

Seniors Action Quebec: Focus Group Findings 2015-2016

1 INTRODUCTION

The 2015-2016 Seniors Action Quebec (SAQ) project entitled *“Building Community Capacity: From Evidence to Action”* used the strategy of focus groups for its consultation with English-speaking seniors in four regions of the province (Gaspésie, Greater Quebec City, Outaouais and the Lower North Shore). The focus groups were designed with the intention of gathering seniors together in their regions to,

- identify and establish priorities among critical needs and issues affecting their quality of life,
- contribute to the development of action plans designed to mobilize communities and organizations working on behalf of seniors, both locally and provincially, to address these priorities and
- increase the awareness of English-speaking seniors of organizations presently working to serve their diverse needs.

2 DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Background

The SAQ 2015-2016 focus groups followed upon the 2012-2015 project Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) entitled *“Building Research Capacity related to Quebec’s English-speaking Seniors”* and funded by SIRA provincial Ministère de la Famille et Aînés¹. As a feature of the QCGN project, “lunch & learn” sessions

QCGN/SAQ "Lunch and Learn" Sessions, 2014-2015		
Date	Host	Region
06-Oct-14	Quebec Community Groups Network / Seniors Action Quebec	Greater Montreal
20-Feb-15	Voice of English Quebec	Capitale-Nationale
08-Apr-15	4Korners	Laurentides
03-Jun-15	Vision Gaspé-Percé Now	Gaspésie

held in four regions of Quebec where project findings were disseminated and consultation was held with the seniors of the region, the hosting English-language community organization and SAQ. The SAQ focus groups build and expand upon the objectives of the QCGN lunch & learn sessions by continuing to inform and mobilize English-speaking seniors and their communities with respect to priorities they themselves establish for improving their quality of life.

The accompanying table presents the regions and host organizations of the QCGN lunch & learn sessions of 2014-2015.

¹ For further details and findings of the QCGN-SIRA 2012-2015 seniors project go to <http://www.qcgn-seniors.org/research.html>

Focus Group Implementation

The project included 17 groups starting in Sept. Iles October 7, 2015 and finishing with Low on March 2016. There were 269 English-speaking seniors who participated when all 17 groups are combined. The number of focus groups and number of participants exceeded expectations. The accompanying table presents date, location, region, host organization and number of seniors who attended each group. The recruitment process entailed a public announcement by the host organization and typically session was integrated into event or activity already

SAQ Focus Groups, 2015-2016				
date	location	region	host	attendance
07-Oct-15	Sept-Iles	Cote-Nord	NSCA	24
13-Oct-15	Aylmer	Outaouais	Connexions	10
15-Oct-15	Buckingham	Outaouais	Connexions	8
19-Oct-15	Quebec City	Capitale-nationale	JHCP	6
19-Oct-15	Quebec City	Capitale-nationale	JHCP	9
20-Oct-15	Valcartier	Capitale-nationale	JHCP	15
18-Nov-15	Chelsea	Outaouais	Connexions	34
24-Nov-15	Port Daniel	Gaspé	CASA	10
25-Nov-15	Matapedia	Gaspé	CASA	14
27-Nov-15	Cascapedia	Gaspé	CASA	11
02-Dec-15	Barachois	Gaspé	VGPN	15
07-Jan-16	Aylmer	Outaouais	RAWQ	27
12-Jan-16	Chandler	Gaspé	CASA	14
15-Jan-16	New Carlisle	Gaspé	CASA	12
10-Feb-16	Escuminac	Gaspé	CASA	8
15-Feb-16	Shawville	Outaouais	Connexions	29
08-Mar-16	Low	Outaouais	Connexions	23
(Total participants = 269)				

designed for seniors of the area through a seniors' wellness center, seniors' day center, regional associations, church or social club. Project regional partners assumed responsibility for arranging time, place, refreshments and technical assistance.

The Session

The duration of the focus group session generally ranged from 1 to 1.5 hours. Consent forms, demographic sheets and evaluation forms were completed by participants (see appendices). Sessions typically included SAQ researcher as lead moderator with assistance moderating and note-taking by a representative of the regional host organization. All sessions were recorded. The session started with a presentation of key socio-demographic findings drawn from the community profiles produced for the participating communities of the project as well as some findings from the 2013 QCGN/SIRA Survey of English-speaking Seniors. This was followed by group discussion and finally a selection of 3-4 priorities by participating seniors for their region.

