



# Life for our Elder population

**The Road to the Future  
during COVID has some  
unexpected twists and turns**

## **COVID – 19 Presentation**

# What we are facing now:

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- Our world has transformed over the last few months to be almost unrecognizable. We have been forced to take another look at almost everything we thought we were sure about. Physical distancing has changed how we react to others. Also, there is a lot of controversy around how far a cough or sneeze will travel. 6 feet may not be enough.
- For our older population, fear, isolation, loneliness, and financial hardships have increased significantly. They are uncomfortable out in public, so even with protective masks, they feel vulnerable.

## Huge Changes to our planned Retirement<sup>†</sup>



# Fear is number one

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- **Fear** of becoming sick and dying, especially since our doctors and hospitals are focussing on the pandemic and we can't get access except by telephone. **Even IF our access to the doctor is allowed**, we need to stand outside and wait to be called, no matter the weather or if we are in a wheelchair. There are few or no operations, or even cancer treatments until facilities are reopened.
- **Fear** of shopping for needed supplies or that the items will be available, especially during the early months of the global shutdown when there was a shortage of essential items like toilet paper, yeast, potatoes, eggs, frozen vegetables, meat or flour on empty shelves. Fear of going out in public is very real for this population. No real direction from our leaders. Wear a mask, not wear a mask?

## FEAR – What will happen now?



# Isolation — Alone & Lonely

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- **Isolation** has always been a problem for the elder population and now the rest of the people can identify, but for seniors it has intensified during the COVID epidemic.
- All the social aspects of life have now become limited to their own four walls and the telephone. There is none of our usual contacts through senior centres, the library, Civic Centre, and even their own families who stay away to protect us.
- Many of our older citizens do not have computers or the skills to use social media to view family members in real time.



# Loneliness & Depression

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- This has been a very real issue for many older people even before the pandemic. Studies have shown the many seniors, especially single ones, are more vulnerable to sickness and death because of being alone.
- There is no one to notice or care if they are having problems with getting food and medication. They suffer alone and feel like their lives don't matter to anyone. Deep, dark depression can follow. People who have depression find it hard to take care of their health, which can further exacerbate health problems.



# Financial Hardship

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- After planning carefully and saving for the final years, many have found that their remaining hard-earned, saved funds for their old age have decreased by between 30% and 50% on their LIRA, TFSA, RRSP or RIFFs. With the economy tanking, they are insecure about their benefits remaining at already barely subsistence current levels.
- For some people, poverty is constantly on their minds because the cost of everything is skyrocketing, but their funds are shrinking or staying the same. It cost more to pay for medication, food, transportation, housing, utilities and taxes.
- Seniors are more likely to use food banks now than at any time in the past and find this embarrassing, hitting their pride of being independent and self-sufficient.



# Did we ever think we might lose everything?

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# How Can We Help elders stay in their own homes?

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Many older people are **terrified** that they may lose their homes and end up in Old Age Homes. More than in any other country, the coronavirus turned Canada's long-term care facilities into death traps. As of the end of June, LTC residents accounted for 81 per cent of Canada's fatalities — more than twice as high as the United States and triple the rate in England.

The City of Merritt could assist our older people with their limited financial options, through reduced taxes for those who are staying in their own homes in our lovely little city. We are aware that there have been efforts to create low-cost housing if all else fails, but these are not just for seniors. They include single parents, welfare recipients and others who may not respect the need for a quiet, safe environment for our elders.

**Homeowner taxes:** The City of Merritt could increase the discount for elders who are already in difficulty making ends meet. This is one suggestion but there must be other solutions as well.

**City Utilities:** Older people use significantly less water, sewer and garbage collection than families. If possible, could there be a reduction in these costs for this segment of our population?



# Together We Can Make a Difference!



What have we, as concerned citizens of Merritt, done for our community during these trying times?

Have we made an effort to notify people where to get tested? Have we reassured the folks that protocols are being encouraged in the community to enhance their safety?

What more can we do to help our elders be more informed, especially those who do not use FB or other computer programs?

I know we can do better.

**Let's get started!**