



**AGE FRIENDLY**  
**SAULT STE MARIE**

## **Community Assessment Report**

Prepared for the World Health Organization,  
Sault Ste. Marie City Council and the City of  
Sault Ste. Marie

September 2014

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## GREETINGS FROM MAYOR DEBBIE AMAROSO



As Mayor of Sault Ste. Marie, I am pleased to present you with the Community Assessment Report for Age-Friendly Sault Ste. Marie. So far, our journey on becoming an Age-Friendly Community has lasted three years. Those three years have been exciting, educational and have certainly brought a better and more comprehensive understanding of our community as a whole.

Age-Friendly Communities have started to become a global trend over the past five to ten years. I believe that they are becoming more of a necessity than an option. We need to ensure there are services and infrastructure in place to support our community throughout the years to come. In the case of our community, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, we have a large aging demographic (predicted by Stats Can to have 30% of citizens 65 years of age and older by 2018). Sault Ste. Marie is not alone in this; most of the Algoma Region (surrounding geographical area), is facing the same trend in the coming years.

The World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Communities Initiative was an attractive option when looking at options to address the aging of our baby boomers. It was important to our City Council that we tackle this issue with a holistic attitude, instead of concentrating on a singular issue. Not only does the Age-Friendly Communities approach address some of the challenges Sault Ste. Marie will experience from our aging demographics, it offers the necessary skills, tools and future planning to provide a healthy and supportive life for *all* ages. From Senior Services, to Parks and Recreation and Youth Engagement, Age-Friendly Communities covers it all.

Our Age-Friendly Community Initiative has not been without its challenges, however; I am happy to say we have faced those challenges head-on. Fortunately, we were able to pull together an amazing steering committee, consisting of Social Services, Public Health, Senior Services and Community Development professionals. City Staff from the Mayor's Office and the Planning Department were also present on the Steering Committee. Without this dedicated group of individuals, our Assessment Process would not have been what it is today.

I would like to thank our Steering Committee, dedicated focus groups and the entire community for your input throughout this assessment period. We have gathered an immense amount of data and have been able to create a report which will launch us into our Age-Friendly Action Plan. I am looking very forward to the next step in becoming Age-Friendly and invite any and all inquiries, questions and comments about our progress thus far.

Let's live a long life... to the fullest.

Sincerely,

  


Debbie Amaroso  
Mayor of Sault Ste. Marie

# AGE-FRIENDLY SAULT STE. MARIE: FORMAT OF ASSESSMENT

*“Year 1-2: A comprehensive and inclusive baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of the city or community. This needs to be rigorous but can be flexible. At a minimum, it needs to at least consider each of the eight domains identified in the Global Age-friendly Cities guide.” (Network Cycle on Continuous Improvement. WHO, 2002)*

This assessment was the first step in a five year process in which the City of Sault Ste. Marie is taking necessary actions to incorporate Age-Friendly initiatives in to its strategic plan. In order to complete the assessment, the eight domains (as identified by the World Health Organization) were separated into four phases. Each assessment phase was conducted in a three month period through a number of focus groups and surveys.

<b>Phase One</b>	Housing	Community and Health Services
<b>Phase Two</b>	Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Transportation
<b>Phase Three</b>	Social Participation	Respect and Social Inclusion
<b>Phase Four</b>	Civic Participation and Employment	Communication and Information

On August 13th 2012 the ‘Phase One: Age-Friendly Sault Ste. Marie’ report was brought forward to council. Phase One was dedicated to assessing Housing and Community and Health Services in Sault Ste. Marie. Since the report was accepted as information, it has been forwarded on to the appropriate departments so they may work the assessment into their future action plans. The Phase Two report, which assessed Transportation and Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, was presented to council in January of 2013. The Phase Three report assessed Respect and Social Inclusion and Social Participation; it was brought before council in May of 2013. Phase Four, the final report in the Age-Friendly Community assessment, was brought before council in February 2014

No domain holds more importance than another. The categories were prioritized by Mayor Amaroso as most critical to least critical to the community at the present time.

It is important to note that throughout the assessment, appropriate public perception of the initiative proved to be a difficult challenge. The steering committee struggled with ensuring the public was aware that the initiative would positively affect *all ages*, including youth and young professionals, not exclusively seniors. As the committee moves forward, all proper media strategies will be in place to market Age-Friendly Sault Ste. Marie as an initiative that creates a better quality of life for the entire community.

