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# Seniors' housing needs 'urgent'



**BILL FISCH:** Regional chairperson says York is bracing for senior population boom.

"In less than 20 years, more than 1.3 million residents will call York Region home. At the same time, our average age continues to increase. By 2026, the number of seniors in our region will accelerate by 300 per cent."

-Bill Fisch, chairperson of York Region

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home, an economic necessity for the couple, who plan to move into a new home soon.

"Yes, I was reluctant. I thought it was my job to (provide care)," Ms Giusti said. "I went through some real soul searching when I considered outside help. But eventually you realize you have to do this if you're going to survive."

Ms Giusti has been encouraged by the rapport Nick has established with the personal support workers who spend each weekday with him. "They care for each other. There seems to be genuine concern," she said.

Josephine De Simone, who is in Mr. Giusti's home three days a week, acknowledges the comfort level that has built up between caregiver and client.

"When I go and give care to an elderly person, it's like how I'd like to be treated," Ms De Simone said.

"If I leave a client and they're happy about that hour I spent with them, that makes me feel good."

Allowing seniors to live independently by providing them with periodic care has created a happy medium, in the form of assisted living residences. Seniors live in their own private condo-style residences, but have on-site health professionals and visiting caregivers.

While many private residences exist, government is becoming increasingly involved in the provision of such housing.

York Region recently announced a three-way partnership, with the federal and provincial governments providing funding that will help create 58 new apartments for seniors and adults with disabilities in Newmarket.

Regional chairperson Bill Fisch hailed the co-operative effort that helped make the

much-needed housing a reality.

"York Region, together with the Town of Newmarket and the federal and provincial governments, has joined hands to create new supportive housing for seniors," the chairperson said.

"The need is urgent and the numbers are telling."

Indeed, York is bracing for a boom in its senior population within the foreseeable future. The region's planning department predicts that by 2026, the senior population will increase to 263,000 residents, or 21 per cent of the population. Seniors currently make up 9 per cent of the region's population.

"In less than 20 years, more than 1.3 million residents will call York Region home," Mr. Fisch said.

"At the same time, our average age continues to increase. By 2026, the number of seniors in our region will accelerate by 300 per cent."

The numbers have prompted Newmarket Mayor Tom Taylor to call for more assistance from Queen's Park and Ottawa.

In the past, Mr. Taylor has admitted frustration over the tepid response from senior levels of government.

"It is essential that long-term, dependable funding be provided by the federal and provincial governments," said Mr. Taylor, chairperson of the region's social services and housing committee.

He has an ally in Ms Egan, who says governments are being short-sighted by all but ignoring the coming seniors' population boom.

"They think there's no problem; there's no need," Ms Egan said.

"But I don't think the need is gone, even if the politicians think the need is gone."

Jeff Mitchell may be reached at jrmitchell@erabanner.com

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