OLD CONNECTIONS & NEW DIRECTIONS:

The Government of Manitoba's Role in Rural Age-Friendly Planning

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Capstone Report

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THE GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA'S ROLE IN RURAL AGE-FRIENDLY PLANNING

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ABSTRACT

Rural communities in Manitoba are rapidly and disproportionality ageing. As a result, more support from the provincial government is needed to address the needs and challenges of an ageing population. In the last twenty years, Manitoba has been deeply involved in making communities more age friendly. While this endeavour was initially kickstarted by the Government of Manitoba, most of the responsibilities have fallen onto municipalities and non-governmental organizations.

Through a series of semi-structured interviews and document analysis, this study investigates the level of involvement the Government of Manitoba has in implementing age friendly strategies and initiatives in rural communities. It also brings awareness to the wide range of needs of the rural ageing population and how the Government of Manitoba could address them more effectively and efficiently.

This research project found that most of the government departments lacked priorities or goals that support ageing population. As a result, some departments did not have a clear direction on how to address the age friendly domains in their work. The research also highlighted the negative effects that changes in government have had within departments, such as the disbandment of a cross-department working group that focused on developing a whole-of-government seniors' strategy. The report also includes recommendations on what age friendly domain each department should be responsible for. To better prepare for the major shift in demographics and support the wide range of needs of older adults, the Government of Manitoba should make an effort to provide clear leadership towards becoming more age friendly.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

AFFC	Age Friendly Cities and Communities
AFRRCI	Age Friendly Rural/Remote Communities Initiative
F/P/T	Federal/Provincial/Territorial
GNAFCC	Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities
HSLTC	Health, Seniors, and Long Term Care
MASC	Manitoba Association of Senior Communities
MCA	Manitoba Council on Aging
MTI	Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PHAC	Public Health Agency of Canada
TONS	Transportation Options Network for Seniors
WHO	World Health Organization
WMR	Winnipeg Metropolitan Region

01
INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

Populations across the globe are ageing rapidly, leading to an increased interest in age-friendly planning to accommodate the wide range of challenges that older adults may face. While research on ageing and age-friendly communities has increased since the start of the 21st century, it has focused mainly on urban contexts. Research on age-friendly planning in a rural context (including implications and implementation processes) is quite limited. Most of the research on this was published in the early 2010s. Research in this area should be prioritized, as the lived experience and needs of older adults in rural settings is vastly different compared to those in urban settings, due to limited infrastructure and services (Menec et al., 2015).

In rural settings, government leadership and support at all levels are especially crucial to implementing age-friendly strategies efficiently (Spina & Menec, 2015). However, it typically falls to non-profit organizations and municipal governments to take on the full responsibilities for implementing age-friendly initiatives and programs. With limited resources and funding, this becomes a burden and makes implementation difficult and sustainability of programs challenging. To make implementing age-friendly strategies more efficient and sustainable over time, this research focuses on understanding how the provincial government can support rural communities.

The main objective of this research project is to identify the roles that the provincial government plays (or could play) in planning and implementing age-friendly strategies in rural Manitoba and how existing roles might be strengthened. Based on the findings from the literature review, this research primarily looks at the roles of Manitoba Housing, Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI), the Community Planning Branch of Municipal and Northern Relations, and Manitoba Health, Seniors, and Long Term Care (HSLTC). The project identifies the responsibilities that each department takes for age-friendly policies and services. This study also explores departmental members' understanding of how their work contributes to developing age-friendly communities.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions which frame this study are the following:

Q1. Which departments or authorities address each of the WHO's age-friendly domain (e.g. housing, social participation, communication and information) in Manitoba?

Q2. How do government departments communicate with each other about age-friendly initiatives for rural communities, especially when their implementation may require interdepartmental collaboration?

Q3. What information do government departments need to integrate age-friendly concerns into policy and planning documents, and to effectively implement initiatives that support ageing populations?

1.3 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

Planners and government authorities should be able to initiate, implement, and manage age-friendly initiatives to support the wide range of needs and challenges associated with an ever-increasing population of older adults. This is especially important for rural communities that are ageing disproportionality; younger adults are leaving for larger urban centres and many older adults are wanting to retire outside of urban centres, often to the rural communities of their youth (Scharf et al., 2016). In comparison to ageing in an urban context, research and literature on ageing in rural communities is limited (Menec et al., 2015). This project expands the literature on rural age-friendly planning and focuses specifically on exploring planning processes in rural Manitoba.

The findings presented from the project can help planners and government authorities gain an understanding of how they can support age-friendliness and contribute to developing rural age-friendly communities. As a result, residents would be able to stay within their community without needing to move somewhere else to meet their needs as they age. This research also benefits the ageing population in rural Manitoba by bringing awareness to rural age-friendly communities.

1.4 OVERVIEW

This report is split into eight chapters. Chapter One introduces the research, including an overview of the questions and background. After the introduction, the second chapter reviews the existing literature on the

relationship between ageing and the environment, age-friendly planning, the history behind the age-friendly cities and communities' (AFCC) movement, and age-friendliness in a rural context. Next, the third chapter provides legislative context and background information on the study site, Manitoba. Then, the next chapter outlines the research methods that were used to complete the research. This leads to the fifth chapter that presents the key findings from the collected research data. The sixth chapter analyzes and discusses the data, noting different patterns and their significance. Following this, the seventh chapter provides recommendations about which government departments should be responsible for different age-friendly domains and calls to action for more awareness of age-friendly communities. Chapter eight provides a concluding summary and considerations for future research endeavours.

02 LITERATURE REVIEW

Planning with age-friendliness in mind is crucial to developing communities where people of all ages can participate within their community in a healthy way. Research on age-friendly communities is relatively new and has become prevalent in the last few decades. However, research on age-friendly communities typically focuses on planning in urban contexts (Menec et al., 2015). This chapter presents, a literature review that was conducted to provide a research foundation and identify areas of focus for this project. The literature review uses a mapping review methodology, which includes identifying gaps and assessing the quantity and quality of existing research on the subject matter (Booth et al., 2012).

The review first examines foundational theories on how environments have impacts on people as they age. This leads into the history of AFCCs and frameworks on age-friendliness. This section also defines the domains that contribute to age-friendly planning. As the research is primarily based on the World Health Organization's (WHO) Age-friendly Cities Framework (2008), its eight domains — transportation, social participation, housing, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, community support and health services, and outdoor spaces — were the focus. Afterwards, the literature review looks at these planning frameworks in a rural context. Finally, the last section identifies gaps in the literature and summarizes the findings.

2.1 AGEING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

As people age, the environment that they live in has impacts on their well-being and behaviour. Buffel et al. (2012) mentions that research on the relationship between ageing and the environment initially focused on housing only, with the focus on creating "lifetime homes." This shifted in the 1970s when researchers started to focus on how older people are influenced by the built environment as a whole (Phillipson, 2011). As academics started to better understand the relationship between ageing and the built environment, they started to emphasize the importance of aligning environments with individuals' personal needs to improve quality of life. Two of the most influential theories are Lawton and Nahemow's "Press-Competence" model and Rowle's theory on place attachment.

Lawton and Nahemow's "Press-Competence" (PC) model (1973) argued that an individual's behaviour and satisfaction rely on the demanding factors in their environment (press) and their ability to cope with those factors (competence). Lawton and Nahemow (1973) believed that individuals with a high competence who lived in environments with fewer demands on the user would lead to positive behaviour and satisfaction. For individual with low competence and lived in an environment with high demand, it would lead to poor behaviour and lower satisfaction. This model provided insight on how a mismatch between environments and a person's ability to meet their basic needs affects not only physical well-being but also mental and emotional well-being.

Another influential theory that shaped how people viewed the relationship between ageing and the environment was Graham D. Rowle's work on place attachment and personal identity in old age. Rowle's argued that as an individual becomes more attached and familiar to a space, they can navigate their

environment more easily (Rowle, 1983, in Phillipson, 2011). He also argued that creating memories and building social relationships over long periods of time assists in older adults maintaining a sense of identity. Rowle's theory provides justification that ageing within a community is beneficial for older adults, and communities should enable individuals to actively age.

2.2 CONTEMPORARY AGE-FRIENDLY FRAMEWORKS

2.2.1 WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)'S AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES FRAMEWORK

There is no universally accepted definition of what an age-friendly community is, however, the WHO's definition in their Age-friendly Cities Framework is one of the most popular and widely accepted. AFFCCs are defined as a community that "adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities" (WHO, 2007, p.1). The framework was developed as part of their Global Age-Friendly Cities Guide (2007). The WHO first publicly presented their research on AFCCs as a concept during the Second United Nations World Assembly on Ageing in the spring of 2002 (WHO, 2007). Their initial research focused on addressing the rapid growth of the global population over age sixty, and working towards building a society for all ages while promoting healthy and active ageing (WHO, 2007). To further their research and understanding of the barriers of AFCCs, the WHO, with support from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), partnered with 33 cities and communities and held focus groups about the experiences of older adults in 2006 (WHO, 2018).