## Age-Friendly Steering Committee

It was important to have a steering committee put in place for the Age-Friendly Sault Ste. Marie Initiative before the assessment phase started. Lead by co-chairs Mayor Debbie Amaroso and past city councillor Peter Vaudry, a steering committee was created, with representation from the following organizations:

- The Mayor's Office
- Mental Health and Addictions Board
- Sault Ste. Marie City Council
- Sault Ste. Marie Public Libraries
- Sault Ste. Marie Seniors Centres
- Seniors Health Advisory Committee
- One Square Meal (local business catering to seniors' needs)
- Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Sault Rising Stars (seniors' social inclusion club)
- City of Sault Ste. Marie Planning department

The Age-Friendly steering committee played an instrumental role in the community assessment. The group was well-rounded with a variety of expertise. There was a large representation of seniors on the committee. Their knowledge helped with both the collection of information and the format of the assessment.

## Survey Format

An explanation of the Age-Friendly concept is written at the top of the first page, as well as guidance on how to fill out the surveys. Each guideline statement was followed by an accuracy rating scale and space for comments. The accuracy rating scale was reduced from five ratings to three after phase two (to simplify data collection) and the statements were turned into questions. After Phase One, there was one minor change; after brief deliberation we have changed the phrase "from three to 83 years of age..." to "from three to 93 years of age..." to express inclusivity to respondents. This format was kept for the remainder of the assessment as not to confuse respondents and keep consistency.

## Availability

The Age-Friendly Surveys were made available online and at public locations throughout the community. The steering committee tried, at best, to place hard copies in one or more locations per city ward. The locations are as follows:

### Websites

- Algoma Public Health - <http://www.ahu.on.ca/index.aspx?l=,1,2,3>

- Mayor Amaroso’s Social Media Sites – [www.facebook.com/saultmayor](http://www.facebook.com/saultmayor)  
[www.twitter.com/saultmayor](http://www.twitter.com/saultmayor)
- Community Engagement Coordinator Social Media Sites— [www.twitter.com/saultengagement](http://www.twitter.com/saultengagement)  
[www.saultengagement.wordpress.com](http://www.saultengagement.wordpress.com)
- Retired Elementary Teachers Ontario – <https://www.rto-ero.org/>
- Libraries – <http://www.ssmpl.ca/>

### **Public Drop Box Locations**

- Cambrian Mall
- John Rhodes Community Centre
- Senior Drop In Centre
- Steelton Centre
- Three Library Branches (Main, Korah, Churchill)
- Civic Centre

The steering committee assessed the number of respondents at each location and those with fewer than 3 survey responses per location were removed. If there were requests for surveys in those areas, a hard copy of the survey was mailed directly to the citizen.

### **Focus Groups**

Several community organizations and groups were approached for consultation and participation throughout the Age-Friendly Sault Ste. Marie assessment. These focus groups provided consistency and ensured a high level of participation throughout the assessment. The following community groups were consulted during one or more phase;

- The Canadian Red Cross
- Seniors Health Advisory Committee
- Sault Rising Stars
- Canada Girl Guides
- Sault Ste. Marie Urban Aboriginals
- Seniors Centre users

**The Age-Friendly Sault Ste. Marie Assessment had over 2500 participants.**

# PHASE ONE: HOUSING

Results from the Housing assessment are as follows:

## Critical issues:

“Sufficient, affordable housing is available in the areas that are safe and close to services and the rest of the community.” This statement ranked very low with 31.5% of respondents describing it as somewhat inaccurate and 42.4% of respondents describing it as very inaccurate.

“Sufficient and affordable housing for frail and disabled older people, with appropriate services, is provided locally.” This statement ranked very low with 25.5% of respondents describing it as somewhat inaccurate, and 35.4% of respondents describing it as very inaccurate.

## Non-Critical issues (positive feedback)

“Housing is well-constructed and provides safe and comfortable shelter from the weather.” This statement ranked fairly high with 31.2% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate, and 15.2% of respondents describing it as very accurate.

“Interior spaces and level surfaces allow freedom of movement in all rooms and passageways.” This statement ranked high with 23.4% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate, and 9.9% of respondents describing it as very accurate.

