
Community Conversations about Social Isolation and Loneliness among Seniors Living in the City of Vancouver

SILAS COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Healthy City Strategy is a long-term integrated plan for healthy people, healthy places, and a healthy planet. The Healthy City Strategy sets out two key goals to build a sense of belonging and connection and specifically sets targets to measure its success. These targets are to increase Vancouver residents' sense of belonging by 10% and that all Vancouverites report that they have at least four people in their network they can rely on for support in a time of need. The Healthy City Action Plan sets out to build on the Engaged City recommendations to create new social connections initiatives, connect existing initiatives and magnify their collective impact in collaboration with partners.

It is estimated that Vancouver's seniors population age 65-74 will increase by 79% and 105% for those over the age of 75 by 2041. With an increasing seniors population social isolation and loneliness have been identified as emerging issues. This is especially important because social isolation and loneliness have been identified as having health impacts similar to those of smoking, alcohol consumption and obesity.

Given that social isolation among seniors is a significant issue, the Seniors' Advisory Committee to Vancouver's City Council has initiated the ***Social Isolation and Loneliness Among Seniors Project (SILAS)*** project. The project will take place between March and May, 2017. Activities include a review of best practices, a community engagement process, and the development of a final report that identifies ideas and potential action steps aimed at supporting coordinated action to address social isolation and loneliness.

The overall goals of the project are to:

- Develop strategies that work to increase social connectedness for isolated seniors;
- Support capacity building by the City of Vancouver as well as organizations and individuals working to address issues of seniors' isolation and loneliness; and,
- Develop ideas and potential action steps that can align with and/or enhance City of Vancouver social strategies including: Age-Friendly Action Plan (2013-15); Healthy City Strategy Phase 2 Action Plan (2015-18); and, Social Infrastructure Plan (in development).

It is expected that each Community Conversation event will utilize a World Café Format to engage participants around a number of key topic areas including:

- What is social isolation? What is loneliness?
- What is currently being done to address these issues? Where are the gaps?
- What action steps are needed in order to identify, reach out to, and support isolated and lonely seniors?
- How do we know if we have been successful in addressing these issues?

For a complete list of Community Conversation events and locations please see the attached invitation or visit: <http://bit.ly/2mEuQ18>

SPARC BC has been contracted by the City to facilitate this engagement process. For more information contact: Jim Sands, Project Coordinator (604-718-8504 / jsands@sparc.bc.ca).

Please feel free to forward additional contact names and information of individuals and/or organizations who you think would be interested in participating. We will make sure to add them to the list of invitees. We will be thrilled to have your expertise and insight at one of these events.