The results of this research was the basis for their Age-Friendly Cities Framework. The Framework recognizes eight interconnected domains of age-friendly design and planning; these encompass the areas of life and built environment that affect the well-being of older people. The framework outlines the approaches that communities should take to address each age-friendly domain and includes a checklist. The domains and their main principles are:

- Transportation
- Housing
- Social Participation
- Respect & Social Inclusion
- Civic Participation & Employment
- Communication & Information
- Community Support & Health Services
- Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

FIGURE 1: WHO'S AGE -FRIENDLY DOMAINS

TABLE 1: WHO'S AGE FRIENDLY DOMAINS (WHO, 2007)

TRANSPORTATION	Older adults have accessible and affordable transportation that allows them to access their communities' amenities and participate socially.
HOUSING	Older adults have multiple housing options, and housing conditions allow them to age independently within their community
SOCIAL PARTICIPATION	Ensuring that older adults are able to stay engaged in their community and participate in social activities outside of their home
RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION	Older adults are equally consulted and included within their community
CIVIC PARTICIPATION & EMPLOYMENT	Older adults have a variety of opportunities to volunteer, work, and engage in politics within their community
COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION	Information should be easily accessible to allow older adults to be able to engage and participate in their communities.
COMMUNITY SUPPORT & HEALTH SERVICES	Older adults have access to affordable health services that meet a wide range of needs
OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS	Ensuring that the physical environment is accessible, clean, and safe enough for people to actively age in their community

After the publication of the WHO Age-friendly Cities Framework in 2008, the WHO established the Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC) two years later. It is a network that connects cities and communities across the globe who have committed to becoming more age-friendly (WHO, 2018). As of October 2024, the network covers over 330 million people and includes 1606 cities and communities in 53 countries (WHO, n.d.).

2.2.2 WHO'S HEALTHY AGEING

The WHO published *World report on ageing and health* in 2015. The report primarily focuses on the Healthy Ageing Framework. This framework emphasizes the maintenance of functional ability and the delivery of integrated care (WHO, 2015). WHO claims that the loss of functional ability as a result solely of a person's age is a groundless stereotype. Instead, it is more closely related to a person's environment and the events that a person experienced in their life. Age-based stereotypes influence policy development and research, creating inequities in planning and outdated conceptualizes on how to address the wide range of challenges that older adults face. The framework is based on the belief that policies and person-centred service that enable older people to live comfortably and independently are required to move towards a more age-friendly world. Building upon the Age-friendly Cities Framework's eight domains, WHO points out the key municipal-level domains that are required to develop an AFCC: transportation, housing and urban development, information and communication, and health and community services. While this framework is very similar to the Age-friendly Cities Framework, it focuses on combating ageism and frames municipal-level services as key domains that need to be addressed to achieve an AFCC.

2.2.3 MENEC'S FRAMEWORK

After the publication of the Age-friendly Cities Framework, multiple frameworks from other researchers developed others in response. One example is the Menec Framework. It was developed as Menec et al. (2011) found there was a lack of focus on social connectivity. They believed that the Age-friendly Cities Framework needed to be more holistic and consider the interrelated environmental conditions, individual well-being, and policies. Rather than the eight domains mentioned earlier, the Menec Framework identifies seven domains: the physical environment, social environment, opportunities for participation, informal and formal community supports

2.2.4 SMART AGE-FRIENDLY ECOSYSTEM FRAMEWORK AND AGE-FRIENDLY ECOLOGIES FRAMEWORK

Another framework that was developed in response to the Age-friendly Cities Framework was the Smart Age-friendly Ecosystem (SAfE) Framework. Marston and Van Hoof (2019) found that the Age-friendly Cities Framework did not reflect the rapid development of technology in the early 20th century and did not focus enough on the personal living environment. This was a concern as it meant that the Age-friendly Cities Framework did not adequately address intergenerational relationships, assistive devices, and the rise of smart automation. The Smart Age-friendly Ecosystems Framework uses the same original eight domains from the Age-friendly Cities Framework, but the eight domains are all connected by a central hub that encompasses technology, personal living environment, and the built environment. However, Marston and van Hoof note that their framework is not suitable for all communities due to the heavy focus on technology and Internet connectivity (Marston & van Hoof, 2019).

Marston, with Linda Shore and P.J. White, built on the framework and developed the Age-friendly Ecologies Framework in 2020. The framework was developed to be more flexible than the SAfE Framework and to take in consideration of a post-pandemic society. The Age-friendly Ecologies Framework is similar to the SAfE Framework; however, it acknowledges sustainability, accessibility, the intersection of the physical and digital environment, equity, and social isolation (Marston et al., 2020)

2.3 RURAL AGE FRIENDLY PLANNING

While urban communities share similar features and barriers, rural communities have some notable differences. The proportion of older adults living in Canadian rural and remote communities is significantly higher than in urban centres. Rural communities are rapidly ageing compared to their urban counterparts because of outmigration of youth and the desire to age-in-place of some older adults outside of an urban centre. Rural communities also have smaller populations spread over larger geographical distances and limited services. Other barriers faced by rural communities include not having enough resources or funding to support the needs of older adults and implement age-friendly initiatives that they launch (Menec & Novek, 2020). Strong leadership by governments at all levels is critical to supporting rural communities in their journeys to becoming more age-friendly and in maintaining age-friendly initiatives (Spina & Menec, 2015).

2.3.1 AGE-FRIENDLY RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES: A GUIDE

To account for the large proportion of older adults that live in rural and remote communities, the Government of Canada developed *Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide* (2007). The findings from the document were based on the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Ministers Responsible for Seniors' Age-Friendly Rural/Remote Communities Initiative (AFRRCI). The AFRRCI, inspired by the WHO's research for the Age-friendly Cities Framework, held focus groups with ten communities. The population of the communities ranged from less than six hundred to approximately five thousand people to represent the various degrees of rurality and remoteness (F/P/T Ministers, 2007). Within the focus groups, they asked older adults about the advantages and barriers their communities faced related to the eight age-friendly domains used by the WHO's Age-friendly Cities Framework. Following the lead of the WHO, researchers on the project also developed a series of checklists to help make communities more age-friendly.

2.3.2 AGE-FRIENDLY DOMAINS IN RURAL CONTEXTS

Many of the opportunities and barriers of age-friendly domains were the same between urban and rural communities, however, rural communities face a few unique barriers due to their smaller populations and limited resources. The four main domains that face different barriers are transportation, housing, communication and information, and community support and health services.

Transportation. Across various research studies, the domain of transportation was noted to impact older adults the most in rural communities. In comparison to urban contexts, rural communities typically have fewer options for public and private transportation. Due to the smaller populations, public transportation is usually not viable (Menec et al., 2015). The most common mode of transportation for older adults in rural areas is carpooling with family or volunteer drivers (F/P/T Ministers, 2007; Menec & Novak, 2015). As transportation options are limited and requires older adults to be reliant on others, this can lead to older adults losing their sense of independence and prevent them from participating in their community.

Housing. Age-friendly housing options are key to allowing older adults stay in their community and remain independent. In rural areas, a major barrier to housing for older adults is the short or lack of long-term care options. Another barrier is maintenance of houses and a lack of infrastructure. Many homes are not adaptable to the changing needs of people as they age. Often, older adults are faced with the financial burden of upgrading and adapting their homes to improve living conditions. There are government grants and

subsidies available for older adults to retrofit their homes, however information on them is not clear or not well enough publicized (F/P/T Ministers, 2007).

Communication and Information. Older adults commonly get their information from traditional media such as newspapers. With the rapid development of technology and implementation of automated devices, traditional media is becoming less commonly used for spreading information. In rural communities, older adults are concerned about being unable to keep up to date on information in their communities as they would need to rely on having Internet service or using an automated device (F/P/T Ministers, 2007). Information can also be difficult to obtain because of technology gaps or connectivity issues present in many rural communities.

Community Support and Health Services. Most rural and remote communities do not have enough community support and health services available, resulting in older adults needing to travel out of their community to seek help they need (F/P/T Ministers, 2007). However, this was not as much of an issue for communities near urban centres as older adults would not need to travel out that far (Spina & Menec, 2015). Another barrier to health services is the availability of providers (Menec & Novek, 2020).

2.3.3 ISSUES AND CHALLENGES TO DEVELOPING RURAL AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The most common issues and challenges that rural communities face when striving to become more age-friendly are related to human capacity, securing funding, and power dynamics. Smaller communities often find themselves stretched too thin and do not have enough human capacity to support and sustain age-friendly initiatives (Spina & Menec, 2015). Menec and Novak (2015) found that many rural communities were reliant on volunteers to run programs. This causes issues as there are often too few volunteers and many of them suffer from burnout. The lack of human capacity can lead to power dynamics where an age-friendly initiative is led completely by one individual. Depending on the individual, they can either positively contribute by being an advocate or they could end up stalling and causing delays with the implementation of a project (Menec & Novak, 2015). Another issue that was brought up was funding. Most age-friendly initiatives and community projects are dependent on securing investments and grants (Spina & Menec, 2015). However, this is extremely difficult as most funding and grant applications are too generic or do not have enough information available on how to apply (Menec & Novak, 2015; F/P/T Ministers, 2007). Besides funding and human capacity, one

of the most pressing issues with making a rural community age-friendly is government leadership. Compared to urban communities, rural communities do not have enough influence over resource allocation and policy decisions (Menec & Novak, 2015). To implement age-friendly initiatives, it is prudent that the federal or provincial government provides leadership and continue to support the initiative beyond initiating it.

2.3.4 GAPS IN LITERATURE ON RURAL AGE FRIENDLY PLANNING

There is a large gap in research on how age-friendly rural communities are and the community characteristics that contribute to making them age-friendly (Menec et al., 2015; Spina & Menec, 2015). The few studies on rural age-friendly planning were done prior to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, which may make them outdated and not account for a post-pandemic society.

2.4 SUMMARY

The literature review highlights the importance of age-friendly planning as aligning an individual's environment to meet their personal needs as they age is critical to older adults actively ageing and participating in their communities. As people age, their needs and capacity to address them change. To accommodate this, the environment should be adaptable. One of the most prevalent frameworks, WHO's Age-Friendly Cities framework, has been instrumental to the growing interest and implementation of age-friendly strategies across the globe. However, the WHO's framework is lacking in research on social connectivity and the rapid development of technology over the past few years. As it was mentioned in the previous section, there is a gap in research on rural age-friendly planning. Age-friendly strategies developed in urban contexts do not necessarily apply readily to rural communities, as they face unique challenges in transportation, housing, communication, and services. To better address the development of rural age-friendly communities, more research and government leadership is required.