## Next steps

The City of Sault Ste. Marie in partnership with the District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board hired OrgCode Consulting Inc. to write the Sault Ste. Marie Housing and Homelessness Plan Update. This plan addresses the critical issues that the community identified through the Phase One Housing assessment.

*“As noted in the commentary on demographics, the population of Sault Ste. Marie is aging. While “aging in place” will be possible for many residents, there is a tendency for some older households to transition from ownership housing to rental accommodation later in life. It is possible for a number of households in Sault Ste. Marie to be “over-housed” (having more bedrooms and living space required for the number of housing occupants) not out of choice, but because of insufficient supply in the rental market to meet demand. With insufficient rental housing this transition to apartments will become more challenging, and demand from both older residents seeking to downsize their housing and younger residents forming new households may exacerbate the issue.*

*In addition, seniors with fixed incomes may require access to rent-g geared-to-income housing or other forms of housing subsidy. Over time there may be more demand for housing units that are accessible, as well as for affordable assisted living options that will help residents age in place and remain independent for as long as possible.” – Sault Ste. Marie Housing and Homelessness Plan Update, July 2014*

The Housing and Homelessness Plan outlines 5 long-term strategic directions, with the first being “Expand Access to Affordable Housing in the Service Area”. Age-Friendly Sault Ste. Marie Housing specific action items are as follows:

*Objective 1.1: Continue to encourage and facilitate the addition of new rental housing and affordable ownership housing to reduce pressure on social housing stock.*

*Action item 1.1.1: Encourage the City of Sault Ste. Marie to approval the new affordable housing policies in the Sault Ste. Marie Draft Official Plan.*

*Action item 1.1.2: Recommend that the City of Sault Ste. Marie designate affordable housing as an eligible community benefit in the Sault Ste. Marie Community Improvement Policy.*

*Action item 1.1.3: Recommend that the City of Sault Ste. Marie designate a “point person” in the Planning Department to provide guidance and assistance for proponents that incorporate affordable or non-profit housing.*

*Action item 1.1.5: Consider offering limited financial assistance to help homeowners add secondary suites in Sault Ste. Marie.... With preference given to those that incorporate accessibility features.*

*Objective 1.3: Develop a long-term financial plan including new social housing stock, preventative maintenance and capital reserve on existing social housing stock.*

***Action item 1.3.2: Work with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to ensure that new affordable housing units are “barrier free” to address the needs of people with disabilities and support aging in place for older residents.***

### **Age-Friendly Action Item**

Recommend that geared-to-income housing, affordable housing and seniors housing are located in well serviced areas including, but not limited to, health services, accessible transportation and grocery stores.

# PHASE ONE: COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES

Results from the Community and Health Services assessment are as follows:

## Critical Issues

“Health and social services are conveniently located and accessible by all means of transport.” This statement ranked low with 33.3% of respondents describing it as inaccurate, and 41.2% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate.

“Clear and accessible information is provided about health and social services for older people.” This statement ranked low with 31.4% of respondents describing it as inaccurate, and 49% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate.

“The delivery of services is coordinated and administratively simple.” This statement ranked low with 50.9% of respondents describing it as inaccurate, and 38.2% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate.

## Non-Critical Issues (positive feedback)

“Health and community service facilities are safely constructed and accessible.” This statement ranked high with 52.9% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 33.3% of respondents describing it as accurate.

“Voluntary services by people of all ages are encouraged and supported.” This statement ranked high with 40.4% of respondents describing it somewhat accurate, and 44.2% of respondents describing it as accurate.

“There are sufficient and accessible burial sites.” This statement ranked high with 45.8% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 37.5% of respondents describing it as accurate.

## Next Steps

The Age-Friendly Sault Ste. Marie initiative will address first and foremost the issues that are within the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie’s purview. There will be, and have been, opportunities for partnership in order to address issues outside of that scope, but for the purpose of this report, the steering committee can only comment on the partnerships already developed, and what the Corporation can integrate into their city plan. This domain has some guidelines that need community partnerships in order to address the critical issues.

Sault Ste. Marie Transit Services currently offers 9 different bus lines, servicing the entire city. As the northern area of the city continues to develop, Transit Services will be altering their bus routes in order to service the higher traffic areas of the city. This will be discussed further in the report during Phase Two: Transportation.

