

Council's currency is information

By Rich Gossen
Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council

"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress."

While the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council does not claim the lofty status of Kofi Annan when he accepted the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize and made those remarks, it does take its responsibilities as the communications hub for the senior serving sector seriously.

That's why, for example, the ESCC arranged a meeting of executive directors and board members with city grant staff Wendy Kinsman and Mary Gallivan in late September to increase awareness of Edmonton's Senior Centre Operating Grant.

It's why the ESCC has been working since mid-October with the Mill Woods Aging in Place Project to learn more about how immigrant seniors get and respond to information about programs and services. This project will include meeting with "community navigators" -- the "go to" people who are already being asked to fill out forms for seniors and answer their questions -- in order to finalize the wording of a community survey and plan for its dissemination.

The ESCC will extend the application of this learning when it moves forward with plans to find out how and where seniors throughout the city access information. This endeavour will be undertaken to address one of the goals in the council's *Vision for an Age-Friendly Edmonton Action Plan*, released in the spring of 2011. The goal states: "Seniors and those who support them easily access the information they need when it's required."

Three reports have already been produced following efforts to address other goals, and the actions required to achieve them, identified in the *Action Plan*. These are:

- *Seniors Assisted Transportation Project: A Coordinated Shared Services Model*
- *Core Community Support Project: Elements for Community Supports for Aging in Place in Edmonton*
- *Helping Seniors Age in Place: A Strategic Framework to Improve Outreach to Edmonton's Isolated and/or At-Risk Seniors*

All of these reports have been posted on the ESCC's website, www.seniorscouncil.net.

The ESCC's efforts to respond to requests from its member organizations and enhance their capacity to address sector issues also resulted in a meeting of executive directors and board members in early November with Michael Phair, a former member of city council who remains active in community revitalization issues. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how the sector can effectively craft key messages and bring them to the attention of appropriate individuals and groups in positions of power to address issues of concern.

On a provincial scale, the ESCC has played a big part in convincing its 2012 Alberta Senior Services Conference co-host, Alberta Seniors, to make age-friendly initiatives the conference theme. And ESCC and city staff continue to meet periodically with their counterparts in Calgary to share information and discuss the most effective means of addressing sector issues.

One of the keys to effective communication is simply to keep at it, on as many fronts as possible. The ESCC is committed to doing just that and welcomes your input.