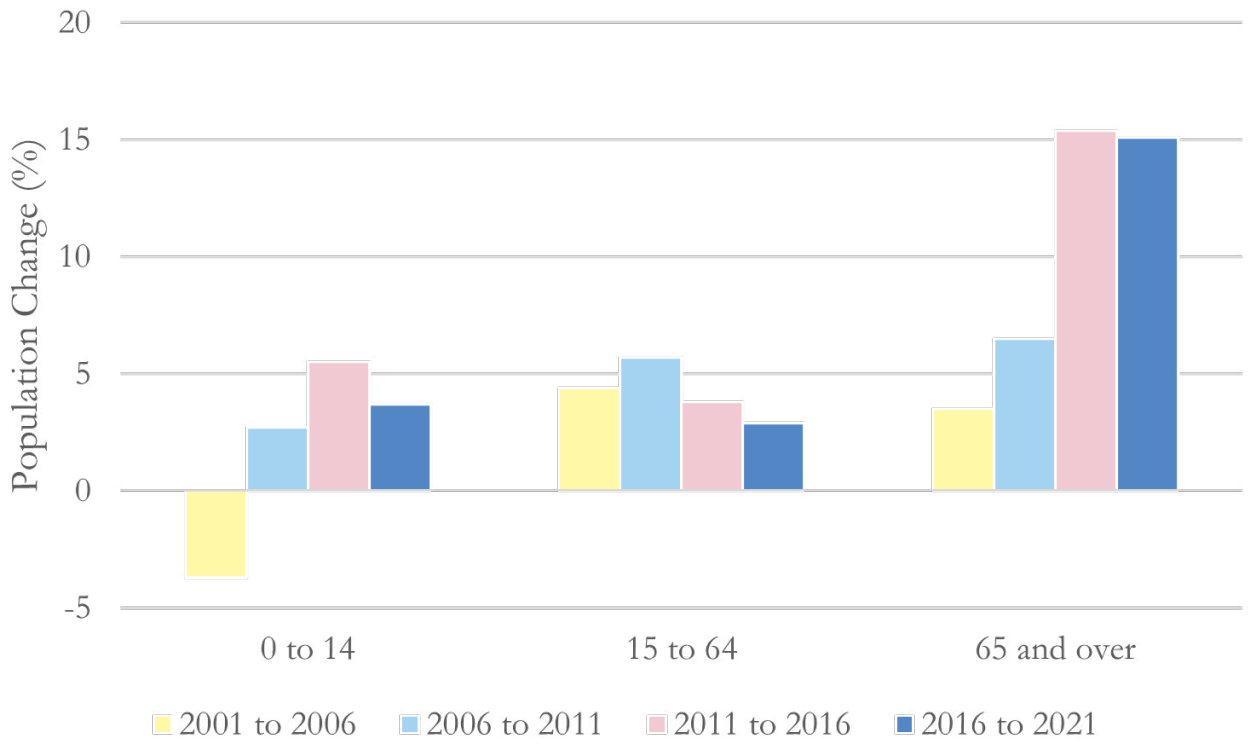
03
CONTEXT

To have a better understanding of the setting and the framework in which the research is conducted, this chapter provides background information about Manitoba as a study site. It also explains why Manitoba was chosen for this project. The chapter opens with a discussion of Manitoba's rural demographic profile. The next section looks at the provincial government's involvement in supporting age-friendliness in Manitoba. The final section in this chapter provides additional context on the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that support and implement current age-friendly initiatives.

3.1 MANITOBA AS A STUDY SITE

The setting of this research project is in the province of Manitoba. In 2021, the population of Manitoba was 1, 342, 153. Since the 2016 census, the population has grown by 5% (Statistics Canada, 2022c). Individuals aged 65 and over represent 17.1% of Manitoba's population. Over the past two decades, the population aged 65 and over in Manitoba has grown exponentially compared to other age groups. In 2001 to 2006, the population for individuals aged 65 and over grew by 3.5%. In comparison, this age group increased by 15.1% from 2016 to 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022c).

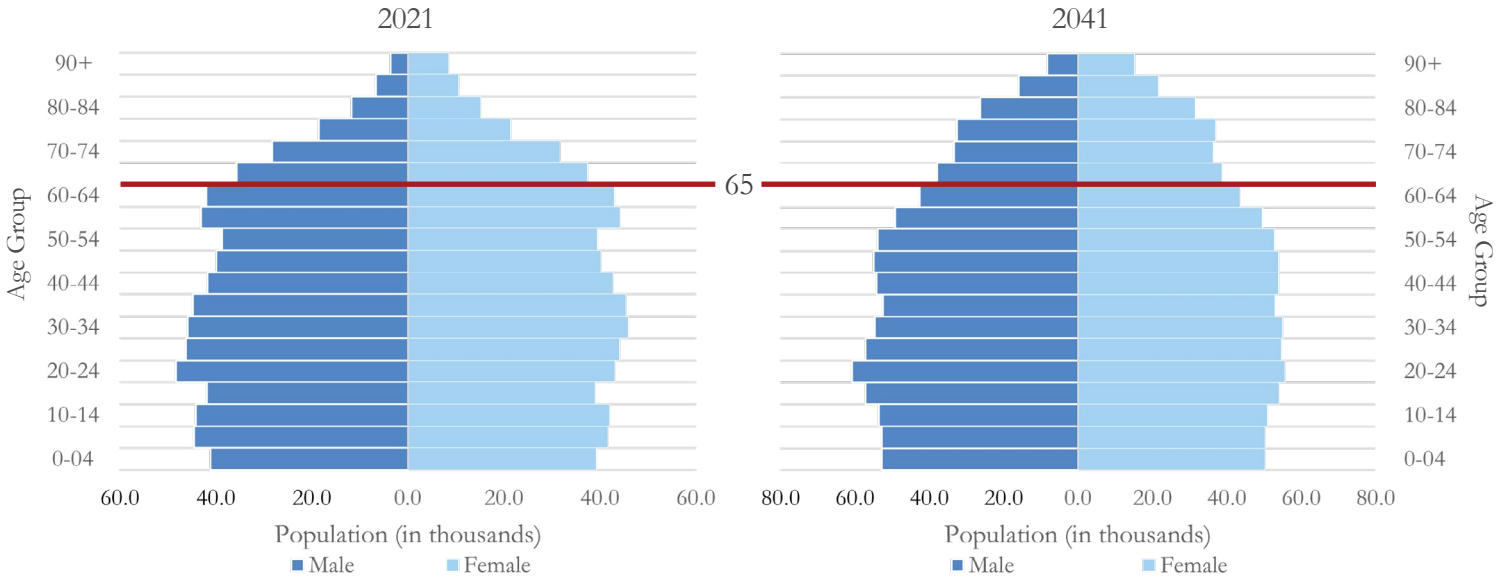
FIGURE 2: POPULATION CHANGES BY BROAD AGE GROUPS IN MANITOBA, 2001 TO 2021



Source: Statistics Canada. (2022b). *Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census of Population.* https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?lang=E&dguid=2021A000246&topic=2&objectid=3#pop-change-broad-age-groups

Similar to other provinces and territories in Canada, there has also been a long trend of the average age increasing in Manitoba. Over the next twenty years, it is expected that both the population and average age of Manitobans will increase.

FIGURE 3: ACTUAL AND ESTIMATED POPULATION PYRAMIDS OF MANITOBA, 2021 & 2041



Source: Statistics Canada. (2022) Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1 (x 1,000). (no. 98-316-X2021001) https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710005701.

While over two-thirds of the province reside in one urban centre, the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region (WMR), the geography of Manitoba is largely remote and rural. Behind the Atlantic provinces, Manitoba has one of the highest shares of residents living in rural areas. As of 2021, 25.2% of all Manitobans live in rural areas (Statistics Canada, 2022b). In comparison, only 17.8% of Canadian live in rural areas (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Manitoba also has a significant proportion of older adults living in rural areas of Manitoba. Approximately 25% of all Manitobans aged 65+ live in rural areas, while 23.2% of all Canadians aged 65+ live in rural areas (Statistics Canada, 2022b; Statistics Canada, 2022d).

TABLE 2: POPULATION DISTRIBUTION, 2021 (STATISTICS CANADA, 2022A)

Location	Total Population	% of Population	Population Aged 65+	Proportion of Aged 65+ (%)
Manitoba	1, 342, 150		229, 050	
Population Centres with a population between 1000 – 10,000	136, 097	10.1	25, 360	11.1
Rural Areas	338, 813	25.2	57, 285	25
Canada	36, 991, 981		7, 021, 430	
Rural Areas	6,601,982	17.8	6,601,982	23.2

3.2 MANITOBA AS AN AGE-FRIENDLY LEADER

Manitoba has also been involved with age-friendly work since the WHO began its research on Age-friendly Cities Framework. Portage la Prairie, a smaller urban centre in Manitoba, was one of the cities that participated in their initial research (WHO, 2007). Manitoba was also one of the members of the Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group for the F/P/T Ministers' *Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide* (F/P/T Ministers, 2007).

The Government of Manitoba also has a history of provincial-level councils and departments focused on promoting age-friendliness. Two notable groups were the Manitoba Council on Aging (MCA) and the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat. In 1980, the Minister of Health created the MCA (Archives of Manitoba, n.d.-a.). The MCA would end up directly reporting to the Minister Responsible for Seniors in 1994 (Rounce et al., 2024). MCA's main responsibilities were:

- Analysis of existing programs and needs;
- Assessing senior citizens' awareness of existing programs;
- Providing information to seniors, government departments, and others delivering services to senior citizens; and
- Providing information to business and industry to encourage employers to modify retirement policies and to help their employees prepare for retirement (Archives of Manitoba, n.d.-a).

The Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat provided the MCA with research, policy development, and administrative support (Archives of Manitoba, n.d.-b). The Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat was established in 1988. The main function of the Secretariat was to:

- Promote the interests of seniors by ensuring policies, programs, and services addresses seniors needs;
- Coordinating government planning on issues related to seniors;
- Promote public awareness on the ageing process; and
- Act as a central contact point within government on seniors (Archives of Manitoba, n.d.-b).

The MCA and Secretariat began reporting to the Minster of Health sometime around 2007 when the Minister responsible for Seniors was amalgamated with the Ministry of Health (Rounce et al., 2024). When the MCA and Secretariat were active, they met regularly, held community engagement events, and developed handbooks and resource guides for seniors (Rounce et al., 2024).

In 2008, the Government of Manitoba's Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat partnered with the University of Manitoba to establish the Age-friendly Manitoba Initiative (Age-Friendly Manitoba, n.d.). It is a province-wide effort to promote active ageing and address the wide range of needs of older adults in their communities. The main goals of the initiative are to help communities assess their current age-friendliness and create an age-friendly committee to provide support and address any issues that may appear. As of October 2024, 98 communities across Manitoba have joined the initiative.

After a change of government in 2016, the Province introduced Bill 10 to shrink and cut provincial government boards (Bill 10, 2017). MCA was one of the boards chosen to be dissolved. The justifications behind Bill 10 were to streamline board operation, save taxpayer dollars, and the belief that smaller boards was more efficient (CBCNews, 2017). However, it was unclear why specific boards like the MCA were dissolved instead or who took on their duties afterwards.

As a result of the pandemic and multiple COVID-19 outbreaks in personal care homes across Winnipeg in 2021, Seniors and Long-Term Care was separated from the Ministry of Health and made into its own portfolio at the beginning of 2022 (Bernhardt, 2022). The Ministry of Seniors and Long-term Care was then amalgamated again with the Ministry of Health after a change of government in 2023.

3.3 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

While the Government of Manitoba is the primary focus of this research, NGOs play a significant role in implementing age-friendly initiatives and strategies in Manitoba. The Manitoba Association of Senior Communities (MASC) is one of the primary NGOs that promote age-friendliness and helping communities become more age-friendly. MASC describe themselves as "Manitoba's age-friendly champion" and partnered with the Age-friendly Manitoba Initiative in 2009 (Age-Friendly Manitoba, n.d.). There are many NGOs that specialize in certain sectors and domains of age-friendliness. Some examples include the Transportation Options Network for Seniors (TONS) which specializes in transportation, and the Long Term & Continuing Care Association of Manitoba (LTCAM) which specializes in care and living options of seniors. Many of these NGOs are non-profit organizations and receive funding or have service-purchase agreements with the Government of Manitoba.

04
RESEARCH METHODS

The research project used semi-structured interviews and a document analysis to collect primary and secondary data. This chapter outlines the rationale for choosing these specific data collection methods, data analysis methods, and the limitations in the methodology.

4.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to answer questions 1 and 2 to better understand how age-friendly domains are incorporated into the planning and implementation process. The interviews were also used to address question 3 by asking participants questions about their own understanding of age-friendly principles and how to make the age-friendly domains easier to understand. Due to the limited research on ageing in a rural context and how the planning process could differ from department to department, semi-structured interviews are ideal because they use open-ended questions (Farthing, 2016). The semi-structured format also allows for major questions to be asked of all participants but also offers flexibility to prompt and probe for further details (Farthing, 2016). The complete interview guides are available in **Appendix A - Interview Guide.**

Interview participants were chosen based on the key WHO domains that affect rural communities – transportation, housing and urban development, information and communication, and health and community services – that were detailed in the previous chapter. Invitations were sent to individuals from NGOs associated with age-friendly initiatives, planners, and government officials from the Departments of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (HSLTC), Manitoba Housing, Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI), and the Community Planning branch. The goal was to have at least one or two representatives from each department and one to two representatives from NGOs. Potential participants were contacted using publicly available email addresses listed in staff directories, official government websites, community organization websites, and governmental reports. Recruitment scripts and follow-up material can be found in **Appendix B - Interview Recruitment Material**. To avoid potential conflicts of interest and perceived coercion, a consent form, information sheet, and interview guide were provided to participants prior to the interview.

In total, eighteen interview invitations were sent out. Seven invitations were declined and three did not respond. All interviews were conducted virtually between December 2024 and February 2025. Each interview, ranging from thirty to ninety minutes long, was audio-recorded. To protect each participant's identity, each was provided with a descriptor or title that is not personally identifiable (e.g. government official, NGO representative).

After transcribing the interviews using the transcription software included in Zoom, they were analyzed using deductive and inductive coding. Key themes were taken from the literature review and were expanded

based on participants' own responses. The coding framework and key themes can be found in **Appendix F - Coding Framework.**

TABLE 3: INTERVIEWS SOLICITED AND ACCEPTED

DEPARTMENT / ORGANIZATION	REQUESTS	ACCEPTED
NGOs	3	2
Community Planning Branch	3	2
Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care	6	2
Housing	2	2
Transportation and Infrastructure	4	0
TOTAL	18	8

4.2 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

To supplement insights from the semi-structured interviews, I conducted a document analysis. This research method was chosen as it helped contextualize the data collected from the interviews and corroborate evidence (Bowen, 2009). Through the document analysis, I gathered more information on the responsibilities of each department as mandated by the current government elected in 2023. For the document analysis, I referred to ministerial mandate letters and official department transition documents from each department interviewed. Both types of documents were chosen as they showed what messages and ideas about the roles of each department were relayed internally from government leadership. The October 2023 departmental transition briefings were specifically chosen as many interview participants mentioned roles and responsibilities that changed with the transition of government. Overall, nine documents were analyzed. Documents were found using official government websites and Google searches.

The documents were analyzed with a deductive content approach. Key themes were derived based

on participants responses in the semi-structured interviews and the original research questions. The following themes were used to analyze the documents:

- Mission
- Priorities
- Responsibilities

TABLE 4: DOCUMENTS ANALYZED

DEPARTMENT / ORGANIZATION	DOCUMENT
Community Planning Branch	• Mandate Letter to the Minister for Municipal and Northern Relations – November 13, 2024 • Department Briefing October 2023 | Municipal Relations
Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care	• Mandate Letter to the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long Term Care, October 19, 2023 • Department Briefing October 2023 | Health • Department Briefing October 2023 | Seniors and Long-Term Care
Housing	• Mandate Letter to the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, October 19, 2023 • Department Briefing October 2023 | Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation
Transportation and Infrastructure	• Mandate Letter to the Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure – November 13, 2024 • Department Briefing October 2023 | Transportation and Infrastructure
TOTAL DOCUMENTS	9

4.3 LIMITATIONS

Throughout my research, I faced some research limitations collecting information. One of the main limitations was difficulty recruiting any individuals from MTI for an interview. Unfortunately, I could not gather comparable detailed and accurate information on MTI; I had to rely on the document analysis and insights from other participants.

Due to the semi-structured nature and limited time allotted for each interview, some questions were passed over or the conversations shifted before questions were answered. For example, some participants were not asked about their familiarity with the F/P/T Ministers' *Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide*. In most cases, this was done because participants had mentioned that they were not familiar with WHO's Global Age-Friendly Guide or that they know very little about age-friendly principles in general.

As the research project focuses primarily on rural age-friendly projects, there is also an inherent bias in which the participants discuss their work. It posed a problem as some age-friendly projects are not always called "age-friendly" even though the goals of the project may align with the literature's definitions of age-friendliness. Similarly, the definition of "age-friendly" differed among participant, as some participants primarily focused on seniors, while others looked at all age groups. Due to the varying definitions, it created challenges comparing participant responses.

05
FINDINGS

This chapter summarizes the key findings from the interviews and document analysis. The chapter starts with the interview findings, followed by the document analysis, and ends with a summary of the key findings.

5.1 INTERVIEW FINDINGS

This section is split into two parts. The first half of the section identifies the responsibilities of each group. The second half of the section summarizes some of the key findings regarding how the departments work together and their familiarity with age-friendly principles.

5.1.1 DEPARTMENTS' AND ORGANIZATIONS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1.1.1 MANITOBA TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I was unable to conduct interviews with anyone from Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI). Despite the limitation, the lack of interviews provided crucial information regarding their department. Three out of four of the individuals that were invited for an interview declined, as they believed that their work bore no relation to rural planning or age-friendly planning. Two individuals also noted that the work being done in the department focused on capital projects such as highways and bridges; however, both declined the invitation as they felt that it would not relate to rural or age-friendly planning.

Another interview participant also noted that finding an individual from MTI who could assist or lead age-friendly projects was difficult. While the participant had only been in their position for roughly six months, they have not yet found a specific person who dealt with transportation with a people-focused lens. The participant stated that "There is transportation wound into every single facet of our government, in some ways, there is no one person that I found that focuses on the transportation of people to places." Another planner mentioned that they had worked with someone from MTI who focused on providing better transportation modes for people a long time ago; however, no specifics were mentioned and it was unclear whether they still work in MTI.

Participants had conflicting answers as to who they think would be responsible for transportation projects or initiatives where an age-friendly lens would be ideal. One government official believed that the responsibility and leadership would fall under MTI. However, one of the NGO representatives stated that MTI's mandate is "highly focused on roads, culverts, ditches, road clearings, but there's nothing that I've found thus far that is focused on the transportation of the humans." The NGO representative found that in this absence, the responsibility would solely fall onto municipal governments or non-profit organizations.

5.1.1.2 MANITOBA HOUSING

Some of the main responsibilities of Manitoba Housing that were mentioned in the interviews was housing program development, working on housing delivery like asset management, and policy development. While no specific projects were mentioned, it was stated during the interviews that Manitoba Housing also provides support to communities wanting to develop seniors housing. This includes conducting a demographics and housing analysis on seniors housing.. Participants also mentioned the work that Manitoba Housing has done with visitable housing. Manitoba Housing describes visitable housing as accessible housing that "offers a convenient home for residents and a welcoming environment for visitors of all ages and abilities" (Manitoba Housing, n.d.). The department has previously worked on visitable housing standards and development projects that contain visitable housing, such as the Winnipeg neighbourhood of Bridgwater.

