



SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION (ONTARIO)

Editorial

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES FOR OLDER ADULTS - IT'S TIME!

March 9, 2026

“An intentional community is a group of people who have chosen to live together or share resources on the basis of common values.”

(Foundation for Intentional Community)

There is a movement happening around the world based on the belief that [“human society has the potential to support the wellbeing of all people and the ecosystems of which we are a part, recognizing that the wellbeing of one depends on the wellbeing of all.”](#)

All over the world people of all ages are coming together to push back against “mutually reinforcing systems, operating on a global scale, that perpetuate harm and foster violence” causing social isolation, division, disconnection, trauma, inequality, injustice, oppression and exploitation.

Rejecting the Current System of Mass Institutionalization and Exploitation of Elders for Profit

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the mass institutionalization of older adults in Ontario and the bulldozing of the environment to create the institutions in which to incarcerate them, while enriching developers and the nursing home industry.

We have seen an MZO used by the provincial government to try to bully Port Hope Council to allow the destruction of their historic district to build a bigger Southbridge institution and the local [Council and citizen pushback in Port Hope](#) that caused them to have to retreat.

We have seen the Freedom of Information Commission support Seniors for Social Action Ontario’s right to access information about Ontario government approvals for Southbridge builds in Ontario by issuing an order to produce the requested information – only to have the Ministry of Long-Term Care continue to defy the Commission and withhold it.

This generation of older adults and their families are starting to push back and refuse to be exploited and have their communities ruined for profit by [long-term care companies with poor track records.](#)

[A New Story](#) – **Building Community Together**

Dr. John Lord, a cofounder and leader of Seniors for Social Action Ontario first talked about a new paradigm of community engagement, and the empowerment of individuals and families through access to individualized funding and independent facilitation to build their own supports and services decades ago.

SSAO is now advocating for a more streamlined and less bureaucratic approach to direct, individualized funding in Ontario.

Individuals having access to their own funding to direct and acquire the support they need as they age in place can set the stage for the pooling of resources and the creation of intentional communities for older adults rather than life in a long-term care institution. If government won't fund them, older adults will have to create them ourselves as many living in naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs) have already done.

Enter as well the Foundation for Intentional Community that partners with hundreds of existing and developing intentional communities around the world - places for sharing lives, resources, land, and purpose instead of living in isolation, disconnected. These are communities that create social, ecological, and economic benefits for those who live in them and for the world in which all of us live.

The Foundation's motto is "people need community and communities need people". Its mission is to "champion social, ecological, and economic justice and resiliency through the support and growth of cooperative culture and intentional communities" while advancing a vision of a more "just, resilient and cooperative world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive."

It Is Time to Come Together: Some Examples of Intentional Communities

As governments and the service system continue to fail older adults at all levels, it is time to end our reliance on them and take matters into our own hands.

It is time to intentionally build communities that are inclusive, not segregating where older adults are treated respectfully instead of like commodities, exploited for profit, and where we take care of each other and pool our resources for care.

All around the world, people are building intentional communities – ecovillages, cohousing, cooperatives, and other communal living environments. In Canada, there are active intentional communities that can serve as models.

Now, at a time when the Federal government is playing a more direct role in helping to fund new, innovative housing initiatives, is the time to move forward.

Bee Living Ecovillages, Silver Valley B.C.

A small group of motivated individuals in the Silver Valley area of Maple Ridge, British Columbia have been successful in obtaining Federal funding and partnering with an affordable housing developer to build an eco-village on land owned by one of their members.

Fiddlehead Commons Cohousing, Almonte Ontario

Small town Ontario is getting organized as well. In Almonte, Ontario a group has organized to create “a fun, livable 15-25-unit cohousing village... for individuals and families who value inclusivity and community. This cohousing community will be simple, attractive, and energy-efficient and will include green space and gardens.”

Great Rivers Cohousing, Ottawa

Another group in Ottawa is organizing housing based on common values of collaboration, kindness, inclusion, and environmental sustainability consisting of “low-rise apartments (up to four floors), townhouses, and a comfortable common space for sharing meals, meeting together, and pursuing mutual interests. This is a multi-generational community with space for 14 to 24 households, and an expected completion date in 2027.”

Kawartha Commons, Peterborough

In Peterborough another group has formed to build a small, welcoming, cohousing community of 40 households. They have a property, are carrying out the surveys and studies required by the city and are working on site design for a low-rise apartment building with various unit sizes and common areas surrounded by green space.

Watershed, Guelph

Seniors for Social Action Ontario’s own [David McAuley](#), a semi-retired architect, was a founding member and architect of Guelph’s first co-housing community where he works and is also a resident. David has been instrumental in creating many beautiful public buildings and projects across Ontario and is an enthusiastic proponent of eco-friendly co-housing.

David did a [Zoom session](#) for SSAO members not long ago about co-housing.

Seniors are Doing it for Themselves

Older adults and their allies are on the march. We are no longer waiting for governments and service providers to do the right thing.

Older adults and their friends are starting to have conversations about establishing their own intentional communities to support their aging in place. It can be as straightforward as talking to each other about pooling resources for a larger home where 2-3 couples or individuals can choose to live together and possibly pool direct funding for care in the future.

If government won't fund the acquisition, renovation, or building of small homes, there is nothing stopping us from acquiring our own, with people of our choice, who share our goals and values.

Dr. Patricia Spindel is the Chair of Seniors for Social Action Ontario.

Comments on this and other SSAO editorials and articles may be sent to seniorsactionontario@gmail.com