

HomeEquity Bank 

CBA SENIORS CODE

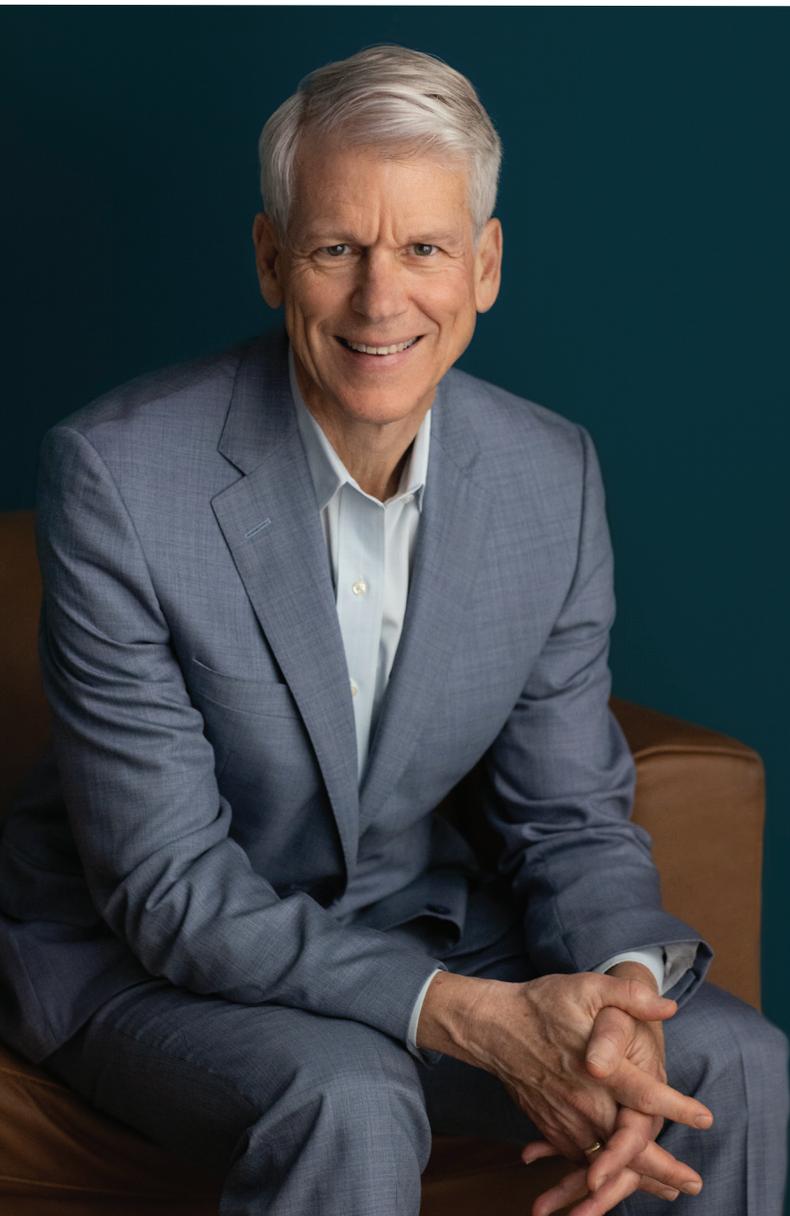
HomeEquity Bank Annual Report

2021



A Message from Our **President and CEO**

— Steven Ranson



2021 marked HomeEquity Bank's second year as a supporter of and advocate for the Canadian Bankers Association (CBA) Code of Conduct for the Delivery of Banking Services to Seniors ("Seniors Code"). The Seniors Code sets out the principles applicable to banks in the delivery of banking products and services to Canada's seniors. During another year of unprecedented change, we continued to strengthen our deep commitment to Canadians 55 and up, with a range of new customer-focused initiatives.



We move through into 2022 brimming with positive energy, and full of pride in continuing to uphold and honour the principles of the Seniors Code. The commitment of our employees and partners in working to better serve the needs of Canadians 55 and up continues to inspire me every day."