5.1.1.3 COMMUNITY PLANNING BRANCH

Participants mentioned that most of the work done within the Community Planning Branch is related to land-use planning, supporting municipalities, and providing advice to council and planning districts. One participant described the Community Planning Branch as "the connection between the municipality and the provincial departments." The branch is split between eight regional offices that work directly with applicants, landowners, and municipal council.

Collaborating with other departments appeared to be a core aspect of the branch. When discussing the working process of the Community Planning branch, one participant said they "always collaborate first" and the branch is built on that idea. Another participant noted that the branch typically collaborated with MTI or Manitoba Housing on projects.

5.1.1.4 MANITOBA HEALTH, SENIORS AND LONG TERM CARE

During the interviews, participants primarily talked about Manitoba Health, Seniors and Long Term Care (HSLTC) in relation to Seniors and Long Term Care. One government official described the responsibilities of the Seniors and Long-Term Care department as:

- Providing analytical advice to the Minister
- Fulfilling the implementation of supportive initiatives for seniors
- Promoting advocacy for seniors and long-term care

In the previous government, Seniors and Long Term Care had its own portfolio. After it was combined with Health, a government official claimed the department primarily focused on issues and concerns with Seniors in relation to health care. Prior to the amalgamation, Seniors and Long Term Care had been working on a whole-of-government seniors' strategy. The government official commented that the strategy was completed right before the change in government. While there were initially plans and discussions to implement the strategy, the government official mentioned that there had been a "change in direction."

While most discussion was related to Seniors and Long Term Care, a few participants mentioned some of the responsibilities of the Health department. Notably, HSLTC was very involved with updating personal care home standards. Another participant had mentioned that they believe that HSLTC should be more involved with other departments like MTI. The participant justified this as transportation is a barrier to rural residents trying to access health care.

During the interviews, it was found that the HSLTC had a service-purchase agreement with multiple organizations to deliver services to seniors across Manitoba. Notably, HSLTC has a service-purchase agreement with MASC to deliver and monitor the Age-friendly Manitoba initiative. Through the service-purchase agreement, HSLTC typically plays more of a background role in supporting senior-focused and age-friendly initiatives initiated by non-profit organizations.

5.1.1.5 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

The involvement of local governments and non-profit organizations in implementing age-friendly strategies was mentioned in every single interview. As mentioned in the previous section, many non-profit organizations are in service-purchase agreements with HSLTC to deliver services to seniors. Their work typically involves community consultations, setting up age-friendly committees within municipalities, and managing projects for seniors. NGO representatives also mentioned that they are heavily involved in conducting research and creating resources and toolkits on applying age-friendly principles.

5.1.1.5.A CHALLENGES

Some of the challenges that non-profit organizations face while doing age-friendly work in rural communities include funding, access to information, and staff capacity. Regarding funding, one participant mentioned that it was difficult sustaining projects as funding was limited. They also mentioned that some

funding sources would only be able to fund a project once. As a result, one community may receive funding to implement an age-friendly initiative, but another community would not be able to receive funding since the project technically already occurred once. This also caused issues with sustaining projects as some funding sources only provided funding for a short time-period. Another participant also mentioned that some funding sources such as Winnipeg Foundation and United Way are unable to fund the non-profit organizations that already receive provincial funding. The funding barrier also applied to the challenge with staff capacity. One NGO representative said that "in rural communities, lots of people wear two or three different hats, they're already doing two or three different things." The NGO representative said that a common reason for this was because rural communities would have to decide between using funding to put plans and initiatives into action or funding more staff. Another challenge that was mentioned was access to information. One participant had witnessed rural communities have difficulty accessing support or resources online due to difficulties accessing reliable Wi-Fi. More information regarding challenges relating to communication can be found below in section 5.1.3 Collaboration and Communication Between Departments and NGOs.

5.1.2 FAMILIARITY WITH AGE-FRIENDLY PRINCIPLES AND DOMAINS

TABLE 5: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS' FAMILIARITY WITH AGE-FRIENDLY PRINCIPLES

	VERY FAMILIAR	SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR	UNFAMILIAR
WHO's *Global Age-Friendly Guide*	3	2	3
F/P/T Minister's *Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide*	3	1	3

One of the questions asked to the participants was about their familiarity with age-friendly principles and domains, primarily the ones dictated by WHO and the F/P/T Ministers. Two out of three of the participants who were very familiar with both age-friendly concepts presented by WHO and the F/P/T

Ministers were NGO representatives. Both participants mentioned that these were used directly in their work; one of the NGO representatives said that they are fundamental to their work and the presentations that they create for the communities they work with. For the government officials and planners that mentioned they were either familiar or somewhat familiar, they mentioned that it was not typically used as a reference guide in their work. Instead of the guides, most of them would instead use internal documents, external reports that are commissioned, or information taken from public consultations. The participants who mentioned that they were not familiar said that they are familiar with the general concepts of age-friendly planning due to their work experiences and discussions with age-friendly advocates.

In discussions on familiarity with age-friendly principles and domains across the government, it was noted by one participant that there are likely many people who are familiar with age-friendly concepts without realizing it. The participant attributes this to the type of language used. The participant mentions that 'age-friendly' is language typically used by planners and communities. However, other professions may not understand it and how it relates to their own work.

5.1.2.1 DEFINING AGE-FRIENDLINESS

When discussing familiarity with age-friendly concepts and the work that the participants were doing, there appeared to be some differences in the way that participants were defining it. Most participants focused on the older adult aspect of age-friendly planning, while three of the participants viewed it more as all life stages, with a primary focus on older adults or end of life stages. This appeared to affect the way that age-friendliness is understood by the participants and how it contributes to their work. For example, some participants only viewed their work to be age-friendly related if it actively involved seniors.

5.1.2.2 AGEISM

During a discussion on people's familiarity and willingness to learn more about age-friendly principles, one participant brought up ageism as a factor to people being unwilling to hear more. The participant provided a few examples of ageism and how it makes people not want to listen solely because of someone's age. The participant also discussed how ageism contributes to the way age-friendly principles are viewed, specifically with the domain of respect and social inclusion. This domain covers the aspect of involving older adults in decisions that concern them, however, ageism can lead to people not considering or providing space for them.

5.1.3 COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS AND NGOS

Every interview mentioned collaboration as important to their work and fulfilling projects despite some challenges. All government officials and planners mentioned that cross-departmental collaboration was common. Participants noted that initiating collaboration was relatively simple as they or a colleague would reach out to someone in the other department. However, some noted that it can be difficult if there was no previous relationship due to staff turnover. When discussing about working with the department of Seniors and Long Term Care, one government official said:

> I currently don't know who my colleague is for that … I used to know her, then she changed jobs. I don't know who replaced her, but not having that relationship makes it very hard to reach out and work together … There's no processes for our systems to work together. It really just relies on you having this relationship.

One of the planners that was interviewed shared similar sentiments that staff turnover was a challenge to collaboration. The planner mentions that "sometimes you find somebody who's a good connection and then that changes, so you have to rework that." Staff turnovers and staff switching positions makes collaboration difficult and the development of working relationships to take longer.

Another challenge that a participant mentioned was competing priorities. About half of the participants mentioned that it is a common stereotype for government departments to stick to their portfolio and not pay attention if it does not clearly relate to their responsibilities. Two participants had mentioned that they have personally seen other departments do this. One participant observed that other departments do not prioritize collaboration first, which makes it difficult to bring attention to projects or initiatives outside of their portfolio. Due to strict visitation restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a large push towards loosening restrictions or finding alternatives to visitation for seniors' homes. To solve this, Manitoba Health had decided to place large shipping containers with a clear safety screen on the property of seniors home so people could visit while social distancing. However, Manitoba Health did not consult other departments before doing this. This was an issue as some of the shipping containers were being placed on the property of non-profit organizations in areas where zoning-by laws prohibited shipping containers. After some of the shipping

containers were delivered and placed, some municipalities were confused and did not understand what was happening. As a result, the Community Planning Branch was brought in to create a temporary permission or zoning by-law amendment to allow the shipping containers. One of the participants noted that it is a backwards form of collaboration and often "an emergency happens, and people move forward, and then you have to fix it afterwards." Another participant claimed that the stereotype is justified, however, this does not mean collaboration does not happen between departments.

Aside from staff turnover and competing priorities, one participant noted fear of change as a challenge for collaboration and implementing initiatives. Regarding fear of change, the participant said "If you make changes, it's one thing. When you make a radical change, there are people who won't be able to make that transition." The participant also noted that while change can create a better future or positively affect a large number of people, somebody will still be negatively affected by change. An example of this was discussed around changes with personal care home standards in Manitoba. Personal care home standards are changing to prioritize residents' experiences first. Despite residents and frontline staff being ready for change, there was challenges with senior leadership agreeing with these changes. The participant believed that this is challenging and difficult for senior leadership as they built and grew their career with the current system.

5.1.3.1 SENIORS AND LONG-TERM CARE GOVERNMENT INTEGRATION GROUP

Despite the many challenges faced while trying to collaborate and communicate between departments, some participants claimed that there is still a lot of collaboration between departments. One of the interview participants mentioned that they were part of a cross-departmental working group called the Seniors and Long-Term Care Government Integration Group. This working group was established in April 2022, a few months after the Seniors and Long-Term Care portfolio was separated from Manitoba Health. The working group had representatives from departments across the whole government and would meet on either a monthly or quarterly basis to discuss issues pertaining to seniors. Another participant that was involved said that the working group was also created so departments would be kept updated on the development of a senior strategy plan. After the change in government in 2023, the last meeting was held in January 2024. During the last meeting, the plan going forward was to hold a few meetings over the year or if certain issues pertaining to seniors arise. However, another participant claimed that the group no longer meets at all due to a "change in direction." Both participants have said no other meetings have occurred since the January 2024 meeting.

