

NOVEMBER 2022 SPEAKER

SUE LANTZ

“AGING YOUR WAY”

“Aging Your Way” means “Aging in Place” to 97 percent of Canadians, according to November speaker Sue Lantz, founder and managing director of Collaborative Aging and author of *Options Open: The Guide for Mapping Your Best Aging Journey*. “That’s according to Canada’s Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).” As Sue noted, none of us want to go into a long-term care home, after years of horror stories of abuse and neglect of residents culminating in a near total abandonment of care during COVID. “People want to live safely, independently, and comfortably as they age,” she said.

UWCNY invited members of other CFUW clubs across Canada, faith-based communities, other organizations, and the general public to listen to Sue’s “virtual” presentation. There was a big audience. A graduate in public administration from Queen’s University, Sue has advised UWCNY’s long term care committee and made such a good impression that she was invited to speak at-large.

“Better to be proactive than reactive to the aging process,” she emphasized. “There are fewer choices and more stress and risks if reactive. Proactive advance planning enables you in a calm way to explore options to determine which fits your personal vision and is most appealing to you. There’s no one pathway for all as we have different life experiences and priorities. Start your planning early, use your lead time wisely.”

She suggested planning the same thorough, comprehensive way as “You do for a good experience in travelling.” She laid out a five-point aging in place “strategy framework.” (1) **Health**- “self-manage your lifestyle –eating, exercise, rest, sleep, stress.” (2) **Housing**- affordability, safety, accessibility. She drew our attention to a host of options: retrofitting (walk-in showers, grab-bars, elevator); co-designing and building a new dwelling that’s simple and accessible; e.g., no outside stairs to entrance; multi-generational in same building or secondary house in laneway or backyard where retain independence yet help nearby; temporary university student tenant – slightly reduced rent in return for taking out garbage, doing dishes; co-ownership of a home or condo; co-operative housing community; retirement community that combines independent living with some shared activities, exercise, and meals. (3) **Social Network** – “Who you can rely on, call on for help.” (4) **Caregiving Team** -available unpaid – family, friends, neighbours- and paid including government funded. (5) **Resources** to carry out plan – financial and other. Investments, insurance, government funding, health care, amenities, community services.

Sue said a big obstacle, which she is working to fix, is the “gap in information. It’s not clear what the three levels of government each will pay for, enable, or deliver – or not – such as home care, community support, meals, home renovations to improve accessibility and safety. There’s also a gap in information as to where to find things, such as a contractor to modify a home and the best medical equipment supplier. Not enough practical information.” She noted, however, that home supply companies – she specifically mentioned IKEA and Home Depot - increasingly are carrying products for the aging. She called on developers to “free up land and design smaller scale buildings suitable for the aging.”

Susan Goldenberg