Today, Canadians 55 and up are increasingly turning to their homes to supplement their retirement income, with 93 per cent now saying they want to age in place¹. This makes it more important than ever for us as a financial institution to commit to meeting and protecting the unique needs of this growing demographic.

At HomeEquity Bank, we're passionate about helping Canadian homeowners live retirement on their terms. As the only bank solely dedicated to serving homeowners 55 and up, we live that commitment every day. 2021 was no exception, and we spent the year working hard to uphold, embody and advocate for the principles of the Seniors Code across a range of activities.

I am incredibly proud of the initiatives that saw us continue to demonstrate our commitment to the needs of this demographic across so many of our activities. These included a revitalized brand campaign challenging stereotypes about home ownership in later life and empowering retirees to stay in the home they love, and the launch of our Home Run – The Reverse Mortgage Advantage book, aimed at dispelling myths about reverse mortgages and increasing understanding of their critical role in retirement planning for Canadians.

Last year we rolled out CHIP Hero training across our company. The training focuses on our adherence to the Seniors Code, our commitment to protecting vulnerable customers, an overview of our Power of Attorney (POA) process, how to identify financial abuse, frauds and scams, and how to escalate if we suspect a client may be the victim of a scam. All new employees must complete the training upon joining the Bank, and customer facing employees are required to review the training annually.

We launched a number of strategic partnerships designed to help us communicate effectively and provide for the needs of our customers. These included landmark research, released in collaboration with the National Institute on Ageing, highlighting the importance of having a range of options and solutions to secure long-term retirement income. In addition, we helped convene a panel of experts to share practical strategies to support Canadians in preparing for the retirement they want.

Finally, Executive Vice President of HomeEquity Bank, Yvonne Ziomecki, and I sat down for a series of conversations with renowned Canadian author and journalist Peter Mansbridge, to discuss and address some of the common misconceptions regarding the CHIP Reverse Mortgage.

We move through 2022 brimming with positive energy, and full of pride in continuing to uphold and honour the principles of the Seniors Code. The commitment of our employees and partners in working to better serve the needs of Canadians 55 and up continues to inspire me every day.

I'm excited to take the next step forward together, as we continue to help even more Canadians plan for a retirement spent in the home they love.

Steven Ranson
President & CEO, CPA, CA

¹Iciaszczyk, N., Feil, C., MacDonald, B.J., Nicin, M., Sinha, S. (2021). *Canadian Perspectives on the Financial Realities of Ageing in Place: Practical Considerations, Strategies & the Need for Policy Reform*. Toronto, ON: National Institute on Ageing, Ryerson University and HomeEquity Bank.

Annual Report Overview

HomeEquity Bank is proud to be Canada's only bank solely dedicated to serving Canadian homeowners 55 and up. We live our passion for helping Canadian homeowners live retirement on their terms daily, in everything we do. We're pleased to share the follow-up to last year's inaugural Seniors Code Annual Report by highlighting our continuing efforts to uphold, embody and advocate for the principles of the Seniors Code across many of our activities this year.

Our team brings deep expertise and knowledge in financial education, elder abuse, fraud, age bias and many other aspects central to the Seniors Code, but that alone doesn't set us apart. At HomeEquity Bank, we have spent years building a framework of respect and dignity that guides the actions of our team and the way we operate as an institution. Canadians 55 and up are some of the most vibrant and dynamic members of our communities and providing them best-in-class customer service thoughtfully and with integrity is part of the fabric of this company.

Here's what you'll find inside:

- The Seniors Code **Explained**
- A Word From our **Seniors Champion**
- **Seven Principles** of the Seniors Code
- **Bringing the Code to Life** at HomeEquity Bank



What is the Seniors Code?

The Seniors Code Explained

In July 2019, the Canadian Bankers Association (CBA) released its Code of Conduct for the Delivery of Banking Services to Seniors, known as the Seniors Code, or the Code. As a member bank, HomeEquity Bank was quick to adopt the Seniors Code.

Codes of conduct like the Seniors Code are non-legislated commitments that CBA member banks make to the public. Compliance with the Seniors Code among CBA members is overseen by The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC).

The Seniors Code focuses on seven principles that apply to banks to guide them when they deliver banking products and services to Canada’s seniors —classified as those over 60—including applying applicable accessibility standards.