5.2 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS

As mentioned in Chapter 4: Methods, ministerial mandate letters and official department transition documents were used in the analysis to better understand the roles and responsibilities of each department. This section is divided by the four government departments that are being investigated.

5.2.1 MANITOBA TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The two documents that were looked at were the ministerial mandate letter for the Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure and the department transition briefing for MTI. A new minister was sworn in after a cabinet shuffle in 2024. As a result, there is a year difference between the publication of the department transition briefing and the mandate letter.

5.2.1.1 MISSION

In the department transition briefing, the department's mission is "To ensure safe, reliable, and sustainable infrastructure and services for Manitoba and its communities" (Government of Manitoba, 2023e, p.6). The mandate letter uses similar language.

5.2.1.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

The following are the department responsibilities outlined in the department transition briefing:

- Construction, maintenance and operation of the province's vast transportation and water-related infrastructure network;
- Development of transportation and corporate policy, programs and legislation;
- Coordination of emergency preparedness, emergency response, and disaster recovery; motor carrier safety and regulation enforcement including carrier permits;
- Development and implementation of sustainable transportation initiatives;
- Provincial emergency expenditures budget; and
- Providing stewardship and asset management (Government of Manitoba, 2023e, pp. 6- 7).

While the mandate does not have specific responsibilities, the mandate does mention that collaboration is expected between MTI; Municipal and Northern Relations; Business, Trade, Mining and Job Creation; and

Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures. The mandate also highlights the importance of keeping families safe twice.

5.2.1.3. PRIORITIES

The ministerial mandate letter and the department transition briefing appeared to have similar sentiments. Some of the priorities under the mandate letter were generalized, while the department transition briefing's priorities all had a specific project attached to them. Overall, the general priorities of MTI are flood mitigation, maintaining transportation infrastructure, and economy based.

TABLE 6: COMPARISON OF MANITOBA TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES

MINISTERIAL MANDATE LETTER	DEPARTMENT TRANSITION BRIEFING
• Building infrastructure to grow economy • Consulting with Indigenous communities on the development of the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Channels • Improve highway safety, specifically in eastern Manitoba • Maintaining road infrastructure • Reversing cuts to roads and maintenance • Develop Churchill and Centreport as transportation and supply chain hubs • Building a new airport at Wasagamack First Nation	• Status of the 2023/2024 Capital Program Delivery • Fisher River Flood Mitigation Project • Northern Corridors Energy Development and NeeStaNan Commitment • 2024 Flood Preparation and Planning • Changes to Canada's Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements and • Manitoba's provincial Disaster Financial Assistance Program. • Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Grid

5.2.2 MANITOBA HOUSING

For the analysis, the department transition briefing is focused on the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation. As the government department also includes addictions, the mandate letter also has a large focus on addictions.

5.2.2.1 MISSION

The department transition briefing outlines the department's mission as "help[ing] keep children, individuals, families and communities safe and secure, while supporting personal development, self-reliance, well-being and social inclusion." There was no mention of support towards seniors specifically in the document. Rather than focusing solely on housing, the mission focuses more on the community and social impacts instead. The mission in the mandate letter is focused on responding to the homelessness challenge in Manitoba.

5.2.2.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

In the mandate letter, seven out of the eight commitments are on addictions. The eighth commitment is focused on building social and affordable housing. The responsibilities listed in the department briefing are more housing centric. Like the mandate letter commitment, the briefing also addresses accessibility, affordability, and adequacy of housing. The other responsibilities focus on the housing market and improving the current conditions of Manitoba's housing stock.

5.2.2.3. PRIORITIES

Similar to the mission, the mandate letter's main priority is ending chronic homelessness by working with municipalities. On the other hand, the department transition is a mixture of providing affordable housing and reviewing the status and strategy of Manitoba Housing. There is no direct mention of working towards ending chronic homelessness in the department transition briefing.

TABLE 7: COMPARISON OF MANITOBA HOUSING PRIORITIES

MINISTERIAL MANDATE LETTER	DEPARTMENT TRANSITION BRIEFING
• Work with municipalities to end chronic homelessness, with a priority on children	• Affordability/Need for new supply • National Housing Strategy • Role of Manitoba Housing • Assessing the Condition of the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation Portfolio • Tenanting and Supporting High Acuity Tenants

5.2.3 MUNICIPAL AND NORTHERN RELATIONS – COMMUNITY PLANNING BRANCH

Like MTI, a new Minister for Municipal and Northern Relations was sworn into government in November 2024. There is a one-year difference between when the department briefing and the letter were released, which may explain some of the differences in priorities. The department briefing focuses only on municipal relations, while the mandate letter discusses northern relations and francophone affairs.

5.2.3.1 MISSION

The department transition briefing's mission is to "advance sustainable, safe and accountable communities that are responsive to the needs of Manitoban" (Government of Manitoba, 2023c, p. 2). The mandate letter does not directly mention sustainability, safety and accountability, but it shares similar sentiments. The mandate letter's mission is "to recognize municipalities as serious partners and to work with them to deliver results for the people of the province" (Kinew, 2024a). This statement focuses more on collaboration, while the briefing is more focused on listening and engagement.

5.2.3.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

Half of the responsibilities under the department briefing are focused on community development, building capacity for local governments, and establishing a strong framework to conduct this type of work. The

other responsibilities focus on making the department a centre of collaboration. This includes collaborating with "individuals, municipal governments, fire services, non-governmental organizations, industry, academic communities and utilities" (Government of Manitoba, 2023c, p.6). Intergovernmental relationships and strategic partnerships at all levels of government are also listed as their responsibility.

The mandate's letter is more specific and appears to align more with the priorities listed in the department transition briefing. The two commitments listed in the mandate letter include providing reliable funding for municipalities and working with municipalities to improve waste-water management.

5.2.3.3. PRIORITIES

The priorities listed in the mandate letter and transition briefing are not the same. The mandate's priorities align more with the mission and responsibilities listed by the department transition briefing. The priorities focus on collaboration, communication, and advancing communities to meet the needs of Manitobans. It is also important to note that affordable housing was listed as a priority for Municipal and Northern Relations. For the department transition briefing, the priorities are more related to governance. Comparison of priorities listed in table 7 on next page.

5.2.4 MANITOBA HEALTH, SENIORS AND LONG TERM CARE

As the Seniors and Long Term Care portfolio was combined back with Manitoba Health after the change in government in 2023, Seniors and Long Term Care had its own separate transition document. In this section, both the Seniors and Long Term Care and Health Department Transition Briefing documents were looked at.

5.2.4.1 MISSION

For the department of Health, the department transition briefing state's the department's mission as "to ensure Manitoban patients, families and seniors have access to quality, timely healthcare wherever they live through a health care system that is sustainable and accountable" (Government of Manitoba, 2023a). The Seniors and Long Term Care's transition briefing mission statement focuses more on cross-department and non-profit organization collaboration to improve senior services. It also specifically prioritizes working on the

TABLE 8: COMPARISON OF MANITOBA MUNICIPAL AND NORTHERN RELATIONS PRIORITIES

MINISTERIAL MANDATE LETTER	DEPARTMENT TRANSITION BRIEFING
• Implement new legislation to give municipalities more freedom and increase collaboration and cooperation between municipalities and the province • Treat municipal and northern governments with the respect they deserve and partner with them to make life better for families across the province • Ensure northern and municipal leaders know you are their point person with our government • Recognize the founding role of the Francophone community in our province, protect their rights and improve access to French language education, health care and services so that we are truly a bilingual province • Work with the City of Winnipeg and the Federal Government to invest in the North End Pollution Control Centre with good, union jobs to build more affordable housing and protect Lake Winnipeg	• Municipal Funding • Community Development Non-Profit Sector Strategy • Capital Planning Region • Municipal Governance and Financial Oversight • Municipal Board Appeals Process, Capacity and Operational Review • Medical First Responders Designation

Stevenson Review, a report on the 2022 personal care home COVID-19 outbreak in Winnipeg, and improving personal care homes.

For the mandate letter to the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long Term Care, the mission is focused entirely on delivering accessible health care and improving the work culture of health care. Besides what is listed in the commitment's sections in the letter, there is no direct mention of seniors.

5.2.4.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

In the Seniors and Long Term Care department transition briefing, the responsibilities are nearly the same as the mission statement. More detail and specifics are given, such as the implementation of a whole-of-government seniors strategy. The responsibilities listed for Health are also similar to its mission statement. However, there is more detail and specific responsibilities listed for Health compared to Seniors and Long Term Care. The responsibilities outlined in the Health department transition briefing include policy and planning of service delivery organizations, promoting public health to all sectors, and building an improved health care system.

The mandate letter's responsibilities are more detailed and specific compared to the department transition briefings. Fourteen out of the fifteen commitments in the mandate letter are focused on health care. The fourteen commitments are centered mainly on education, increasing staffs, building health care infrastructure, and making improvements to the health care system. The one commitment dedicated related to Seniors and Long Term Care is "improve care for seniors by creating an independent Senior's advocate and increasing the number of Personal Care Home beds in Manitoba and working towards more direct hours of care for seniors." Unlike the department transition briefing, there is no mention of a whole-of-government seniors' strategy.

5.2.4.3. PRIORITIES

. The priorities listed in the mandate letter and the department transition briefings are quite different. The mandate letter appears to look at more short term and immediate priorities while the department transition briefings focus on more long-term priorities and objectives. It is notable that the priorities under the mandate letter do not mention seniors, ageing, or personal care homes.