SAQ Focus Groups, by Host Organization		
host	sessions	participants
CASA	6	69
Connexions	5	104
JHCP	3	30
NSCA	1	24
RAWQ	1	27
VGPN	1	15
SAQ Focus Groups, by Region		
region	sessions	participants
Capitale-nationale	3	30
Cote-Nord	1	24
Gaspé	7	84
Outaouais	6	131
Total	17	269

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3 DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic profile of English-speaking seniors who participated in the SAQ focus groups is presented in the accompanying table. The distribution of participants in terms of age was fairly balanced - the fewer individuals under 60 years of age expected as many focus groups were held during the day to accommodate the older senior group. Female participants greatly outweighed males and the language of preference was predominantly English. Interestingly, a small number of seniors whose preferred language is French were in attendance as well as a few seniors whose preferred language is neither English nor French.

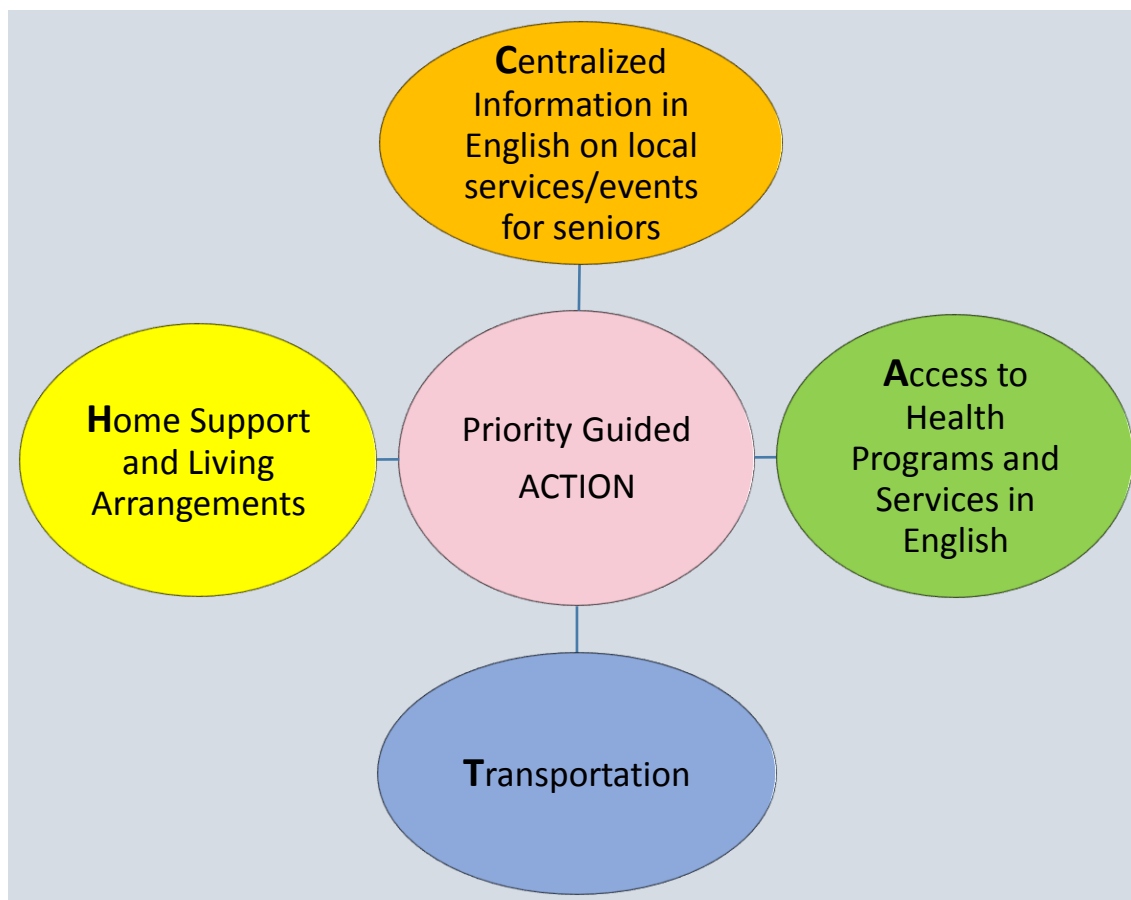
Demographics of SAQ Focus Group Participants	
by Age Group	
under 50	3
51-60	10
61-70	61
71-80	87
81 and over	60
Grand Total	221
by Gender	
Female	176
Male	44
Grand Total	220
by Preferred Language	
English	195
English/French	13
French	10
Other (specify)	3
Grand Total	221
<i>Note: Not all respondents completed the demographic forms.</i>	

