

HomeEquity Bank TM 

CBA SENIORS CODE

HomeEquity Bank Annual Report

2023

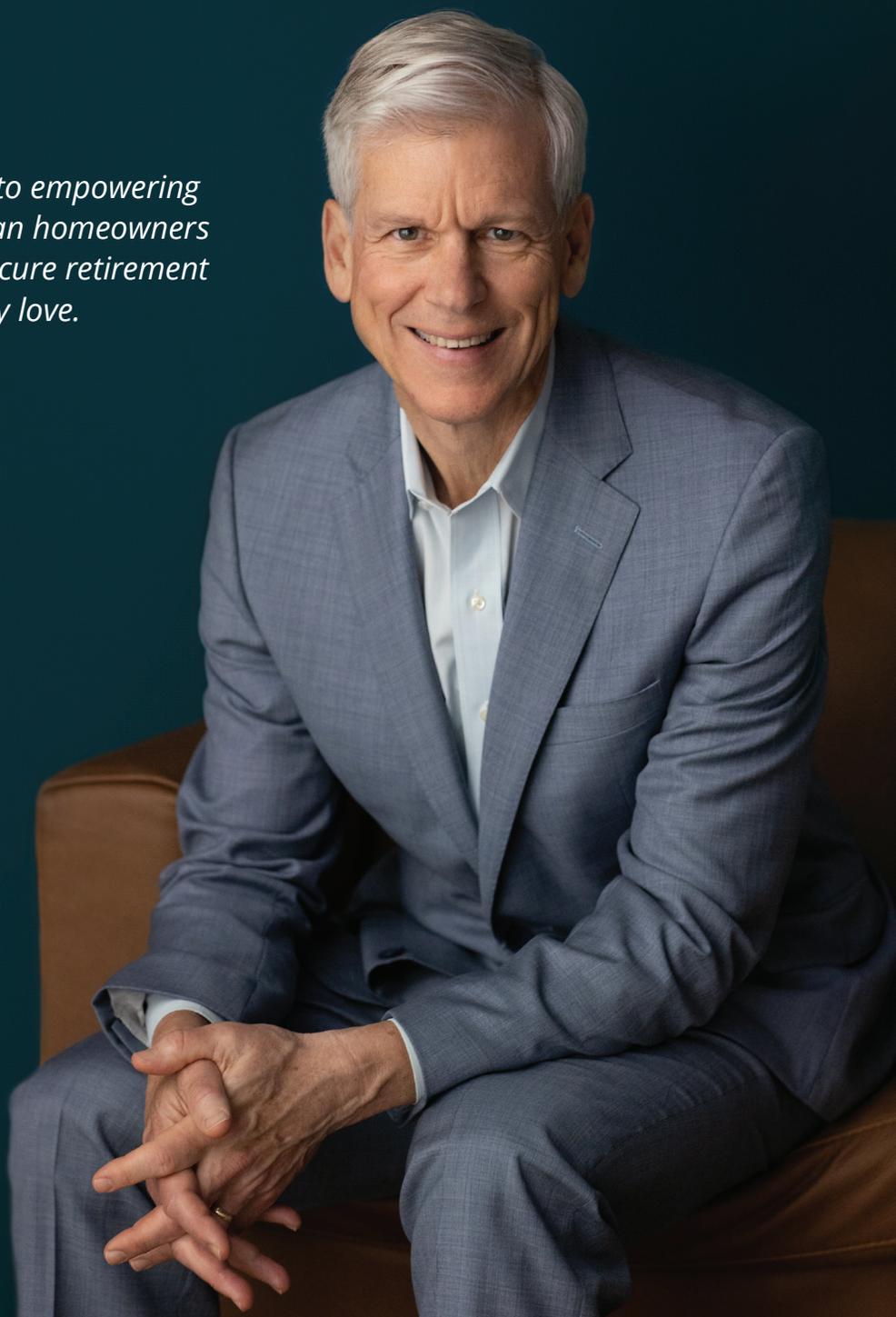


Empowering Canadians 55 and Over to Live Retirement on Their Terms

A Message from Our President and CEO



HomeEquity Bank is committed to empowering the growing numbers of Canadian homeowners 55 and over to live a safe and secure retirement on their terms, in the homes they love.





By the end of 2024, one third of Canada's population will be 55 and over. That means one in three people in this country will be considering, planning for, or already enjoying retirement. As more Canadians than ever before reach their golden years of retirement, they are living longer, more active lives. This will only continue to shift the way we approach retirement as individuals, families, and a society.

