



From Local Vision to National Action on Ageing

**2026 Community-Based Seniors' Services
(CBSS) Sector Summit**

June 7–9, 2026 | Winnipeg, MB,
and online

CBSS, Unscripted!

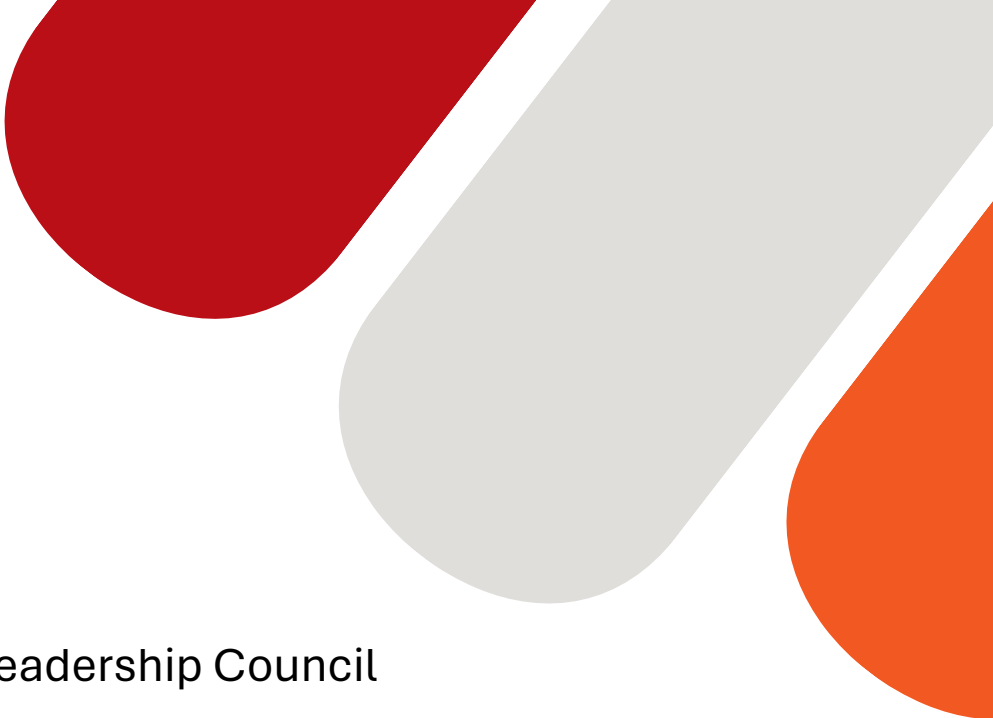


The Power of Community
From Local Vision to National Action on Ageing
2026 Pan-Canadian CBSS Sector Summit



HelpAge

Canada



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Introduction

From June 7–9, 2026, community leaders, practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and advocates from across the country came together in Winnipeg and virtually for the **2026 Community-Based Seniors' Services (CBSS) Sector Summit**. Hosted by HelpAge Canada in partnership with the National CBSS Community Leadership Council, the Summit united people and organizations committed to strengthening community-based supports for older adults.

Under the theme **The Power of Community: From Local Vision to National Action on Ageing**, participants explored how local innovation, grassroots leadership, and a shared pan-Canadian voice for the sector can shape a stronger future for ageing in community.

This year's Summit built on the momentum of the 2024 CBSS Sector Summit and was a vital touchpoint to share and activate insights from the 20 community consultations held across Canada over the past two years, weaving local perspectives and older adults' voices into the development of the growing national CBSS sector.

Hosted every two years, the CBSS Sector Summit has become a cornerstone event for organizations working at the heart of healthy ageing in Canada. It provides a unique opportunity for community leaders to look beyond their local contexts and come together as part of a growing national movement. By gathering with hundreds of peers from across the country, participants share promising practices, explore innovative solutions, and help shape a collective vision for a strong, unified, and recognized pan-Canadian CBSS sector.

This year's Summit reinforced a powerful message: while CBSS organizations across Canada serve a diverse range of older adults and communities, the opportunities and challenges confronting the CBSS sector are deeply shared. Lasting progress happens when organizations come together — not only as local leaders, but as part of a coordinated national effort to create a better future for ageing in Canada.

Special Thanks from the National Community Leadership Council

The National Community Leadership Council is a volunteer-led group of leaders from across Canada's community-based seniors' services (CBSS) sector who generously contribute their time, expertise, and lived experience to help strengthen supports for older adults and the organizations that serve them. Originally established as an Interim Community Leadership Council in 2024, the Council was created to ensure the development of a pan-Canadian CBSS sector remained grounded in community voices and experiences. This year, in conjunction with the 2026 CBSS Sector Summit, members confirmed the Council's mandate and formally transitioned to a permanent National Community Leadership Council structure. The Council will continue to play a critical role in advancing a stronger, more connected CBSS sector while championing the priorities of older adults and communities across Canada.