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4 TOP PRIORITIES FROM PROJECT CONSULTATION

A project session was held on February 12, 2016 to establish the top priorities that emerged from the 17 focus groups held in the four project regions. The four priority areas below were validated by SAQ, provincial partner CHSSN and regional partners NSCA, Vision, Jeffery Hale, CASA, Connexions and RAWQ.

C.H.A.T. – The top four priorities established by participants of SAQ’s (2015-2016) *Building Community Capacity* focus groups to guide future action targeting Quebec’s English-speaking seniors.



CENTRALIZED INFORMATION IN ENGLISH ON LOCAL SERVICES AND EVENTS FOR SENIORS: Someone to call and talk to in English; Information on services that range from the offerings of public institutions and community organizations (health clinics, schools/CLCs, networks and advocacy groups, libraries) to the private services of professionals for home maintenance (snow clearing, home adaptation, general maintenance); increase awareness of local social participation opportunities.

HOME SUPPORT AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS: A trusted contact to turn to for help; a seniors’ network that organizes a “check-in” on seniors in their region; access to support services/programs in English that facilitate independent living; monitoring as protection against elder abuse; more affordable living arrangements for English-speaking seniors; more alternatives to living alone and maintaining single dwelling.

ACCESS TO HEALTH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN ENGLISH: Sessions provided by English-speaking community organizations (health information offered through group session, support groups organized around health issues, fitness and health prevention activities designed for seniors, day centers in English); improved information in English to facilitate navigation of public health and social service system; improved communication in English from public institutions concerned with health and dignity of those in advanced stages of life (service reception, hospitals, assisted-living/long-term care).

TRANSPORTATION: Transport with scheduling, costs and safety adapted to senior's lifestyle and limitations; increase options to relying on personal car; a volunteer network for "ride sharing" among English-speaking seniors.

5 FROM LESSONS LEARNED TO PLANS FOR ACTION

The four priority areas established by the project will serve as guidelines in the partnering, planning and activities of the participant community organizations as they move forward in their work with, and on behalf of, English-speaking seniors in their regions. Findings from the community profiles as well as lessons from the focus groups produced by the project are important additions to the evidence-base that informs regional and provincial initiatives and advocacy.

One lesson learned was that each region, and indeed each sub-regional community, has its unique demographic characteristics, challenges and strengths, institutional resources and organizational style. For example, some organizations are involved in the direct delivery of service such as a seniors' day center they're managing while other organizations are working through and with partner organizations to support them in adapting services to the needs of English-speaking seniors. Still, despite these differences there are also notable commonalities in their vision for their elders.

It was agreed by all project organizations that the priority guided action they envision going forward would be designed to enhance the social engagement and connection of English-speaking seniors and that as much as possible the action would be responsive to all four priority areas. Practically speaking, it was acknowledged that the plan for action would need to be modified in accordance with the circumstance of each organization in terms of the size and geographical dispersion of their English-speaking senior population, the capacity of seniors' organizations in general in their region (number, state of networks, etc.) and of course, financial resources.

Preliminary statements on plans for action with validation by seniors.

North Shore Community Association (NSCA): We would like to see a "community liaison link to existing services helping seniors to find English resources" and "a volunteer, peer-to-peer support system that would "check-in" on seniors". A form of community outreach with a designated person for seniors.

Jeffery Hale Community Partners (Jeffery Hale): We would like to see "a community organizer. Someone that would be designated for seniors...receive their calls and help them find English resources". Also, the organization will work on "integrating new retirees into volunteering".

Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA): We would like to work towards establishing an "outreach worker or street worker for seniors". Someone in a position responsible for getting information to seniors, assisting them in access to different services" and to "link to other similar initiatives in the area."