Whether that looks like pursuing a second career or simply enjoying more quality time with family, HomeEquity Bank is committed to empowering the growing numbers of Canadian homeowners 55 and over to live a safe and secure retirement on their terms, in the homes they love. As the only financial institution in Canada serving solely this demographic, we take pride in offering a highly personalized customer service experience. With our culture of continuous learning, including employee training, and process optimization, HomeEquity Bank clients can trust that every member of our team is equipped with the skills to help them achieve financial independence and security in retirement.

Last year, we launched our Customer Experience Vision and Ambition, a major investment across the organization to expand our customer service offering and put our customers at the centre of everything we do. We're happy to report that we've made tremendous strides on our journey to elevate our customer experience, including robust

new employee training programs, an enhanced complaints management system, and a new Voice of the Customer (VOC) program. These enhancements have allowed us to streamline our customer experience and proactively address customer concerns.

In addition to enhancements to our customer experience, we are lending our voice to amplify topics that matter to Canadians 55 and over. From the rising inaccessibility of in-home care to more sophisticated and brazen fraud tactics, we equip our clients with the knowledge to ask the right questions and get the solutions they need. We will proudly continue to provide accessible and relevant education to our clients on the issues that matter to them the most, while also working to evolve Canadians' perceptions and expectations about retirement and ageing. As an institution and individuals, we are more inspired than ever to keep working to uphold and honour the principles of the Seniors Code. In the year ahead, with plans to expand and further educate our distribution networks, we look forward to building trust and helping even more older Canadians age in place and improve their financial health.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Ranson', is positioned above the name and title of the signatory.

Steven Ranson
President & CEO, CPA, CA

Annual Report Overview

HomeEquity Bank is proud to be the only bank in Canada that's solely dedicated to helping Canadian homeowners 55 and over. We've been providing specialized service to meet the needs of this demographic for 35+ years. From the products we offer to our communications and the way we train our staff, our organization is built on the foundation that we have a unique responsibility to protect our customers.

In sharing our fourth edition of the HomeEquity Bank Seniors Code Annual Report, we reflect on a year of transformational growth as an institution and highlight our organizational efforts to ensure regulatory compliance. We continuously train our people to not only understand and meet our customers' needs but predict and proactively assist or intervene when necessary.

As much as that means keeping up with trends in technology and fraud, it also means fostering genuine care, empathy and understanding for our demographic. To us, that work is never truly done. We're in a period of accelerated change and it's more important than ever to ensure we maintain our forward-looking position. Whatever new things lie ahead, our customers can trust that HomeEquity Bank have their safety and security in retirement top of mind.



Shyam Nagarajan

Senior Vice President and Chief Risk Officer

Here's what you'll find inside:

- The Seniors Code **Explained**



- **Seven Principles** of the Seniors Code



- A Word From Our **Seniors Champion**



- **Bringing the Code to Life** at HomeEquity Bank



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, also known as the Seniors Code, or the Code. As a federally regulated 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 intended to guide banks in the delivery of banking products and services to Canada's seniors, classified as those over 60, including the application of relevant accessibility standards.

Under the Seniors Code, each CBA member bank is required to designate a representative from management to promote the interests of seniors. **Yvonne Ziomecki-Fisher, Executive Vice President, Marketing and Sales** has held the role since the Code's introduction.

Yvonne's vision and passion continued to help shape and evolve the narrative around this age group in media throughout 2023. This stands to extend the impact of the Seniors Code by promoting awareness of issues impacting older Canadians like in-home health care, fraud prevention, financial literacy, and supporting Canadian veterans.

Under Yvonne's leadership, HomeEquity Bank has assembled a team of experts in their fields to offer education and new perspectives to the growing number of Canadians planning for and financing their retirement. From understanding the facts and fictions of reverse mortgages to understanding all options for affording retirement at home, Chief Financial Commentator Pattie Lovett-Reid and Strategic Communications Consultant Peter Mansbridge lend their expertise and trusted voices to amplify or demystify in-the-moment issues.

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

A Word From Our **Seniors Champion**

“*Last year showed us people are ready to think differently about the role Canadians 55 and over play in our world. This year, we’re finding new ways to keep driving that discussion.*”

At HomeEquity Bank, we have spent years building a framework of respect and dignity that guides the actions of our passionate team. Every one of us is always looking for new ways to apply our specialized expertise to make the lives of Canadians 55 and over better. Last year we deepened our commitment to better serving and understanding our customers inside our walls. With our partners and Canadians, our focus was on nurturing relationships and conversations that will shift cultural attitudes about those 55 and over.