Under the Seniors Code, each CBA member bank is required to designate a representative from management to promote the interests of seniors. HomeEquity Bank selected **Yvonne Ziomecki, our Executive Vice President of Marketing and Sales**, to assume the role of Seniors Champion, as announced in our inaugural Seniors Code report. Yvonne has provided effective leadership in implementing the Seniors Code, while continuing to promote awareness of issues impacting older Canadians. She’s also been instrumental in engaging with subject matter experts and organizations representing this age group.

Her many credentials and track record for advocating for older Canadians—which include publishing a book aimed at educating retiring Canadians on reverse mortgages, hosting a talk radio show for retirees and many additional media appearances as a subject matter expert—mean she remains a natural fit for this position.

“As HomeEquity Bank’s Seniors Champion, I have a deep, personal passion for helping Canadians 55 and up find freedom and security at this important time in their lives.

No one’s retirement will look exactly the same. That’s why, at HomeEquity Bank, we go deep in understanding the needs and desires of homeowners 55 and up, and tailor our services to ensure they’re understandable and relevant to this valued segment of Canadians.

Being treated with dignity and respect is something that everyone is entitled to and deserves. I am deeply proud to uphold and honour the principles of the Seniors Code, and to drive HomeEquity Bank’s work in providing Canadians 55 and up with the information, initiatives and programs that can empower them to enjoy retirement on their terms.

As we continue into 2022, I cherish the opportunity to continue working hard for such a vibrant and dynamic group – and look forward to what our team will continue to achieve for them.

Our Seniors Champion — Yvonne Ziomecki



Seven Principles of the Seniors Code

HomeEquity Bank is committed to abiding by the 7 principles set out in the Code. Banks will:



01

Establish and implement appropriate policies, procedures and processes to support the Code

02

Communicate effectively with seniors

03

Provide appropriate training to our employees and representatives who serve seniors

04

Make appropriate resources available to customer-facing employees and representatives to help them better understand matters relevant to seniors' banking needs

05

Endeavour to mitigate potential financial harm to seniors

06

Take into account market demographics and the needs of older Canadians when proceeding with branch closures

07

Publicly disclose the steps they have taken to support the principles set out in the Code

Bringing the Code to life at HomeEquity Bank

01

Establish and implement appropriate policies, procedures and processes to support the Code

Since day one, we've prioritized providing Canadians 55 and up with a customer experience that feels personal and tailored to them. Since our products are designed exclusively for this demographic, we continue to orient our policies, procedures and communications to resonate with and reflect their unique needs. This includes our policies on adding Power of Attorney (POA) to client accounts, our escalation process for customer complaints, our fraud policy to manage and mitigate risk and our Incident Management Process to report, investigate and remediate incidents. Furthermore, the principles of the Seniors Code have been incorporated into the Bank's Regulatory Compliance Management Framework (RCMF).

Our world continues to change. Over the last decade, the way we bank has evolved significantly, as have our collective attitudes towards retirement. That's why HomeEquity Bank welcomed the introduction of the Seniors Code in 2020 as an opportunity to do better for our customers, while asking: How could we continue to enhance the products and services we provide to Canadians 55 and up? What could we do to ensure our demographic feels seen and understood by us?

These questions continue to inform our thinking to ensure we uphold and honour the principles of the Seniors Code while empowering all Canadian homeowners 55 and up to live retirement their way.



Trust is the foundation on which we build every customer relationship. Our customers trust our team to communicate with them clearly and accurately, and we prepare our employees to do so. Accordingly, we have embedded and expanded practices that align with the second, third and fourth principles of the Code.

Bringing the Code to life at HomeEquity Bank

02

Communicate effectively with seniors

We continue to enhance our communications to ensure all our customers feel comfortable and confident when banking with us.

- HomeEquity Bank follows a **clear language policy** that to ensure that we provide consumers with clear, simple communications, that are not misleading. The guidelines enable the Bank to better serve the needs of consumers and clients by providing clear communications that are focused on their needs and that aid them in understanding financial information about the Bank's products and services.
- Our mortgage specialists ensure that, where possible, communications such as application documents, annual statements or marketing materials are made available to customers in **large print** or **braille**.
- Our website meets **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0** at level AA, and our employees are available to walk customers through online activities should they require assistance.
- HomeEquity Bank has a dedicated section on its website with consolidated information related to our commitment to the CBA Seniors Code.