The Council extends its sincere gratitude to all those who participated in regional consultations, conversations, and engagement activities over the past year, helping to shape the vision and priorities for this work. We also wish to recognize the members of the Interim Community Leadership Council for their contributions during this foundational phase, and the Summit Planning Committee for their leadership in shaping our most recent pan-Canadian sector gathering. Finally, we thank the HelpAge Canada team for their ongoing dedication and support in advancing this work. Together, we have made significant progress in laying the foundation for a more collaborative, resilient CBSS sector across Canada.

Sincerely,

Marta Hajek and Karen McDonald
Co-Chairs, National Community Leadership Council



A Word from Kahir Lalji

Chief Executive Officer, HelpAge Canada

In the months since our time together in Winnipeg, I've had the privilege to reflect on everything we learned and shared at the 2026 CBSS Sector Summit, and to look ahead at what we will accomplish together next.

Our theme, From Local Vision to National Action on Ageing, captured something fundamental about the work we do: **lasting, far-reaching change begins in the places we call home.** It happens in the cafeteria of a neighbourhood seniors' centre, where people gather for a game of cards and good banter. In a local garage, where a small group of older men find connection shoulder to shoulder. At an older person's doorstep, where a volunteer arrives with a meal and, just as importantly, a friendly conversation. These moments may seem small, but together they build something much bigger: a Canada where every older adult can be seen, supported, and valued in their communities.

The Summit gave us an opportunity to celebrate the work already underway in communities across the country, learn from one another, forge new connections, and consider how we can carry local perspectives forward as part of a growing national sector. The ideas and conversations captured in this report reflect both the diversity of our sector and the strength of what becomes possible when we come together with a shared purpose.

As you read this report, I hope you see your own experiences reflected in these pages and find new inspiration for what comes next. Our collective progress is built on the knowledge, leadership, and determination of communities across Canada. Together, we are turning local vision into national action and shaping a stronger future of ageing in Canada.

Thank you for being part of this important conversation, and for the work you continue to do every day to make this future possible.

Sincerely,

Kahir Lalji
CEO, HelpAge Canada



What is the CBSS Sector?

The community-based seniors' services (CBSS) sector is a robust network of **over 8,000 organizations across Canada** who provide older adults with the services, programs, and support they need to age in the places they call home.

From seniors' centres to libraries to Meals on Wheels and everything in between, CBSS organizations are at the heart of healthy ageing across the country.



A Sector Built by Communities, For Communities

Building on the momentum of the 2024 CBSS Sector Summit, HelpAge Canada and the interim National Community Leadership Council led a series of provincial and territorial consultations to explore how to strengthen the sector both regionally and through a cohesive pan-Canadian approach.

Grounded in a shared “by community, for community” mandate, the consultations brought forward common priorities and important regional differences. Together, these insights provide a foundation for how the sector can grow, evolve, and better respond to the realities of communities across Canada.

What emerged from these consultations and from the insights brought forward by the interim National Community Leadership Council was **a draft five-year strategic plan** that was national in scope but grounded in local realities. Built around three interconnected priorities — advancing sector issues, deepening sector understanding, and strengthening collaboration – the plan provides a shared roadmap for building the evidence, social license, and capacity needed to strengthen the CBSS sector across Canada.

The 2026 CBSS Sector Summit offered an opportunity to validate the National Community Leadership Council’s draft 5-year Strategic Plan, with sector leaders while testing the plan’s directions and identifying opportunities for improvement. **The result is a living framework**: one that calls us to move together with purpose while making space for relationships, reconciliation, learning, and adaptation along the way.



Highlights from the 2026 CBSS Sector Summit





204 delegates in Winnipeg

**12 provinces and
territories represented**



87 online participants

Session Highlights

- **Inspiring keynote presentations** from Bruce MacDonald, President and CEO of Imagine Canada, and Dr. Samir Sinha, Geriatrician and Clinician Scientist at Sinai Health System and the University Health Network, Professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto, and Director of Health Policy Research at the National Institute on Ageing
- **A national sector-building update** led by National Community Leadership Council co-chairs Marta Hajek and Karen McDonald, celebrating progress made since the 2024 Summit and outlining future priorities.
- **Provincial storytelling panels** featuring leaders from British Columbia and Alberta, who shared lessons learned, successful strategies, and rich insights from their provincial sector-building journeys.