We widened our bench of expert support through a partnership with esteemed “retired” journalist Peter Mansbridge, who joins the bank this year as Strategic Communications Consultant. As we continue our work to educate and empower Canadians 55 and over about their finances, Mr. Mansbridge is there to let them know it’s okay to have questions, and they should feel empowered to ask them. With the help of our Chief Financial Commentator, Pattie Lovett-Reid (also “retired,”) we brought forward a new conversation about women and finance, challenging stereotypes about older women’s financial literacy and independence.

Beyond their experience, both these “retired” individuals show our customers, and all of Canada, that our cultural understanding of what a 55, 65, or 75-year-old “should” be needs to be reevaluated. I look forward to 2024 being the year this happens.”



Our Seniors Champion
Yvonne Ziomecki-Fisher

Executive Vice President,
Marketing & Sales

Bringing the Code to life at HomeEquity Bank

01

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

HomeEquity Bank has always focused on creating products and services specifically for Canadians 55 and over, ensuring a personalized and tailored customer experience.

We consistently align our policies, procedures and communications to meet the unique needs of this demographic. We continually strive to improve our offerings for Canadians 55 and over, to ensure they feel valued and understood by us.

This includes:

- Incorporating the principles of the Seniors Code into the Bank's Regulatory Compliance Management Framework
- Maintaining policies and procedures for adding Power of Attorney (POA) to client accounts
- Creating robust fraud policies to manage and mitigate risk
- Complaint management process designed to ensure an objective and fair complaint resolution, including mandatory annual training for all customer-facing employees
- An Incident Management Process to report, investigate, and remediate complaints
- Complaints Management System and Complaints Resource Centre to ensure consumer complaints are managed in an effective and timely manner
- Engaging with our customer reviews on Google and Trustpilot to ensure transparency, accountability and continual improvement to the customer experience

New in 2023

Whether driven by finances, passions, or age, more Canadians are thinking about retirement differently. Bringing to life our customer vision and ambition has let us further refine our delivery of tailored customer service as the need for it trends toward the norm.

In 2023, we reoriented the way we handle complaints to ensure wherever possible a 24-hour response and quick resolution. Our employees can now respond to more nuanced issues even faster, with the most up-to-date information available. Thanks to this optimization we continue to improve our complaint response rate.

Bringing the Code to life at HomeEquity Bank

02

Communicate effectively with seniors

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.

- Our Sales Practices Policy, which encompasses **clear language expectations**, ensures all Bank communications are customer-focused: clear, simple, and honest, while promoting understanding of the Bank's products and services.
- Communications such as application documents, annual statements or marketing materials can be made available to customers in **large print** or **braille** upon request.
- Our website meets **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG) 2.0 at level AA, and our employees are available to support customers through online activities should they require assistance.
- Since January 2022, HomeEquity Bank customers have been receiving easier-to-read **annual statements**, redesigned based on their feedback and recommendations, to help ensure our clients fully understand the status of their reverse mortgage.

New in 2023

***Our Customer Experience Vision:
Deliver an easy and timely experience for our customers.***

As part of our "Customer Experience Vision and Ambition," we continue to deepen our investment in clear and accessible communications to ensure all our customers feel comfortable and confident when banking with us.

This initiative drove enhanced training, performance management, communications standards, and access to tools to help simplify processes, build subject-matter expertise and accountability, and create an even better client experience. This includes:

- Improved web accessibility score in 2023 to 95.5 per cent as we continue our work towards 100 per cent accessibility.
- Launched a new "Voice of the Customer" (VOC) program to proactively capture customer feedback and ascertain any obstacles in their customer experience.

Bringing the Code to life at HomeEquity Bank

03

Provide appropriate training to our employees and representatives who serve seniors

With their **first six weeks** with the Bank, new team members must 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, Sales Practices 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 over customer base

Customer-facing employees must retake the CHIP Hero training annually. All training modules conclude with a “Knowledge Check” section to evaluate and validate participants’ understanding of the information.

In 2022, we had just begun to see the results from new initiatives as part of our investment in customer service, including fortified customer service training for employees of all levels and departments. This year, we went further with **more intensive training specifically for contact centre and client relations teams.**

New in 2023

Improved Complaint Handling Process and Procedures.

In 2023, we streamlined our complaint management system so we could ensure a 24-hour response and resolution time for customer complaints. Complaints now route through a dedicated Complaints Management Team with streamlined logging and escalating processes to further increase efficiency in managing complaints and investigations.