Additionally, respondents identified a need for clear and concise information through the entire assessment, including the need for an increase in health services communication. The Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie can work to ensure their media material includes accessibility information, and that they share information on public health both online and in their facilities. Algonia Public Health, Sault Ste. Marie's public health provider, has been in the process of revamping their public relation policies. To read more on their communication strategy, please visit: [www.algomapublichealth.com](http://www.algomapublichealth.com)

### Age-Friendly Action Items

Recommend that Transit Services assess current routes to ensure they are vital, in high demand, and provide quick and easy access to community and health services.

Recommend that community services offered by the Corporation are advertised and communicated to the public through appropriate partnerships.

## PHASE TWO: TRANSPORTATION

Results from the Transportation assessment are as follows:

### Critical Issues

“All city areas and services are accessible by public transport, with good connections and well-marked vehicles.” This statement ranked low with 47% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate, and 36% of respondents describing it as inaccurate.

“A voluntary transport service is available where public transportation is too limited.” This statement ranked low with 38% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate, and 38% of respondents describing it as inaccurate.

“Taxis are accessible and affordable, and drivers are courteous and helpful.” This statement ranked low with 38.5% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate, and 38.5% of respondents describing it as inaccurate.

### Non-Critical Issues (positive feedback)

“Public transportation costs are consistent, clearly displayed and affordable.” This statement ranked high with 42.5% of respondents describing it as accurate and 42.5% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate.

“Vehicles are clean, well-maintained, accessible, not overcrowded and have priority seating that is respected.” This statement ranked high with 52% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 37% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

“Specialized transport is available for disabled people.” This statement ranked high with 65% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 29% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

“Drivers stop at designated stops and beside the curb to facilitate boarding and wait for passengers to be seated before driving off.” This statement ranked high with 54% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 27% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

“Complete and accessible information is provided to users about routes, schedules and special needs facilities.” This statement ranked high with 51% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 35% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

“Roadways are free of obstructions that block driver’s vision.” This statement ranked high with 58% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 38% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

“Traffic signs and intersections are visible and well-placed.” This statement ranked high with 52% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 43% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

“Parking and drop-off areas are safe, sufficient in number and conveniently located.” This statement ranked high with 48% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 35% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

## Next Steps

Currently, the City of Sault Ste. Marie Transit Services has 9 Parabuses in operation, offering 58 hours of service per weekday and 25 hours of service per weekend day. Additionally, the City offers 32 trips per day through contracted services. Transit Services has acknowledged the need for specialized transit in the community, and is looking at different funding models in order to address this gap. In recent years Transit Services increased Parabus services from 40 hours per day to 58.

Transit Services will be reviewing their long term transit plan (through the hiring of a consultant) in the near future. They plan to hold public consultation sessions, as well as consider the changing demographics in the community. In the past five years, Transit Services has changed several routes to accommodate changing demands from transit riders.

Transit Services now requests that contract taxis are accessible. They currently have two accessible taxis in their fleet.

### Age-Friendly Action Items

Recommend that Council investigate the feasibility of an additional Parabus and dispatcher in the budget for Transit Services.

Recommend a community bus service runs on weekends to recreational areas such as Hiawatha, Point des Chenes, etc.

Encourage City Council determine the effectiveness of a by-law on taxi accessibility.

# PHASE TWO: OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

Results from the Outdoor Spaces and Buildings assessment are as follows:

## Critical Issues

“Pavements are well-maintained, free of obstructions and reserved for pedestrians.” This statement ranked low with 30% of respondents describing it as inaccurate, and 41% of respondents describing it as only somewhat accurate.

“Pedestrian crossings are sufficient in number and safe for people with different levels and types of disability, with nonslip marks, visual and audio cues and adequate crossing times.” This statement ranked low with 29% of respondents describing it as inaccurate, and 50% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate.

“Cycle paths are separate from pavements and other pedestrian walkways.” This statement ranked low with 48% of respondents describing it as inaccurate, and 43% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate.

“Special customer service arrangements are provided, such as separate queues for or service counters for older people.” This statement ranked low with 28% of respondents describing it as inaccurate, and 47% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate.

“Public toilets outdoors and indoors are sufficient in number, clean, well-maintained and accessible.” This statement ranked low with 45% of respondents describing it as inaccurate, and 41% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate.

## Non-Critical Issues (positive feedback)

“Public areas are clean and pleasant.” This statement ranked high with 58% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 33% of respondents describing it as accurate.

