

# Elder Care Advocacy

Information from *Ryerson's National Institute on Aging* shares that 70 per cent of Canadians 65 years and older wish to age independently in their own homes. The Ontario Co-operative Association, and our partners, are **developing an innovative co-operative ecosystem to support seniors remaining in their homes and communities.**

The first development is the creation of a Care Federation that will provide business support services to care co-operatives to lessen their administrative burden. The Federation will offer accounting, scheduling, human resources, marketing and other business services while also supporting co-operative business development.

There are **four care models** that support the caregivers, and their clients, and build generational wealth within marginalized populations:

## Worker Co-operative

- In 2019, Home Care Workers' Co-operative was incorporated and three women began caring for elders on their own terms. They pay themselves a living wage, schedule clients with enough time to meet their needs and build relationships with the families they support. From their website:
  - "Our co-op [...] has the unique opportunity to show the broader community that there is a more dignified and compassionate way to care for our most vulnerable citizens, and an economically feasible way to create meaningful employment for those who care for them [...] **Working under a not-for-profit co-operative model allows us the freedom to put people first.** Our clients will get the highest standard of care because our membership and community as a whole will agree on what that standard of care looks like. And, because workers are owners, they have a real stake in the success of their business."

## Consumer Co-operative

- The families that founded Rougemount Co-op Housing started long before the building with a co-operative they call Deohaeko. Twelve individuals came together to explore ways for their children with special needs to live in a way that they felt fulfilled and satisfied within a community.
- Deohaeko Co-operative formed to intentionally build a community for their children. They came together to first build housing within a community to support a fulfilling life, then they worked together to pool resources and apply for funding for services and staff to support their children's lives.
- Today, the Deohaeko Co-operative allows each of the now adult children to live as independently as possible within the housing co-op. The co-op ensures each of them are financially supported for all of their care needs, pays a full-time employee to monitor their changing needs and advocate for funding or community support and ensure they have the opportunity to fully participate in the community.
- This example of a consumer co-operative will fit any kind of shared care or shared advocacy requirement of any group of seniors.

## Housing Co-operative

- Cohousing is an intentional community design that emerged out of Denmark in the 1960s. The community is planned, managed and co-operatively owned by the residents through participatory and democratic decision-making processes. Cohousing is a housing innovation with plentiful benefits, including social, environmental and economic benefits. Cohousing has been adapted into "Senior Cohousing" to meet the unique needs of residents in their later years, which may involve an emphasis on universal design, accessibility, and safety, co-caring and mutual support, or whatever else may emerge to meet the needs of residents.
- Harbourside is the first senior cohousing in British Columbia and only the second in Canada. It is the first cohousing in Canada to include: (1) a care suite to support aging in place; (2) a conscious commitment to voluntary neighbourly mutual support (co-care); and (3) a required weekend course on aging well in community for potential members. Harbourside includes three generations and an age range from late 40s to late 80s. It has no age restriction but aims to be a sustainable senior cohousing homeowner community that promotes healthy aging in place.
- This model is possible in Ontario if the innovative Home Opportunities approach to housing is embraced. The Home Opportunities approach is a great opportunity for seniors to finance a new build, and maintain autonomy, through the ownership of an extremely affordable condominium and consider shared care co-operative models or working with a PSW co-op for in-unit care.
- Homes through Home Opportunities are affordable for modest-income seniors through a two-tiered mortgage offered by Ontario's credit unions. With a first mortgage only financing a portion of the new home, it is extremely affordable. A second mortgage for the final portion of the new home's purchase price is held for repayment until the home sells at a future date when there is hopefully enough equity to pay the second mortgage and leave the family with a profit.

## Multistakeholder Co-operative

- In Quebec, municipalities partner with communities to build elder care infrastructure to help community members remain in their homes and the community as they age. These multi-stakeholder co-operatives have worker, consumer and investor members that allow all members of the community to contribute to a system that values family and dignity.
- Novaide, and other co-operatives like them, are community co-ops where the business delivers PSW care, as well as other home care needs like cooking, cleaning and small jobs. Novaide is owned by the workers, the seniors (who are customers) and community investors who purchased shares in the co-operative to support its success.
- There are over 100 of these types of co-operatives in Quebec that are all part of a federation of care co-operatives called EESAD (Entreprise d'économie sociale en aide à domicile). Each of the co-operatives have been created through partnerships with government, families and employees.