Bringing the Code to life at HomeEquity Bank

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, on our employee intranet site, which includes:

- ✓ HomeEquity Bank Power of Attorney (POA) process
- ✓ Independent Legal Advice (ILA) process
- ✓ Sales Practices Policy
- ✓ How employees can facilitate client requests for Braille or large-print documents
- ✓ Online training modules for continual reference
- ✓ Complaints Resource Centre to support our complaint-handling activities
- ✓ The Seniors Code

HEB Talks

With the goal of delivering useful and quality service with care, we encourage employees to continue enhancing their skills while increasing their understanding of our clients, our business and the global economic landscape that affects our industry.

HEB Talks is an internal speaker series designed to provide education, inspiration, expert advice, and first-person experiences to empower our employees in their roles and lives.

Highlights in 2023

This year's talks focused on two of the Bank's priority areas to keep employees informed on in-the-moment issues relevant to their customers and how best to serve them.

- **Fraud in Mortgage Transactions:** FCT (First Canadian Title) spoke with our employees about the growing risk of real estate fraud, as well as best practices to help our customers reduce the risk.
- **Customer Insights:** HomeEquity Bank's Senior Voice of the Customer and Design Researcher spoke to employees about insights into customer feedback and how we can provide them with an enhanced experience.

Bringing the Code to life at HomeEquity Bank

05

Endeavour to mitigate potential financial harm to seniors

As the only bank in Canada dedicated to serving Canadians 55 and over, HomeEquity Bank takes an active role in mitigating potential financial harm to seniors, whether they're banking with us or not.

As part of our commitment to protecting older Canadians from financial harm, HomeEquity Bank actively creates and facilitates resources throughout the year to help educate our clients and the public on important topics related to financial wellbeing.

HomeEquity Bank also has robust processes in place to protect customers and mitigate the potential for financial harm, especially given the proliferation of scams targeting Canadians 55 and over.

Key elements include:

- "Know Your Customer" and "Know Your Partner" due diligence processes to help mitigate the potential for financial harm, fraud or elder abuse. When meeting with new clients and partners, employees are trained to identify key information, such as the "Use of Funds" (or why they are interested in CHIP), influencing factors, timing and urgency of the application, personal information verification, and other measures intended to prevent fraud and abuse.
- Annual employee training focused on the Bank's anti-money laundering policies, POA abuse, and other types of elder abuse.

New in 2023

Unmask the Scam: HomeEquity Bank showed Canadians the dangers of scams in the face of proliferating AI technology with an advertising campaign featuring [a deepfake of a well-known and often-imitated Canadian actor](#). Based on the very real trend of romance fraud via AI-generated celebrity impersonation, the campaign served to educate on the latest in scam technology while also normalizing the experience. As people often feel most embarrassed to admit they've fallen victim to these types of scams, the goal was to create a conversation demonstrating how easily and frequently you can be targeted.

Protect Yourself from Home Improvement Scams Webinar with FCT Canada: In the face of rising door-to-door scams targeting Canadian homeowners aged 55 and over, HomeEquity Bank hosted a webinar to empower this group with knowledge to outsmart scammers, safeguard assets and practical solutions with actionable strategies to make an immediate impact.

Bringing the Code to life at HomeEquity Bank

05

Endeavour to mitigate potential financial harm to seniors

Mitigating Financial Harm with Literacy & Self-Empowerment

With the help of partners like [Chief Financial Commentator for HomeEquity Bank](#), Pattie Lovett-Reid, we at HomeEquity Bank continue to share perspectives and extensive knowledge on relevant and emerging subjects related to financial health and well-being in retirement.



Asking the right questions and being aware of your finances is the first step to your financial wellbeing."

– Pattie Lovett-Reid,
HomeEquity Bank's Chief Financial Commentator



New for Pattie in 2023

Last year, Pattie lent her expertise to develop brand-new, easy-to-use tools and resources as proactive education opportunities to help mitigate financial harm. From demographic trends and real estate to financial planning, budgeting for ageing in place, and women’s experience with finances, Pattie advocates for every person 55 and over to be actively engaged in their financial well-being.

- **[Financial Wellbeing Calculator](#)** – Helping Canadians find their Financial Wellbeing Score in just three minutes and three simple steps. A quiz designed to show how easy it is to take control of your finances when you know where to start and what questions to ask.
- **[The Great Retirement Resource Guide](#)** – A one-stop-shop for all things retirement, this free online guide includes financial and retirement advice from Pattie Lovett-Reid and Joyce Wayne in addition to valuable information about everything from finances to health and come care, and even mastering technology in retirement.
- **[“Back to Basics – Financial Bootcamp with Pattie Lovett-Reid”](#)** (November 2023): An accessible series of videos to level-set financial literacy and start building confidence, released in time for Financial Literacy Month 2023.