TABLE 9: COMPARISON OF MANITOBA HEALTH, SENIORS AND LONG TERM CARE PRIORITIES

MINISTERIAL MANDATE LETTER	DEPARTMENT TRANSITION BRIEFING	
	HEALTH	SENIORS AND LONG TERM CARE
• Send an open letter signed by you, the Minister of Health, and myself, to Manitoba's frontline health care staff to let them know that help is on the way • Implement our health human resource strategy to fix the staffing crisis in health care by hiring 400 doctors over 5 years; 300 nurses in Winnipeg with a corresponding commitment to rural and Northern Manitoba; 200 paramedics and 100 homecare workers • Reduce wait times at ERs starting with reopening the Emergency Department at the Victoria hospital and by increasing bed capacity at all major hospitals with ERs across the province • Reduce wait times in ERs by opening 4 new Neighborhood Illness and Injury clinics in Winnipeg and 1 in Brandon	• Seniors Strategy and Next Actions • Truth and Reconciliation – Seniors and Long-Term Care engagement with • Indigenous Partners and Mutual Collaborative Action • System Redesign and Framework with Quality and Accountability • Supports in Housing Settings • Home Care • Stevenson Review and Ongoing Implementation of Recommendations	• Seniors Strategy and Next Actions • Truth and Reconciliation – Seniors and Long-Term Care engagement with • Indigenous Partners and Mutual Collaborative Action • System Redesign and Framework with Quality and Accountability • Supports in Housing Settings • Home Care • Stevenson Review and Ongoing Implementation of Recommendations

5.3 SUMMARY

Through the interview findings and document analysis, I found information on the role that each department has and how different authorities and departments work together. From the interviews, it was found that most participants are generally familiar with age-friendly planning. However, most of the information that is used by the departmental members to understand age-friendly principles were gathered internally at the province. A common theme between both research methods was the reliance on local governments and NGOs to implement age-friendly initiatives and projects. It was also found that the Seniors and Long Care department was its own portfolio in the previous government and had been working on a whole-of-government seniors' strategy. After the change of government, it was not implemented and the working groups that oversaw the process were disbanded. Another reoccurring theme in the document analysis was a lack of clear direction on priorities regarding support for older adults.

06
DISCUSSION

This chapter explores the significance of the research findings and how they address the research questions that are being investigated. The sections in this chapter are organized by research question and ends with a summary of the key points.

6.1 WHICH DEPARTMENTS OR AUTHORITIES HANDLE EACH AGE-FRIENDLY DOMAIN (E.G., HOUSING, SOCIAL PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION) IN MANITOBA?

6.1.1 DEPARTMENTAL PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

While some departments seem like they would be the clear candidate for the responsibility of a specific age-friendly domain, it is not that straightforward. Based on names alone, MTI seems like it would be responsible for transportation. However, the interview and document analysis findings show that they do not claim responsibility. This is more of a municipality or non-profit responsibility instead. By not taking responsibility for this domain, decisions made with transportation at a provincial level do not take the concerns of the ageing population into consideration.

With HSLTC, the data is conflicting on which age-friendly domain they handle. Based on the interviews, the ministerial mandate letter, and Health transition briefing, HSLTC seems to only handle the domain of community support and health services. However, the Seniors and Long Term Care briefing suggests that the department would address all of the domains. As the interview findings do not seem to support the Seniors and Long Term Care briefing, it suggests that it is not true. Instead, HSLTC is primarily connected to community support and health services. HSLTC is involved with every domain due to their service-purchase agreements with NGOs like MASC. However, it appears that HSLTC plays more of a supportive role rather than taking on full responsibility. The domain of community support and health is important, but the amalgamation of the HSLTC portfolio leaves a large gap by deprioritizing the work of Seniors and Long Term Care.

Regarding the departments of Municipal and Northern Relations and Housing, the document analysis and interviews aligned with each other. Due to their strong involvement with municipalities, Municipal and Northern Relations appear to be responsible for communication and information. As Municipal and Northern Relations is also responsible for land-use planning across Manitoba, they work on projects that address outdoor spaces and buildings and housing. They would also indirectly engage with the domains that are passed onto municipalities, like transportation. Based on the work described by Manitoba Housing in the interviews and

the document analysis, it appears that Manitoba Housing works primarily with the domains of housing and outdoor spaces and buildings.

Based on the document analysis, the domains of respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, and social participation are handled by every department. All the documents discuss the well-being of Manitobans and making decisions that allow Manitobans to participate in their communities. Even though the document analysis points to this, most of the interview findings do not clearly support this. Besides Manitoba Housing and HSLTC, barely any discussion was made about other departments that could relate to these domains. In HSLTC's case, these domains were discussed, however, plans and groups that focused on these domains were disbanded. This creates dissonance between the department's responsibilities and their actions.

6.1.2 RELIANCE ON NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Rather than the provincial government assigning responsibility to their departments, most age-friendly planning efforts falls to non-profits and local governments. The biggest example that was found through the findings was with MTI. Most projects and initiatives regarding age-friendly transportation is done by local governments and non-profit organizations. As one participant mentioned, transportation is interwoven in every facet of government. Despite that, the responsibility has been given to municipalities and non-profit organizations. By relying solely on municipalities and non-profit organizations, it makes it difficult to make changes if it falls under provincial jurisdiction. For example, if a municipality wants to make crossing highways for pedestrians safer, they are unable to do this without consulting the provincial government. It also creates more of a burden for non-profit organizations and local governments as they become responsible for all aspects of planning and implementation of rural public transportation.

The challenges faced by non-profit organizations and local organizations in implementing age-friendly initiatives is largely consistent with the literature review. Two of the largest challenges identified by Spina and Menec (2015), human capacity and funding, were also brought up as major challenges by the NGO representatives. These challenges are another barrier to addressing age-friendly concerns and shows that the provincial government should help alleviate that burden.

To a certain extent, the government does help alleviate these burdens through service-purchase agreements. While the financial support is helpful, it can also be a hinderance. As mentioned during the interviews, some funding is restricted to non-profit organizations that receive provincially funding. This reduces the amount of funding that can be obtained and leaves non-profit organizations to figure out if they should prioritize funding carrying out the project or staff.

6.2 HOW DO GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER TO IMPLEMENT AGE-FRIENDLY INITIATIVES FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES?

6.2.1 CROSS-DEPARTMENT COLLABORATION

Overall, the departmental interviewees stated that communication was done simply by reaching out to another department. Participants relied on having a contact in another department or knowing someone who has a contact. Many participants agreed that it is especially difficult collaborating if they do not have a prior relationship with someone in the relevant departments. As seen with the participant who had difficulty finding a contact from MTI , having to rely on existing relationships to initiate collaboration can complicate the implementation process of age-friendly projects and initiatives for those who do not have any. This results in delays due to the time it takes to re-build relationships or even just finding a contact.

The document analysis supported the conversations held during the interviews about collaborating. It was most evident with the department of Municipal and Northern Relation, where both interview participants and the document analysis implied that collaboration is essential to their department. As mentioned in the interviews and document findings, some departments also had direct orders to work with other departments for other projects. These specific collaborations were not mentioned during the interviews, but it can be implied that collaboration takes place based on the participants general comments on their department's reaching out to other departments.

6.2.2 WORKING IN SILOS

Generally, it seemed like participants believed that collaboration was important. Many noted that the first step to take if they find out an issue considers a different department was to reach out. Despite

the mentions of collaboration and awareness of its importance, there was a reoccurring theme present during the interviews of other departments not collaborating.

It is contradictory for departments to work in silos as their mandates and transition briefings would often mention collaborating or taking whole-of-government approaches to their work. The document analysis suggests that it is not intentional, and more of a lack of understanding of each department's jurisdictions. An example of this is the lack of collaboration between Health and Municipal and Northern Relation on the COVID-19 shipping containers solution. As seen in that example, working in silos contributes to the inefficiencies and lack of planning for ageing populations. Working in silos creates confusion and causes problems that delay the implementation of initiatives and projects that address age-friendly concerns.

6.2.3 WORKING GROUPS AND WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACHES

Over the years, the provincial government has had groups and councils focused on supporting the ageing population. However, it appears that none are currently active. Based on participants' responses during the interviews, these were integral for the government to address concerns pertaining to seniors and implementing age-friendly initiatives. These groups allowed for cross-departmental collaboration, easy access to support and resources for developing, and a space where age-friendly issues could be brought to light. The lack of groups and councils focused on addressing the ageing population contributes to the difficulties that departments face communicating with each other regarding age-friendly initiatives.

6.3 WHAT INFORMATION DO GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS NEED TO INTEGRATE AGE-FRIENDLY CONCERNS INTO POLICY AND PLANNING DOCUMENTS, AND TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT AGEING POPULATIONS?

6.3.1 UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS CONSIDERED "AGE-FRIENDLY" WORK

Based on the interview findings, it appeared that most of the planners and government officials were familiar with how to implement policies to support ageing populations. However, most only understood age-friendliness if it specifically mentions or relates to seniors. Some departments, such as Manitoba Housing,

seemed be aware of how age-friendly concerns are interwoven into projects, even if a project is not specifically seniors focused, but this was not apparent with every department.

Not understanding how age-friendly principles can be applied to projects that are not explicitly age-friendly can negatively affect all age groups. For example, MTI's work is focused on capital projects like highways and bridges. Projects like these may not seem like they would have age-friendly concerns, so the department might not think of implementing initiatives that support ageing populations. However, rural communities typically have a provincial highway running adjacent or through the middle of them. As someone ages, their abilities to safely cross a highway may change. This also supports the literature and the capacity for rural communities to make change (Menec & Novek, 2020). Highway planning may not explicitly seem like an age-friendly project, however, considerations towards ageing populations still need to be made.

6.3.2 THE PROVINCE'S UNDERSTANDING OF AGE-FRIENDLY PRINCIPLES

During the interviews, most of the government officials and planners mentioned that they use the province's guides and handbooks when they need information to address age-friendly concerns. Many non-profit organizations have resources and guides available; however, the interviews suggest that these are not well known by those in the provincial government. I was unable to find and analyze the documents that internally shared by the provincial government, so it is unclear what is being provided in those documents and how they compare to the existing literature and resources provided by the non-profit organizations.