“Green spaces and outdoor seating are sufficient in number, well-maintained and safe.” This statement ranked high with 62% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 29% of respondents describing it as accurate.

“Pavements are nonslip, are wide enough for wheelchairs and have dropped curbs to road level.” This statement ranked high with 44% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 34% of respondents describing it as accurate.

## Next Steps

As outlined in the City's 2011-2014 Strategic Plan, under Objective 3A- Recreational/Cultural Infrastructure, the Engineering and Planning Department, Public Works and Transportation Department and the Sault Trail Advocacy Committee began the implementation of the Cycling Master Plan. This includes the completion of the Hub Trail to Hwy 17 N; and the Hub Trail to the West End Community Center.

Under Objective 1B-Transportation Network Improvements, improved pedestrian and vehicular traffic flow was a result of long range capital road construction in the northeast area of the city. Additionally, the Plan addresses downtown revitalization which will improve pedestrian walkways in the downtown core.

### Age-Friendly Action Items

Recommend accessible public restrooms are installed along the Hub Trail and at Bellevue Park.

Recommend bicycle paths are constructed on Queen Street, Pine Street, sections of 2<sup>nd</sup> Line, Wallace Terrace and other high traffic routes.

Recommend audio cues, sensory and visual cues are installed on all crosswalks starting with highest traffic areas (e.g. Great Northern Road).

Encourage City Council to continue implementation of the Cycling Master Plan.

# PHASE THREE: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Results from the Social Participation assessment are as follows:

## Critical Issues

“There is a consistent outreach to include people at risk of social isolation.” This statement ranked very low with 42% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate, and 42% of respondents describing it as inaccurate.

“Events are held at times convenient for older people.” This statement ranked low with 57.5% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate, and 15% of respondents describing it as inaccurate.

## Non-Critical Issues (positive feedback)

“Venues for events and activities are conveniently located, accessible, well-lit and easily reached by public transport.” This statement ranked high with 37% of respondents describing it as accurate and 51% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate.

“A wide variety of activities is offered to appeal to a diverse population of older people.” This statement ranked high with 25% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 54.5% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

“Gatherings including older people are held in various local community spots, such as recreation centres, schools, libraries, community centres and parks.” This statement ranked high with 38% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 45% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

“Complete and accessible information is provided to users about routes, schedules and special needs facilities.” This statement ranked high with 51% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 35% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

“Activities can be attended alone or with a companion.” This statement ranked high with 51% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 46% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

“Activities and attractions are affordable, with no hidden or additional participation costs.” This statement ranked high with 30% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 57.5% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

## Next Steps

Overall, Sault Ste. Marie received positive feedback through the Social Participation assessment. Since this domain is heavily influenced by outside organizations and their mandates (sports groups, hobby clubs, etc.), the City of Sault Ste. Marie has limited power over direct changes.

The City of Sault Ste. Marie applied for a federal grant, the New Horizons for Seniors Program, during 2013, and received over \$18,000 in 2014 to increase social participation programming for seniors (including intergenerational programming). These programs are administered through the City's Senior Centres. The Senior Centres received very positive feedback through the Social Participation assessment in all related guidelines.

### Age-Friendly Action Items

Recommend that accessibility information is required on all City media releases and advertising material.

Encourage Council to continue to support seniors programming both externally and through the Senior Centres.

# PHASE THREE: RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Results from the Respect and Social Inclusion assessment are as follows:

## Critical Issues

“Community-wide settings, activities and events attract all generations by accommodating age-specific needs and preferences.” This statement ranked low with 42% of respondents describing it as inaccurate, and 25% of respondents describing it as only somewhat accurate.

“Older people who are less well-off have good access to public, voluntary and private services.” This statement ranked low with 36% of respondents describing it as inaccurate, and 28% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate.

## Non-Critical Issues (positive feedback)

“Older people are regularly consulted by public, voluntary and commercial services on how to better serve them.” This statement ranked high with 46% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 38.5% of respondents describing it as accurate.

“Services and products to suit varying needs and preferences are provided by public and commercial services.” This statement ranked high with 54% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 31% of respondents describing it as accurate.

“Older people are regularly consulted by public, voluntary and commercial services on how to better serve them.” This statement ranked high with 46% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 38.5% of respondents describing it as accurate.

“Older people are specifically included in community activities for “families”.” This statement ranked very high with 67% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 33% of respondents describing it as accurate.

