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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **County receives tremendous response from Age-Friendly Simcoe County Survey**

**Midhurst/May 25, 2016** – In an effort to identify gaps and priorities in our policies, programs, services, and environments that support and enable people to age actively, the County of Simcoe reached out to area seniors—and they responded.

The County of Simcoe released its Age-Friendly Simcoe County Survey in March 2016 and received 3,048 completed surveys, of which, 2,077 were obtained via electronic submissions. The remaining 971 hard copies were dropped off at various locations around the County, including 26 of Simcoe County's local libraries, 16 municipal offices, and the City of Orillia.

"It is essential that our municipalities meet the needs of our aging population," said Warden Gerry Marshall, "and thanks to the response we received through the Age-Friendly Simcoe County Survey, our communities will be better equipped to enhance our services, programs, and infrastructure to meet the demands of all our residents, regardless of age."

As outlined in the County's *Age-Friendly Community Initiative*, the survey is the first phase of a broader community engagement process and its results will assist in the development of a planning framework to guide communities in developing strategies and plans to help make the County a better place to grow older together.

"We would like to thank all the individuals, organizations, and members of our Age-Friendly Community Project Steering Committee for assisting us with the survey," said Jane Sinclair, General Manager of Health and Emergency Services for the County of Simcoe. "Your contributions toward its success is greatly appreciated; we could not have achieved this without you."

In addition to the survey, informant interviews have been conducted to garner more feedback based on the World Health Organization's eight dimensions: housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communications and information, community support and health services, outdoor spaces and buildings, and transportation.

Next steps in our community engagement process will be to hold discussions with 15 focus groups across the County's 16 member municipalities. Focus groups with caregivers, service providers, Francophones, newcomers, business owners, aboriginals, and senior living communities were selected based on suggestions received from the Age-Friendly Community Project Steering Committee.

As a final phase of our engagement strategy, four public consultations in the fall will review the information received from the first three engagement strategies and validate the gaps and priorities with additional input from the public. Collingwood, Penetanguishene, Orillia, and Alliston will each host one public consultation session.

The County is currently working to collate and compile a comprehensive analysis of all data collected during the survey to be used during the consultation process.

The results of the community engagement strategies will be utilized to determine the guiding principles of the County's Age-Friendly Community Planning framework. A report will be vetted through the AFC Project Steering Committee and submitted for endorsement by County Council so it can then be incorporated in future strategic planning.

**About the Age-Friendly Community Initiative**

In July 2015, the County of Simcoe received funding from the Government of Ontario as part of its Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant Program. The funding program is operated through the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat and supports local governments and community organizations to undertake strategic planning and develop local plans to address aging demographics and further enable people of all ages to fully participate in community life. The County has received approval of up to a maximum amount of \$50,000 from the Government of Ontario to execute the program. Visit our website at [Simcoe.ca/age-friendly](http://Simcoe.ca/age-friendly).

The County of Simcoe is composed of 16 member municipalities and provides crucial public services to County residents, in addition to providing paramedic and social services to the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia. Visit our website at [simcoe.ca](http://simcoe.ca).

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