Bringing the Code to life at **HomeEquity Bank**

06

Take into account market demographics and the needs 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 2022 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**

We're committed to using our position to help shift the public narrative about what it means to age in our world while raising awareness about the unique issues that retired or retiring Canadians face, because being secure in retirement doesn't end with financial health.

The work of HomeEquity Bank is to empower Canadians aged 55 and over to live the retirement they deserve, in the home they love. In 2023, advocacy initiatives focused on in-the-moment trends and issues we knew our customers had questions about, and could directly impact their ability to age in place.

Smashing Stigma about Women and Finance: A study commissioned by HomeEquity Bank found [**When it Comes to Financial Well-being, Older, Single Women are Leading by Example**](#). Our new research subverted expectations and stereotypes to further empower this underserved demographic, while starting conversations with media and financial advisors about the type of unique support they need for financial freedom.

Zoomer Magazine Explained – Life to Legacy: HomeEquity Bank partnered with Zoomer Magazine for three episodes of its *EXPLAINED* mini-series on happy and healthy ageing in which experts came together to discuss the latest trends in health, technology and finance that are reshaping the way we think about retirement.

- [**Episode 1: Life To Legacy**](#) — Retirement lifestyle experts shared simple changes for living longer.
- [**Episode 2: Living in Place III**](#) — HomeEquity Bank Chief Marketing Officer Vivianne Gauci shared tips on designing your home to age in place with the latest trends in technology and AI for medical assistance.
- [**Episode 3: Leaving Your Legacy**](#) — Pattie Lovett-Reid and a panel of other financial experts discussed different ways you can create a legacy and making your exit easier on loved ones.

Celebrating Home Care Heroes for Personal Support Workers Day 2023: Access to at-home care is a crucial part of retiring at home, which is why for the second year, [**HomeEquity Bank celebrated the vital work that thousands of Personal Support Workers \(PSWs\)**](#) provide for Canadians who want to age in-place.

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

HomeEquity Bank's Home Care Heroes Award gave Canadians the opportunity to nominate a PSW who has made a positive impact in their life or the life of someone they love, to help shine a light on the importance of PSWs. Five winners received \$2,500 each to acknowledge their important work and contributions. A bursary was also awarded to a student at SE Health, a HomeEquity Bank partner that provides PSW education and employment.

Retiring S*nior Time to retire the word "Senior" this National S*niors Day: Pattie Lovett-Reid again teamed up with HomeEquity Bank for its third-annual **National Seniors Day** campaign. The ongoing call to action to disrupt the cultural perception of the word "senior," encourages Canadians to rethink their use of the term to describe the demographic. This year's focus was on limiting beliefs, how using this word can perpetuate those limiting beliefs, and how to move forward.

Creating a Library of Online Financial Literacy Resources

We continue to expand the online catalogue of informational and educational materials available on the HomeEquity Bank website and social channels, specifically tailored for Canadian homeowners 55 and over. These include:

- **"Retire Savvy, Retire Happy - In the Home You Love"** (Apr 13 and Sept 14, 2022): These webinars were originally broadcast live on Apr 13 and Sept 14 and remain free to access any time on our **YouTube channel**.
- **Home Run - The Reverse Mortgage Advantage** (2021): An easy-to-read guide on financially secure retirement, co-authored by HomeEquity Bank CEO Steve Ranson and Executive Vice President, Marketing and Sales, Yvonne Ziomecki-Fisher.
- **Catch the Scam** (2020): An educational video series on spotting and preventing the most common scams developed in response to the growing financial threats faced by older Canadians.

In the year ahead, we look forward to building trust and helping even more Canadians 55 and over age in place with confidence with new, relevant resources based on trends we've observed that may affect our clients.

Whether that's the rising inaccessibility of in-home care or new fraud tactics, we equip our clients with the knowledge to ask the right questions and get the answers they need.

Final Observations

We take extra care so our clients can live retirement on their terms.

We've been helping Canadians 55 and over achieve their retirement goals for more than 35 years and our customers' needs vary more now than they ever have. As Canadians 55 and over continue to place their trust in HomeEquity Bank to live a better retirement on their terms, we will always proudly uphold and exceed the principles of the Seniors Code. We look forward to another year of working closely with our customers to help them enjoy a financially secure retirement in the home they love.



HomeEquity Bank 

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