# **For Seniors, By Seniors: Community Conversations**Diagram Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Summary of discussion at ‘Community Conversation: Home’ on September 21, 2022

Watch the recording here: <https://youtu.be/YeFZPib61Dw>

Stay up to date with the series here: <https://parachute.ca/en/program/for-seniors-by-seniors-community-conversations/>

The first Community Conversation session was on Sept. 21 from 12-1:30 pm (Eastern) and 55 seniors from across Canada joined the conversation. An additional 40+ seniors registered for the event and were sent the recording and an information package after the session. From information collected at registration, we know that:

* Most registrants reported being female (73% female; 23% male; 4% did not say)
* Almost half of registrants were between 71 and 80 years old (25% 71-75; 22% 76-80)
* Most registrants planned on joining the session from the web using a device rather than via phone audio (90% web; 5% phone; 5% I don’t know)

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| **Poll Results** | | |
| **Poll 1:** Have you had a fall or near fall in the past 12 months?  Yes: 44%  No: 49%  I don’t know: 7% | **Poll 2:** Have you considered making any home modifications to reduce your risk of falls?  Yes: 55%  No: 38%  I don’t know: 7% | **Poll 3:** Do you believe most falls are preventable?  Yes: 74%  No: 7%  I don’t know: 19% |

**Key themes**

What we have learned from the participants:

## **Taking control of your own life**

* Be proactive and plan ahead of time. Modify your home before an injury may happen.
* Move around your own home now and see what changes might need to be made.
* Be financially proactive for changes. Investigate potential costs and start saving.
* Maintain physical and mental health.
* Wear proper footwear. Wear shoes with grip and support and make sure they are intact.
* Carry your cell phone with you in case of emergency or some way to call for attention if you fall.
* Adapt the way you live in your own home (use the door with the best handrail, leave laundry at the top of the stairs for someone to carry down, etc.).
* Be aware of your medications as some can impact your ability to walk. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist.
* Keep things tidy and out of the way so you have a clear path.
* Concerns include: fear of falling if living alone, and snow removal and yard work.

## **Home modification suggestions**

* Bathroom:
  + Raised toilet or raised toilet seat
  + Grab bars in bathtub and beside toilet
  + Bathmat with rubber on the bottom
  + Walk-in shower / bathtub
  + Widen doorway
  + Pedestal sink
  + Pole to get into bath/shower
  + Anti-slip strips in bathtub/shower
* Stairs/Steps:
  + Step height (risers) may be too high
  + Landings (tread) are too narrow
  + Stair lift
  + Handrails on either side
  + Handrail extension after stairs end
  + Reflector on each step
* Outside:
  + Raised garden beds at waist height
  + Handrails extending to garage
  + Ramps in place of steps
  + Handrails beside all steps/stairs
* Other:
  + Possible options in converting the main floor to include a bedroom, laundry room, or larger/more accessible bathroom
  + Wider hallways
  + Handrails in hallways
  + Handrails are of graspable size and shape
  + No rugs on floor
  + Nightlights throughout the home
  + Adjusters to help in and out / up and down from bed, couches, chairs

## **Rental considerations**

Some people found that having a supportive landlord helped them complete their modifications. Here are some suggestions to help ask for modifications:

* Ask for items that have universal design (like a walk-in-shower) and are aesthetically pleasing.
* Get an assessment from an Occupational Therapist or your family doctor, then have them write a recommendation or prescription for your modifications.
* If these do not work consider, partial modifications that are not permanent.
* If none of the above work, go to your local rental board.
* People expressed concern about being able to afford to move if modifications were not approved

## **Lack of information/access to resources**

* Home modifications are costly. What funding is available to assist?
* Who to reach out to for a quote on home modifications? Who is the right person for the job? Do they know how to properly install handrails/grab bars?
* Need for more Occupational Therapists available to assess homes for modification suggestions.
* More paid & unpaid workers to assist with community resources/services.

*Participants and registrants were provided an information package after the event which included:*

1. *Grant and funding information for home modifications, organized by province.*
2. *Online information and resources related to home modifications.*
3. *Information about tenants’ rights related to home modifications in Canada.*

## *Other discussion points:*

* Cost comparisons for decision making (e.g., moving laundry to the main floor versus stair lift to the laundry room in the basement, home modifications required versus moving/downsizing).
* Having family or friends who check in via phone calls or in person for safety.
* Having family or friends who are handy to help out with modifications and/or installations.
* Common surgeries: knee replacement, hip replacement, pelvis replacement, corrective eye surgery, pulled shoulder, shoulder replacement.
* Disappointment with other living options (besides living at home).
* Inaccessible public spaces. Should include public input/ senior input (ageism).
* If living in an apartment, sometimes the elevator is not working and the stairs are difficult due to mobility issues.

# **Recommendations**

## **For Older Adults**

* Understand ahead of time what modifications may be needed in your home.
* Engage in research in your community on how to make changes to public spaces and bring concerns to your town council or committee.
* Get seen right away by a physician if you have had a fall.
* Connect with your local Council on Aging.
* Connect with your local community centre on assistance with yard work and shoveling.
* Consider what changes may have to be done to have everything you need on the main floor (bathroom, bedroom, laundry room, etc.).
* Regularly check on clamp-on grab bars to ensure they are secure as they can loosen over time.
* Begin financial planning to ensure affordability of possible home modifications.

## **For Government and Resources**

Older adults need more support from government and other community resources, including:

* Access to funding and assistance to financially support home modifications.
* More accessible information on qualified individuals to complete home modifications (e.g. home assessment and renovations).
* Access to information where technological literacy may act as a barrier.
* More healthcare workers, community workers, and occupational therapists.
* Easier navigation through the healthcare system.
* More accessible public spaces for all. Allow for public input in designing and planning.
* Include perspectives from seniors on accessibility to further work against ageism.
* More accessible resources for tenants on home modifications in rental properties to reference with their landlords.