Regional Association of West Quebecers (RAWQ): We propose to act as “a clearing house for information. Bring groups together for information exchange and have seniors take an active leadership role...mobilizing and empowering seniors to act on their own behalf”.

Connexions: We would like to work on “strengthening the links of seniors’ organizations (for example, we have 5 seniors’ tables in our region). A type of outreach worker but with a broader focus by building and strengthening a common link among organizations already actually working with the community and with seniors in particular.”

Vision Gaspé Perce Now (VGPN): We will work on “rejuvenating and revamping our social clubs. We want to bring the different communities served by them together and reorganize them to better serve the seniors.”

Seniors Action Quebec(SAQ): “We see ourselves playing an advocacy role in terms of policy development. We need to bring English-speaking seniors to the attention of policy-makers.”

6 PRIORITIES FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS

SAQ Priorities from Focus Groups, 2015-2016				
<i>Location</i>	<i>Top Priorities</i>			
Quebec City, Capitale-nationale	Protect English-language community organizations	Access to health and social services in English when outside of JHSB	Transportation	
Quebec City, Capitale-nationale	Access to health and social services in English	Home support and living arrangements	Transportation	
Valcartier, Capitale-nationale	Access to health and social services in English	Home support and living arrangements	Transportation	
Sept-Iles, Cote-Nord	Access to organized social support and assistance to seniors in English	Access to health and social services in English	Accessible living arrangements	
Barachois, Gaspé	Access to health and social services in English	Home support and living arrangements	Transportation	Advocacy at municipal level
Cascapedia, Gaspé	Information for seniors in English	Access to health and social services in English	Home support and living arrangements	
Chandler, Gaspé	Home support and living arrangements	Information for seniors in English	Access to health and social services in English	
Escuminac, Gaspé	Access to health and social services in English	Home support and living arrangements	Social support and assistance	
Matapedia, Gaspé	Access to health and social services in English (especially out-of-region)	Home support and living arrangements	Elder abuse awareness and assistance	
New Carlisle, Gaspé	Elder Abuse awareness and assistance	Home support and living arrangements	Access to health and social services in English	Transportation
Port Daniel, Gaspé	Access to health and social services in English	Information in English	Elder abuse awareness and assistance	Transportation
Aylmer, Outaouais	Access to health and social services in English	Home support and living arrangements	Access to information in English	Social Participation
Aylmer, Outaouais	Home support and living conditions	Access to Information in English	Strengthen Advocacy	Transportation
Buckingham, Outaouais	Access to health and social services in English	Age-friendly information / communication in English	Social support and connections	Home support and living arrangements
Chelsea, Outaouais	Access to health and social services in English	Information in English	Transportation	Living arrangements for seniors
Low, Outaouais	Access to health and Social services	Transportation	Home support and living arrangements	Social support networks
Shawville, Outaouais	Home support and living arrangements	Information in English	Employability	Transportation

7 APPENDICES

7.1 APPENDIX A. CONSENT FORM

You have been asked to participate in a focus group hosted by Seniors Action Quebec and funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage. The main purpose of the group is to identify the critical issues affecting the English-speaking seniors in your region. The information learned in the focus group will be used to establish action plans to address the issues identified.

Your participation in the focus group is voluntary and you may stop at any time. Although the focus group will be tape recorded, your responses will remain anonymous and no names will be mentioned in the report.

There are no right or wrong answers to the focus group questions. We want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear from everyone. We hope you can be honest even when your responses may not be in agreement with the rest of the group. In respect for each other, we ask that responses made by all participants be kept confidential.

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

7.2 APPENDIX B. SAQ FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Date:

Time:

Place:

Where do you live? _____

How long have you lived in the region? _____

Your age:

- under 50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- 71-80
- 81 and over

Your gender:

- Male
- Female

Preferred language:

- English
- French
- Other (specify) _____

7.3 APPENDIX C. SAQ FOCUS GROUP EVALUATION

1 – Were the time and location convenient for you? (please circle one)

Yes No

2- Did you feel comfortable participating in this session? (please circle one)

Yes No

Comments _____

3- Did you learn anything from today’s session about seniors and seniors organizations in your area? If yes, what?

Yes No