Session Highlights

- **Expert-led workshops** exploring topics such as evaluation and impact measurement, intergenerational volunteerism, appreciative ageing, and advocacy skills to help organizations strengthen their impact.
- **A fireside conversation with sector leaders from across Canada**, examining emerging opportunities, shared challenges, and the future of community-based seniors' services.
- **A World Café session** where delegates validated the national CBSS sector-building strategic plan and contributed their perspectives to help shape the sector's priorities and actions over the next five years.



What We Heard

Insights from the World Café

The World Café is a pivotal part of every bi-annual CBSS Sector Summit — a space where delegates from coast to coast come together to reflect on two years of progress, share what they're seeing and learning in their communities, and discuss and affirm priorities for the next two years as a national sector. Gathered around large, circular tables, participants bring diverse local perspectives into conversation, helping to build a fuller picture of where the sector is today, what's changing, and what matters most for the future.

At the 2026 CBSS Sector Summit, these shared voices helped turn conversation into action.

Delegates affirmed the National Community Leadership Council's five-year strategic plan for the CBSS sector and provided input around how the plan reflected the priorities, concerns and aspiration of the CBSS sector across Canada.



Three Actions to Build On

Delegates at the 2026 World Café identified three actions to drive the sector's continued growth over the next five years, strengthening the movement nationally and helping CBSS organizations to meaningfully engage with the development of the sector.



Build a Strong, Connected National Movement

Strengthen partnerships, collaboration, and representation across Canada.

Build a more connected and representative national movement by strengthening relationships across the sector and creating meaningful mechanisms to elevate local, provincial, territorial, Indigenous, and community voices.



Invest in the Necessary Conditions for Success

Strengthen the capacity, infrastructure, and tools that enable the sector to thrive.

Create the conditions for sustainable growth through stable funding, stronger organizational capacity, shared language and approaches, common data and evaluation tools, and coordinated infrastructure that supports collective action.



Build Trust Through Accountability and Engagement

Communicate, report back, and show how community voices are driving action.

Strengthen accountability through continuous communication and meaningful engagement. Report back regularly, share progress transparently, create clear feedback loops, and ensure communities can see their voices and priorities reflected in decisions and action.

Three Interconnected Priorities

01

Advancing Key Sector Issues

Address and advance key issues as sustainable funding gaps, workforce shortage, uneven recognition in health and social systems, coordination challenges, widening resource disparities, and more.

02

Increasing Understanding

Raise awareness of the role CBSS organizations play in healthy ageing and ageing in place with key stakeholders, including governments, allied sectors, and older Canadians.

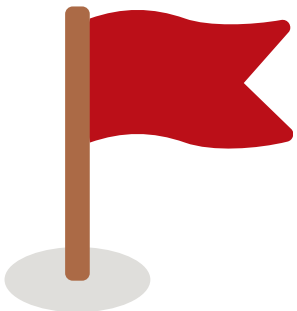
03

Strengthening Collaboration

Strengthen collaboration between CBSS organizations in Canada by mapping organizations regionally and nationally, promoting opportunities for shared endeavours, and facilitating knowledge sharing and mobilization.

The Goal

Greater recognition of the CBSS sector as essential social infrastructure that supports the wellbeing, participation, and inclusion of older adults across Canada.



A Foundation for the Next Phase

Together, these actions and priorities provide a clear foundation for the next phase of CBSS sector growth: strengthen the movement's identity and reach, invest in the sector's capacity, and build trust through clear action and accountability.

The transition from an interim to a permanent National Leadership Council, endorsed at the 2026 CBSS Summit, creates the backbone infrastructure needed to steward this work over the long term. By providing ongoing leadership, coordination, and sector-wide accountability, the Council will help sustain momentum and champion these priorities into the future.

What's Next? The NCLC Five-Year Strategic Plan

The 2026 CBSS Sector Summit marked an important transition from strategy development to validation and implementation for the national CBSS sector. **Building on the momentum and insights generated through the Summit**, as well as previous NCLC planning sessions, the NCLC Five-Year Strategic Plan provides a shared roadmap for collective action and builds greater recognition of the CBSS sector as essential social infrastructure that supports the wellbeing, participation, and inclusion of older Canadians.

Next steps for the NCLC will include the refinement of the strategic plan and putting it into action through phased implementation activities, shared learning opportunities, and the development of mechanisms for accountability, clear communication, and ongoing collaboration with the broader CBSS sector.



Thank You to our Partners

HelpAge Canada would like to extend its sincerest thanks to the sponsors, partners, sector allies, staff, and volunteers who helped make this event possible.

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Sue Hesjedahl
Vi Sorenson

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Helping older persons live with dignity in
Canada and around the world since 1975.



About Us

Change starts where you live. That's why HelpAge Canada is **Canada's only national charity** dedicated to supporting and strengthening local-led action for older adults in Canada and in developing countries around the world – so that no matter where you call home, everyone can age with dignity, purpose, and belonging in the heart of their communities.

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