While we are proud to provide these accessible options for our customers, we are continuously working on enhancing our communication methods.



03

Provide appropriate training to our employees and representatives who serve seniors

All new team members have six weeks upon joining to complete one-time and annual training sessions to ensure they are prepared to meet the needs of our customers. Training covers our fraud policies and incident management processes, our clear language policy, protecting client privacy, and our complaint handling procedures.

New team members must also complete mandatory CHIP Hero training to ensure they fully understand the Seniors Code and its principles within 60 days of joining. This training includes:

- ✓ Understanding the Seniors Code principles
- ✓ Our Power of Attorney (POA) process
- ✓ Spotting financial abuse and scams
- ✓ When and how to escalate if financial abuse or scams are suspected
- ✓ Communicating effectively with our 55 and up customer base

Customer-facing employees must retake the CHIP Hero training annually.

04

Make appropriate resources available to customer-facing employees and representatives to help them better understand the banking needs of seniors

We supplement training with additional tailored resources for client-facing employees (available via a distinct section on our intranet) and direct team members to these resources any time we add new materials to the site. This includes resources on our Power of Attorney (POA) process, our Independent Legal Advice process, our Customer Complaint process, our clear language policy, and how our employees can facilitate client requests for braille or large print transcription requests.

Bringing the Code to life at HomeEquity Bank

05

Endeavour to mitigate potential financial harm to seniors

As part of our commitment to protecting older Canadians from financial harm, we have taken the following actions to educate our customers:

In 2020, we partnered with former conman turned security consultant, **Frank W. Abagnale**, to develop an educational video series on spotting and preventing the most common scams. Since their release, the videos have received more than 1 million views across our social media platforms, and prompted positive responses from customers thanking us for providing helpful content. Some customers have said they now feel significantly more confident in spotting and handling potential scams. This content can be found in the dedicated Seniors Code section of our website.

To provide further financial education to Canadians 55 and up and their families on our products, as well as the other financial options available to fund their retirement, we undertook the following projects in 2021:

- **Home Run – The Reverse Mortgage Advantage** is an easy-to-read guide on financially secure retirement, co-authored by HomeEquity Bank CEO Steve Ranson and Executive Vice President of Marketing & Consumer Sales Yvonne Ziomecki. The book helps readers become confident and better informed about their retirement options in the face of increasing societal pressures.
- **NIA Panel ‘Ageing at Home: Is it an Affordable Option’**: The devastating consequences of the pandemic on long-term care homes and other aspects of life had many older Canadians rethinking their next steps in 2021. To help support Canadians with practical strategies as they prepare for retirement, HomeEquity Bank sponsored an Empire Club panel on ageing at home in October 2021, presented by the National Institute on Ageing.



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When people are threatened with not being able to stay in their own homes and having to move to another community away from their family and friends, that can be really devastating. And that’s why I think so many people are so determined to stay independent in their own homes.”

– Dr. Samir Sinha, Director of Health Policy Research at the [National Institute on Aging](#) - NIA

- **Promoting financial literacy with Credit Canada:** In November 2021, Financial Literacy Month, HomeEquity Bank sponsored “**Money Management Magic – Make Your Debt Stress Disappear.**” In addition to being platinum sponsor, the Bank also supported event programming. Hosted annually by Credit Canada, a non-profit organization and Canada's first and longest-standing credit counselling agency, the month of virtual events, podcasts, webinars, social and blogs covered topics such as managing expenses, budgeting, and dealing with unexpected financial situations.

Bringing the Code to life at HomeEquity Bank

06

Take into account market demographics and the needs of of seniors when proceeding with branch closures

This is not applicable to HomeEquity Bank, as we do not have branches.

07

Publicly disclose the steps we have taken to support the principles set out in the Code

In keeping with the Code's **seventh principle** we have documented our progress against our 2021 initiatives and shared in this report, in addition to posting this information in the Seniors Code section of our website.



