

# Media Release

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## 'Stratford Connects' App Launched to Empower Seniors Living in the Town of Stratford



**For Immediate Release: January 11, 2023**

The Town of Stratford launched three new social engagement programs, including a mobile application, all to increase social connectivity for seniors in the community. *Stratford Connects* consists of three programs: Senior Match and Exchange, Newcomer Match and Stratford Grandparents.

Through the *Stratford Connects* app, senior residents can connect with one another and expand their social circles through the exchange of skills, knowledge, and time. Eight topic areas exist within the app to facilitate these connections; they range from making friendships to finding a shopping buddy, exchanging equipment and tools, or finding an occasional drive to appointments or community events. The app is available for use at no charge. There are, however, optional topic areas that may have an expense related to them, such as the Social Lunches topic area, which might see occasional, or even regular, meetups at local restaurants between interested seniors at their own expense. Participation in the app is entirely voluntary, with seniors using the app deciding how often and when to post or respond to posts by others from the community.

"The *Stratford Connects* app is a new way for seniors in our community to meet and connect," commented Stratford Mayor Steve Ogden. "We often hear about seniors feeling like they have lost their connection to the community and risk becoming isolated, particularly after a significant life change such as retirement or losing their partner. Through *Stratford Connects*, we hope they will find new connections and enjoy being an active member of our community with improved personal well-being."

The second program launched today is called Newcomer Match. Through this program, a senior volunteer will be matched with a newcomer family, couple or individual in our community to help the newcomer(s) adjust and integrate into their new home and life in Stratford. The senior will also benefit from this program through anticipated cultural learning from the newcomer, and the experience of helping with the transition will hopefully create a lasting friendship.

The final program, Stratford Grandparents, connects a senior volunteer with a family in the community who can benefit from the positive role an older adult can play in their own and their children's lives. This program is intended for seniors and families who do not have their own family nearby but wish to participate in intergenerational opportunities for learning and sharing with and from one another.

Further information and application forms for Newcomer Match and Stratford Grandparents can be found on the Town of Stratford's website at [www.townofstratford.ca](http://www.townofstratford.ca). All parties must be residents of Stratford to participate, be willing to commit to a period of one year and agree to spend a minimum of two hours per month together.

Further meetings beyond the two-hour minimum are encouraged with the hopes that lasting friendships are created that will continue beyond the initial one-year period required.

“These programs help us continue building the best community possible,” added Mayor Ogden. “The more we can do to help our residents connect and have opportunities to form positive relationships, the better Stratford will continue to be into the future.”

A public information session will take place on Tuesday, January 24, 2023, from 2pm to 3pm at Stratford Town Centre for residents to learn more about the programs, have assistance downloading and installing the app and ask questions about the programs. All are welcome to drop by during this time.

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