“Schools provide opportunities to learn about ageing and older people, and involve older people in school activities.” This statement ranked very high with 45.5% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 54.5% of respondents describing it as accurate.

Older people are recognized by the community for their past as well as present contributions. This statement ranked very high with 50% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 41.5% of respondents describing it as accurate.

## Next Steps

Much like during the Social Participation assessment, Sault Ste. Marie received positive feedback through the Respect and Social Inclusion assessment. This domain is also heavily influenced by outside organizations and their mandates (nonprofits, volunteer clubs, etc.), the City of Sault Ste. Marie has limited power over direct changes.

However, the City of Sault Ste. Marie currently has a number of programs in place that relate to these guidelines. The City awards exceptional volunteers in the community through a number of annual ceremonies. All City Staff are required to complete customer service training; some training is more thorough depending on department.

## Age-Friendly Action Items

Encourage Council to continue to request feedback from seniors relating to City operations through public consultation.

# PHASE FOUR: COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Results from the Communication and Information assessment are as follows:

## Critical Issues

“Regular and widespread distribution of information is assured and a coordinated, centralized access is provided.” This statement ranked low with 45% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate, and 31% of respondents describing it as inaccurate.

## Non-Critical Issues (positive feedback)

“Public and commercial services provide friendly, person-to-person service on request.” This statement ranked very high with 37% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 47% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

“A wide variety of activities is offered to appeal to a diverse population of older people.” This statement ranked high with 25% of respondents describing it as accurate, and 54.5% describing the statement as somewhat accurate.

## Next Steps

The theme of Communication and Information was present in the assessment of every other domain the steering committee reviewed. The need for adequate communication is instrumental in order to roll out programs and services properly to the community. From the perspective of the City of Sault Ste. Marie, one of the largest hubs of information is the City Website. There were numerous comments related to the need of a website refresh and a greater online presence. Since the beginning of the Age-Friendly assessment, the City of Sault Ste. Marie has started a website refresh and has an active Twitter account.

The New Horizons for Seniors Program also funded a staff person to review the current seniors' community and health services directory. This directory will be available online and in print. Accessibility information on City facilities will be provided.

## Age-Friendly Action Items

Recommend Council increase the IT department's staff wages budget in order to hire a permanent Webmaster.

# PHASE FOUR: CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Results from the Civic Participation and Employment assessment are as follows:

## Critical Issues

“A range of flexible and appropriately paid opportunities for older people to work is promoted.” This statement ranked fairly low with 34% of respondents

## Non-Critical Issues (positive feedback)

“A range of flexible options for older volunteers is available, with training, recognition, guidance, and compensation for personal costs.” This statement ranked high with 58% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 42% of respondents describing it as accurate.

“Discrimination of age alone is forbidden in hiring, retention, promotion and training of employees.” This statement ranked high with 13% of respondents describing it as somewhat accurate and 63% of respondents describing it as accurate.

“Decision-making bodies in public, private and voluntary sectors encourage and facilitate membership in their organization for older people.” This statement ranked high with 67% of respondents describing it as accurate.

## Next Steps

The Civic Participation and Employment assessment received the lowest amount of respondents throughout the entire process. Unfortunately, this skewed the data significantly and therefore the steering committee relied heavily on the focus group conversations for quality feedback. The data described above is not reflective of a large sample size and must be taken with a grain of salt.

The focus groups provided feedback on several items in this category including several suggestions;

- There should be a discount program for those who are volunteering but still need resources to do so (gas, food, transit, etc.)
- Post-secondary institutes offering classes at no or little charge to seniors.
- Clear and concise information on requirements and application processes to sit on Council appointed committees.

## *Acknowledgements*

The World Health Organization – Age Friendly Communities

Sault Ste. Marie City Council

The City of Sault Ste. Marie

Mayor's Office

Clerk's Department

Community Services Department

Finance Department

Information Technology Department

Planning Department

Transit Services

8-80 Cities

Algoma Public Health

Girl Guides Canada

One Square Meal

Retired Elementary Teachers of Ontario

Sault Rising Stars

Sault Ste. Marie Francophones

Sault Ste. Marie Public Libraries

Sault Ste. Marie Urban Aboriginals

Seniors Health Advisory Board

Seniors Rights Protection Council

The Cambrian Mall

The Canadian Red Cross