

# Champions WELLAND LEADING THE WAY

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MEDIA RELEASE



## WELLAND'S SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY GROUP WORKING HARD TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR SENIORS

**Welland** – The City of Welland's Senior Citizens Advisory Committee is pleased to have Mr. Doug Rapelje re-appointed as its Chair.

"I believe that the individuals who volunteer to serve on this committee are committed to being a strong voice for Welland seniors and help improve their quality of life", stated Rapelje.

"City Council and staff are committed to ensuring that corporate programs, services, and policies are designed to address the evolving needs and interests of Welland's growing senior's population", says Mayor Barry Sharpe. "With this in mind, the Senior Citizens Advisory Committee was formed in December 2007 and has made significant progress in its effort to enhance the quality of life for senior citizens. The Committee is a valuable community resource".

The objectives for the Committee:

- To act as a liaison for all seniors in the City, and advise City Council and staff on ways to enrich and enhance the health and quality of life of seniors in the community.
- To solicit input and act as a public forum for issues that affect seniors in the community.
- To provide advice based on input received to improve the programs, policies and services provided to seniors.
- To identify barriers to access by seniors to City programs and services.
- To form partnerships in the community to educate, inform and improve quality of life for seniors.
- To prepare and submit an annual report and recommendations to Council for consideration.

"I believe the role of the committee has become more important when you consider the demographics and the fact the first wave of Baby Boomers have reached the age of 65 in 2011", said Rapelje. "Citizens in Welland age 65 and older account for 8,460 individuals or almost 17% of the total population. The community will face new challenges in meeting the present and future needs of our senior citizens", continued Rapelje.

Mayor Barry Sharpe also recognizes the challenges the City faces. "According to Statistics Canada, population projections indicate that within the next 10 years, the number of children in Canada aged less than 15 years could be outnumbered by the number of seniors aged 65 and over. The background report that accompanies the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan indicates that the age profile in the City of Welland is considerably older than the provincial average. This trend is expected to accelerate due to the impact of the large 'baby-boom' generation and lower birth rate."

Since its inception, the committee has made several recommendations to Council and initiated a number of projects. Two of the most important recommendations related to the need for additional Long-Term Care beds and affordable housing. The Committee also submitted recommendations regarding the City of Welland's new Official Plan and its potential impact on seniors.

"Our first major project was to initiate the Age-Friendly Community Project which was proposed and unanimously endorsed by Welland City Council on April 21, 2009. As the project progressed it became a Regional Project with the City of Welland being the first community to participate. With the support of the Rose City Senior Citizens Foundation a Trillium Grant was obtained and other partners joined the project", stated Rapelje. "We want our communities to be welcoming, inclusive, and supportive, offer choices, encourage participation, recognize diversity, and make use of the talents and skills of seniors, promote active aging, and foster community pride".

Rapelje commended Council and Rose City Senior Seniors Activity Centre Boards on the expansion that will allow for more seniors and others to benefit from the centre and encourage active aging. "We believe an important part of our work is to provide information to seniors and families. During 2010 we sponsored four forums on subjects like – Wills and Estates, Senior Safety Day at the Safety Village, and The Road to Wellness".

In addition to Mr. Rapelje, the Senior Citizens Advisory Committee is comprised of eight other volunteer members who will work alongside Mr. Rapelje to move the objectives of the Committee forward over the next three and a half years. The members appointed to the Committee by Welland City Council are, Arnold L. Steed, Vice-Chair; Bunny Alexander, Joan Elliott, Shelley Frupp, Sean Keays, Neil McGregor, Phyllis Pelette, and John Rose.

The Committee continues to deal with many different issues that will help improve the quality of life for all seniors and make Welland an Age-Friendly Community.

If you have any input, being from individuals or organizations, on issues or idea's that would impact the lives of seniors, the Senior Citizens Advisory Committee would welcome a presentation from you at a future Committee meeting. Please contact Doug Rapelje, Chair, City of Welland Senior Citizens Advisory Committee at (905) 732-1459 or by email at [drapelje@cogeco.ca](mailto:drapelje@cogeco.ca).

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