a culminating Regional Housing Needs Conference, will also facilitate the development of public policy solutions.

Project Outcomes

The participation of ASHRA members throughout all phases of the collaboration will develop capacity within our region to design and conduct research, to analyze research-sourced data, and to influence policy within a systematic knowledge mobilization strategy that develops and disseminates information from the project's outset. The central role played by Alliance members in all aspects of this project will enhance understanding of aging Atlantic Canadians' housing needs and wants, at all social and economic levels, by both public and private organizations.

Contact Information

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