Other initiatives we've undertaken to uphold, embody and advocate **for the spirit of the Seniors Code**

It is fundamental to our organization's mission to recognize and advocate for the needs of Canadians 55 and up. In keeping with the spirit of the Seniors Code, we recognize that now, more than ever, Canadians 55 and up are embracing the many benefits of ageing in place and are looking for ways to enjoy the freedom they deserve in retirement. At the same time, HomeEquity Bank recognizes that ageism in society plays a role in preventing this demographic from living the retirement they want.

It's been proven that ageism and media bias can have a detrimental impact on Canadians 55 and up. We want to shift the public narrative while helping to raise awareness about the issues faced by this demographic.

- **A brand with a plan:** HomeEquity Bank launched a large-scale national advertising campaign, with three TV spots offering fresh and different perspectives on retirees. With a cheeky tone, the spots directly address concerning findings from an [Ipsos survey commissioned by the Bank](#), including that 76 per cent of Canadians 55 and up feel pressure to sell their homes. Each spot takes a different approach to correcting misconceptions about this age group, while encouraging younger Canadians to pause and reflect on their own attitudes towards the older people in their lives:
 - ✓ **Granddaughter:** Celebrated Canadian actress Jayne Eastwood plays grandma Doris, who engages in a witty back-and-forth with her granddaughter who implies it's time to move to a retirement home
 - ✓ **Sore Back:** Follows a funny misunderstanding between a father and daughter as she tries to discuss downsizing with her parents
 - ✓ **Consultation:** Shows a couple's hilarious reaction to their son-in-law's suggestion they move to a retirement community
- **Conversation Stoppers with Doris:** Turned the brand campaign concept into a tool for our customers. Hosted at launch on the HomeEquity Bank website, the online video series featured Jayne Eastwood as Doris giving advice to Canadians 55 and up on responding to family or anyone in their lives trying to push them in undesired directions in their retirement.

Other initiatives we've undertaken to uphold, embody and advocate **for the spirit of the Seniors Code**

- **Raising the alarm with the National Institute on Ageing:** The National Institute on Ageing Fall 2021 report revealed that almost 100 per cent of Canadians surveyed wanted to remain in their homes as long as possible, yet many felt financially unprepared for it. These staggering statistics moved us to raise a national discussion about the affordability of aging at home. We aimed to inform Canadians of all ages about the financial realities of aging and encourage decision makers to take decisive action by seeding discussion through media coverage:
 - ✓ **Globe and Mail:** [Why Canadians should plan early to age in place in their later years, an update on reverse mortgages and debunking the four per cent rule for retirees](#)
 - ✓ **Benefits Canada:** [75% of older Canadians worrying about financial security: survey](#)
 - ✓ **CTV:** [77 per cent of Canadians aged 55-69 worried about retirement finances: survey](#)
 - ✓ **Financial Post:** [Baby boomers are increasingly worried about their finances heading into retirement](#)
- **Retiring "Senior":** Based on research conducted in 2019 on [age bias in the media](#), HomeEquity Bank made a commitment to stop using the word "senior" in marketing for, or communications with this age group. In 2021, a new study found Canadians 55 and up do not universally embrace "senior," with only half of respondents (52%) positively associating with it.

We felt it was time for individuals and brands to understand this fact and challenge their own use of the term. On **National Seniors' Day 2021**, we raised a discussion to disrupt the cultural perception of the word "senior," calling on Canadians to rethink their use of the term to describe the demographic:

Wealth Professional.ca:

[Is it time we stopped using the word 'senior' to describe over 55s?](#)

Final Observations

HomeEquity Bank is incredibly proud of its continuing role in honouring the principles of the Seniors Code.

This important and growing demographic can continue to place their trust in HomeEquity Bank to deliver compassionate and expert advice, and a market-leading financial solution for Canadians 55 and up who want to live retirement on their terms. We look forward to working closely with all of our customers in helping them plan for and enjoy a financially secure retirement in the home they love.



HomeEquity Bank 

[@HomeEquitybank.ca](https://www.homeequitybank.ca)