

Suite 500
150 Laurier Avenue W.
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5J4

T. 613-230-3060
E. chba@chba.ca
W. www.chba.ca



August 26, 2016

Ms. Adèle Acheson
Executive Advisor, Vice-President's Office
Emerging Technologies - Platforms
National Research Council Canada
1200 Montreal Road
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0R6

Dear Ms. Acheson:

RE: NRC Aging in Place Consultation

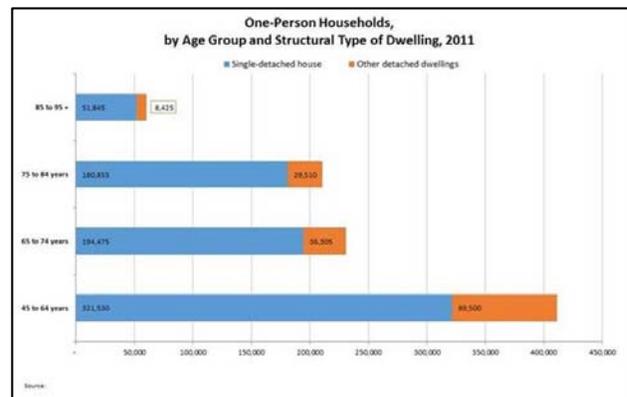
Please accept this supplemental submission to the NRC consultation on identifying technologies that could make it easier for seniors to remain living at home for as long as possible. The Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) applauds NRC for taking on this important initiative, especially as Canada addresses the needs of its aging population.

CHBA has provided its comments via the online survey, but we also wanted to provide some initial thoughts on the policy development that must accompany any research objectives that result from the survey.

First, the range of needs for Canadians to age in place, and in effect, the market for new products and technology-based services must be established based on research, and while the survey does begin this discussion, the resulting compilation of barriers from the survey will be self-limiting based on the availability of corresponding technologies and/or innovations to address said barriers. A substantive list of barriers should be obtained from data on the subjects themselves.

A significant database on seniors and their housing situations already exists, and we encourage NRC to draw from it. The breakdown of one-person households, for instance, shows that we must not neglect the needs of seniors in multiple-unit homes, as the proportion of seniors living in such accommodations continues to grow.

NRC should also reach out to other organizations that have done work in this area, like the Co-Operative Housing Federation of Canada, and your colleagues in the ESDC Office for Disability Issues.



We should also recognize and track the Statistics Canada data the differences in numbers and proportions of seniors by region across the country. There is a widening divergence of population growth rates in Eastern and Western Canada, which will mean differing local infrastructure and service requirements – at both household and community levels - for the aging population in different regions.

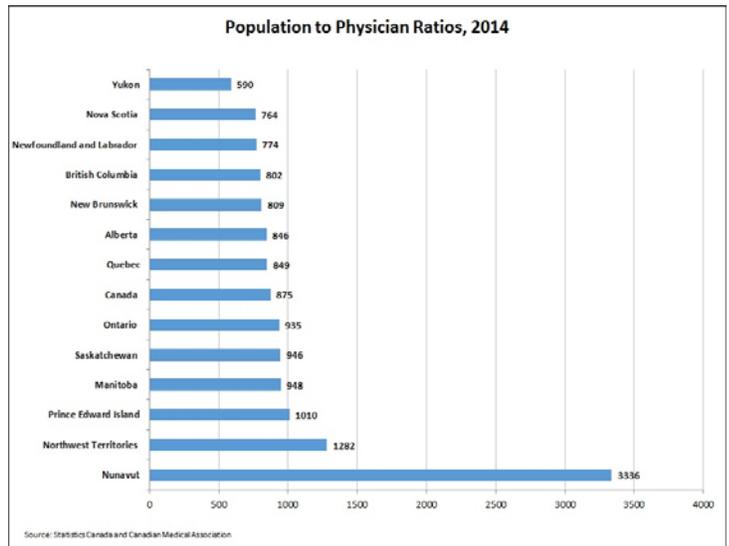
Second, NRC’s research should be coordinated to complement other government initiatives in the area of seniors housing – in particular, the government’s commitments to improve the income security of lower income seniors living alone, ensuring adequate and coordinated support programs to address seniors’ poverty, and encouraging the construction of new affordable rental and seniors’ housing. These initiatives are also likely to be part of the government’s National Housing Strategy, already in development.

Third, there are likely to be limits as to what technology can do to improve socialization for seniors or to reduce the potential for “stranded” seniors – and some technology, like the automation of grocery ordering (“the internet of things”) may actually contribute to the further isolation of seniors.

A CHBA presentation to the National Housing Research Committee has identified “stranded” seniors as an emerging issue that needs to be addressed, i.e., those who may be stuck in their homes without adequate services or day-to-day contacts with others.

Fourth, pressures on health care systems in areas with aging populations could potentially lead to medically-driven out-migration. Do communities have the capacity to deal with an influx of seniors?

Fifth, the federal government is now offering a tax credit to improve home safety and accessibility. The Finance Department estimates this will contribute some \$40 million annually toward the purchase and installation of supportive technologies in homes of seniors and those with disabilities. See: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdlst/tpcs/ncm-tx/rtrn/cmpltng/ddctns/lns360-390/398/398-eng.html>.



As the need for such renovation inevitably increases, seniors could well become a bigger target for fraud and exploitation. Therefore, any initiative that promotes renovations to aid in senior’s mobility should also include a component to protect them from unscrupulous “cash-only” operators offering home renovation and conversion services.

Sixth, although likely beyond the scope for this work, we should not dismiss innovations such as self-supplied detached accessory suites as a means to increase seniors’ options for independent housing. CHBA has identified taxation and regulatory barriers that prevent wide-spread adoption of this housing type, but the structural/design elements of this type of dwelling could also be addressed. In a similar vein, the development of basement apartments and conversion of large single-family homes to multiple residents could help seniors stay in their homes longer and decrease their isolation.

Again, thank you for taking on this important initiative. We look forward to participating in the next steps.

Sincerely,

Jason Burggraaf
Government Relations and Policy Advisor
Canadian Home Builders' Association