

COUNCIL REPORT

Meeting Date: March 17, 2025
Department: Community Services
Report No.: CS-2025-20
Submitted by: Paul Lattimore, Supervisor of Recreation and Programs
Reviewed by: Robert Lilbourne, Director of Community Services
Approved by: Rob Browning, Chief Administrative Officer
SUBJECT: **Seniors' Focus Group – March Report**

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT: Report CS-2025-20 titled “Seniors’ Focus Groups – March Report” be received for information.

BACKGROUND:

In December 2024, Council provided the following direction to the Community Services Department:

THAT: Staff be directed to form a focus group of Seniors to understand the “gap” and need in Recreation activities delivered to the Seniors community, and further;

THAT: Staff, using that report as the foundation, present Council with options for delivering the services identified by the focus group, with the report to include possible, if necessary, locations for further Seniors activities, and further;

THAT: The initial report to be delivered sometime in March and final report with recommendations to be delivered sometime in June.

On January 14, 2025, a survey was distributed to over 200 seniors in the Strathroy-Caradoc community through email and municipal recreation programs to engage seniors that were interested in taking part in a Seniors’ Focus Group. The department received 111 responses of interest to participate. Interested participants were given morning, early afternoon, late afternoon, and evening time options to provide their availability. Initial plans were to create four (4) groups including one group of 55 – 64 years, one of 65 – 74 years, a group of 75 years plus and a final group that was a mix of all ages. Staff collected the data/availability and were able to create three (3) groups of all ages combined.

The focus groups were conducted in two-hour sessions and lead by Rob Lilbourne, Director of Community Services, Paul Lattimore, Supervisor of Recreation, Programs and Community Liaison and Nicky Bolton, Recreation Program Coordinator. The sessions included a mix of individual and group activities with engaging discussions a part of each activity. The activities were designed to sequentially work through what the participants knew was available for recreation in the community to their wants and needs and ended with an activity that had them prioritize what our community should have for senior's recreation in Strathroy-Caradoc.

The following activities were part of each focus group:

1. What Do We Have and How Do We Use It?
2. The Battle of Want vs Need
3. This or That – Recreation Edition
4. The Ideal Seniors Recreation Landscape

Bonus Activity – Each session included a “Parking Lot” for hot topics that the group wanted to discuss but were not the dedicated focus of the activities. This included examples like an indoor pool and the Strathroy and Area Seniors’ Centre.

Session #1

Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025
Time: 6:30 – 8:30pm
Location: Town Hall – Committee Room
Participants: 11
Absent: 4

Session #2

Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2025
Time: 10:30am – 12:30pm
Location: Town Hall – Committee Room
Participants: 13
Absent: 5

Session #3

Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2025
Time: 1:30 – 3:30pm
Location: Town Hall – Committee Room
Participants: 12
Absent: 4

COMMENTS:

Although the number of participants were not as high as intended (60 – 80), the 36 that attended were engaged and provided the information expected, with strong feedback and some innovative ideas/suggestions to be explored in the upcoming June report. There was a heavier participation density for Strathroy residents (32) than Caradoc (4) but the cross-section of residents did address

recreation for the community as a whole and not just focused on Strathroy. There was also a larger contingency of female participants (25) to male (11) and no participants that identified as “other”.

The activities were well-received by the data collected in the surveys and that data will help formulate recommendations in the June report. Discussions between each session provided similar themes but also provided unique commentary for each group. Activities and discussions did provide a continuous theme amongst each focus group and that was the need for a designated seniors space. The space does not need to be a standalone singular focused facility, but it had to provide time and space designated for only seniors. Communications and socialization were also recurring themes with emphasis on the Municipality promoting programs and services to seniors that may not engage social media as a primary source of communication; and making sure that there are programs to provide options to seniors that may be and/or feel isolated from the community.

Overall, the focus groups provided the information and feedback that staff required to build a base of recommendations to Council in the June report.

CONSULTATION:

Director of Community Services
Recreation Program Coordinator

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

To be included in the June report if any.

ALTERNATIVE(S) TO THE RECOMMENDATION:

1. Council to provide alternate direction.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This matter is in accord with the following strategic priorities:

Community Well-being and Quality of Life: Residents of all ages in Strathroy-Caradoc will have access to community amenities and activities that are accessible and support active lifestyles and wellbeing.

ATTACHMENTS:

None