



## SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION (ONTARIO)

### INFORMATION BULLETIN

# ELDERS TAKE CHARGE – THE AMBLESIDE MOVEMENT, OTTAWA

May 21, 2024

*As older adults, we can't wait for the Ontario government to get its values and priorities straight and help us to age in place within our communities. It is time to do what this generation has always done, initiate change ourselves.*

*That is exactly what elders in Ambleside in Ottawa are doing, and kudos to them for taking control of their own lives and building their own support system.*

*This model can be replicated in every community in Ontario if a small group of people decide to change their world.*

**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has." (Margaret Mead)**

In Ottawa there is a very special group of people who formed from Ambleside Oasis and the Ambleside Healthcare Working group who call themselves the Ambleside Movement. They came together as part of the Queen's University Project study on Oasis.

In 2011, in collaboration with the Kingston Council on Aging, seniors in Kingston created Oasis as a holistic system of support that included seniors/members, an onsite Oasis Coordinator, community health and social service providers and other stakeholders. It is an "older adult-driven model for aging in place located in naturally occurring retirement communities" (NORCs) (Oasis, 2024).

Today the Oasis Senior Supportive Living Inc. program is successfully addressing issues that affect older adults' abilities to age in place – isolation, nutrition, physical fitness, and a sense of purpose. Its guiding principle is self-determination and it is person-directed, offering programs based upon the identified needs and wishes of Oasis members. Most importantly it is a program that builds community among its members who live in condo or apartment buildings.

### **Oasis Programs Are Expanding**

In 2017, the Kingston Oasis community partnered with the Queen's University research community (Queen's University, n.d.) to describe, evaluate and spread the model to other NORCs. Since that time, the Oasis program has been spread to 18 communities across Ontario, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia. This work has been supported through funding from the Ontario Government, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, local funding, and

an Anonymous Donor. Most recently, the Federal government has begun financially supporting the spread of the Oasis program with \$1.8 million in funding as part of Canada's Age Well at Home Program (Government of Canada, 2023).

The Ambleside Movement arose from an Ottawa expansion of the Queen's University Oasis Project that included individuals from each of the three Ambleside condo buildings in Ottawa. It started with a member arranging to have her physiotherapist talk to the group about avoiding falls. Then, in cooperation with an enthusiastic and supportive Rexall manager and her IT team, COVID shots were brought to each of the three buildings for those who wanted them, rather than elders having to line up for them. More presentations followed on "What Pharmacists Can do".

Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre (PQCHC) also brought presentations and clinics on falls prevention to the community, with future presentations planned on diabetes and other health issues affecting older adults.

Now underway is work on the first in-house Wellness Hub(s) to provide assistance to elders without family physicians, and with medical and/or mobility and access issues. This is being delivered in a joint venture with Ottawa Paramedics Services, PQCHC, a nurse practitioner, system navigator and the Rexall pharmacist who was part of the initial collaboration.

Members of Ambleside are very excited about these developments. These initial connections have led to other conversations with enthusiastic health care professionals willing to talk to the Ambleside community about cancer testing and other topics to provide information and support for people to age in place in good health. The last word goes to the Oasis Ambleside community:

***"Given the correlation between seniors' health, quality of life and social connections, we believe that this increased sense of community, with its genesis in our Oasis program roots, will contribute to positive health outcomes."***

Seniors for Social Action Ontario could not agree more. It is this kind of local elder citizen action to help ourselves that will lead to a kinder, gentler, and more supportive present and future for all of us.

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***Dr. Patricia Spindel is Chair of Seniors for Social Action Ontario.***

## REFERENCES

Government of Canada. (2023). Age Well at Home Program.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2023/12/background-er-age-well-at-home-initiative--in-home-support-pilot-project-stream.html>

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As always SSAO welcomes comment on this editorial and others at

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To learn more about Oasis programs and Queen's research please go to:

Oasis description: <https://www.oasis-aging-in-place.com/>

Queen's Research on Oasis: <https://healthsci.queensu.ca/stories/feature/it-takes-village-helping-older-adults-find-their-oasis>

Queen's Research Team: <https://www.oasis-aging-in-place.com/about-the-research-team>