6.3.3 ELIMINATION OF WORKING GROUPS

As mentioned in the previous section, it can be difficult collaborating and implementing age-friendly initiatives if there is no pre-existing relationship. While staff turnover is a more complicated and layered issue, the elimination of working groups makes this issue even larger. Without the working groups, this makes it more difficult to find a potential contact from another department. Not only does it make it harder to build relationships with other departments in general, but it also makes it difficult to find a contact who has experience or knowledge on addressing age-friendly concerns.

6.3.4 LACK OF CLARITY AND DIRECT LEADERSHIP

The findings suggest that there is a lack of clear leadership and direction by the provincial government for addressing concerns that affect older adults. This supports the ideas brought up by Spina and Menec (2015). While the health and medical aspect regarding age-friendly domains appear to be clearly addressed by putting Seniors and Long Term Care under the Health portfolio, the other age-friendly domains are not clearly addressed.

Through the interviews and document analysis, participants mentioned that the previous government developed a seniors' strategy with representatives from all over government, yet it appears to have been tossed out. Even if the government has plans to implement it at a later date, it has been over a year and a half since it was published. Currently, there does not seem to be any motions to put the strategy into effect. Participants were only able to say that the delays are due to a change in direction, however, it is unclear what this new direction is. The document analysis of the Seniors and Long Term Care transition briefing point to this as a priority, however the other documents do not paint this as such. This makes it seem like the government is making empty promises and demonstrating that supporting ageing populations is not a priority.

The lack of direction and leadership has adverse effects on the implementation of age-friendly planning in rural communities. As the findings had shown, competing priorities can create issues with collaboration and the efficiency of carrying out plans. Without a clear direction on how the government plans to address age-friendly domains and the concerns of seniors, this creates space for departments to not see this as a priority. Strong and clear leadership is needed to effectively bring awareness by showing how serious this is and determining priorities. If leadership does not see this issue as a priority, why would anyone else?

6.4 SUMMARY

Based on the research findings, there were conflicting answers as to which department handles each age-friendly domain. The document analysis of each department shows that they are clearly linked to different age-friendly domains. However, the interview findings do not reflect this most of the time. Overall, it appeared that most of the responsibility for implementing age-friendly initiatives and strategies, outside of Manitoba Housing, would fall onto municipal governments and NGOs. Regarding the way that departments would communicate with each other, the data suggests that cross-departmental collaboration would frequently

happen. However, the idea of departments working in silos or not prioritizing collaboration was a common theme in the interview findings. While the interview findings suggest that most departments are familiar with age-friendly planning, it is clear that most departments only understand it at face-value. The research findings suggest that there is a provincial government's lack of clear leadership on addressing older adults concerns. The elimination of working group also contributes to the lack of presence that the provincial government has in rural age-friendly planning.

07
CONCLUSION

This chapter answers the research questions, offers several recommendations, and suggests future research directions. The chapter concludes with my final thoughts.

7.1 REFLECTION ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section builds off the discussion from the previous chapter and summarizes how the findings answer the research question.

Q1. WHICH DEPARTMENTS OR AUTHORITIES HANDLE EACH AGE-FRIENDLY DOMAIN (E.G., HOUSING, SOCIAL PARTICIPATION, COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION) IN MANITOBA?

It appears that some of the department's goals at the beginning of the 2023 transition do not clearly align with the work being done recently. Based on the findings that did correlate, it was found that:

- Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure does not handle any age-friendly domains in their work. Municipal governments and NGOs like Transportation Options Network for Seniors take on work related to this domain instead.
- Manitoba Housing directly handles the domains of housing. Some of their work, specifically in relation to development, handles the domains of outdoor spaces and building, and respect and social inclusion.
- Manitoba Health, Seniors and Long Term Care directly handles the age-friendly domains, community support and health services. Through funding and service-purchase agreements with NGOs, they indirectly handle all the other domains.
- The Community Planning Branch directly handles the domains of communication and information and outdoor spaces and buildings. Their works also frequently handles the domains of transportation and housing.

Q2. HOW DO GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER TO IMPLEMENT AGE-FRIENDLY INITIATIVES FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES IN THEIR GIVEN SECTORS?

Based on the findings, government departments communicate with each other about age-friendly initiatives and projects based on prior working relationships. In previous government leadership, departments would also communicate through a working group dedicated to addressing the concerns of seniors. However, this group has since been disbanded. Communicating with other

departments is now solely dependent on individuals knowing of each other and having each other's contact information.

Q3. WHAT INFORMATION DO GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS NEED TO INTEGRATE AGE-FRIENDLY CONCERNS INTO POLICY AND PLANNING DOCUMENTS, AND TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT AGEING POPULATIONS?

It appears that the provincial government already has internal documents on age-friendly principles. As mentioned in previous chapters, I was not able to evaluate these documents so it is unknown what information they actually contain. The previous provincial government developed a whole-of-government seniors' strategy with information to help departments integrate age-friendly concerns into their work. The document has not been implemented and there appear to be no plans to do so in the near future. While it seems like the government does have adequate resources on addressing age-friendly concerns, there needs to be more direction and importance placed onto age-friendly issues by government leadership to effectively implement initiatives. Besides stronger and clearer leadership, government departments need to understand age-friendly domains in relation to their work and how the different domains connect.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section proposes recommendations on which departments should handle each age-friendly domain. As this research project only covers a few departments – Manitoba Housing, Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure, the Community Planning Branch, and Manitoba Health, Seniors and Long Term Care – not every domain is covered. Even if one department is recommended to primarily handle one domain, this does not mean that they are the only department responsible. There may be other departments that were out of the scope of the project that may also be involved with some of the domains listed below or not mentioned at all.

MANITOBA HOUSING

What they currently handle: Primarily the domain of housing, but undertaking some projects related to the domains of outdoor spaces and buildings and respect and social inclusion

What they should handle: Primarily the domain of housing, but undertaking some projects related to the domains of outdoor spaces and buildings and respect and social inclusion

Based on the work that Manitoba Housing is currently doing, the domains that they are currently handling are what they should be handling. Their work with providing multiple housing options, affordable housing, seniors housing, housing developments, and working toward ending chronic homelessness all relate to the domains listed above.

COMMUNITY PLANNING BRANCH – MUNICIPAL AND NORTHERN RELATIONS

What they currently handle: Primarily communication and information and outdoor spaces and buildings, but undertaking some projects related to the domains of transportation and housing

What they should handle: Primarily communication and information and outdoor spaces and buildings, but undertaking some projects related to the domains of

Similar to Manitoba Housing, it appears that the Community Planning Branch currently handles the appropriate age-friendly domains. As they are responsible for municipalities and land-use planning, it makes sense for their work to primarily involve the domains of communication and information and outdoor spaces and buildings. Some of their work impacts transportation and housing as well.

MANITOBA TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

What they currently handle: None

What they should handle: Primarily transportation, but undertaking some projects related to the domains of outdoor spaces and buildings, and social participation

Based on the findings, MTI does not appear to or at least consider themselves to handle any domain. However, they should primarily handle the domain of transportation. The domain of transportation relates to ensuring that older adults have accessible transportation that allows them to access amenities and participate in their community. In the document analysis, it was noted that one of MTI's responsibilities was constructing the province's transportation network. This responsibility is directly related to the age-friendly domain of transportation. For example, transportation for older adults is very crucial for those requiring medical assistance. As many rural communities do not have their own medical centres, they are required to travel to other communities. By involving age-friendly principle, the planning of where highways are and how communities are connected to each other would consider older adults.

MANITOBA HEALTH, SENIORS, AND LONG TERM CARE

What they currently handle: Primarily community support and health services, indirectly handles all domains

What they should handle: Manitoba Health focuses on community support and health services, while Seniors and Long Term Care focuses on supporting all domains

After the 2023 change in government, Seniors and Long Term Care was incorporated into Manitoba Health. As a result, Seniors and Long Term Care primarily focused on the needs of older adults that associated with health. Through their service-purchase agreements, the other domains end up being covered by the NGOs. The needs of older adults encompass more than just health-related issues. Manitoba Health by itself is a very large portfolio, which makes it difficult to ensure that everything in their portfolio is given enough attention.

Based on the work that is being done, it is reasonable that Manitoba Health continues to handle the domain of community support and health services. However, the Seniors and Long Term Care department should not only work with this domain. As mentioned by a participant, the department was previously in charge of all aspects relating to older adults, but now it only focuses on health related matters. The Manitoba Council on Aging, Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Secretariat, and Seniors Integration Working Group show how Seniors and Long Term Care has previously been able to work directly with all domains. By combining Seniors and Long Term Care with Health, it leaves a gap in the provincial government on who should be the

main contact concerning older adults. Reinstating Seniors and Long Term Care as a department that not only focuses on health would also provide clearer leadership on how to support older adults within the government.

It is also strongly recommended that a cross-departmental working group or a sub-department like the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Secretariat be created again. Based on the interview responses, this helped make collaboration more efficient between different departments. It also helped off load some of the work from NGOs to manage the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative and provided support to other departments working on age-friendly related issues.

RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Even though some domains may have specific domains that they should primarily handle, all domains should incorporate the domain of respect and social inclusion. This domain ensures that older adults are consulted in decisions that concern them and raising awareness about ageing and issues of ageism. One of the key points from the findings was that the provincial government did not see supporting older adults as a priority. While there is not enough evidence to support whether this was done with malicious intent or if it was simply forgotten, solving this issue comes down to respecting older adults and ensuring they are included in the community. Reducing negative perceptions of ageing, recognizing the unique needs of older adults, and ensuring they are involved should be incorporated into every department's work.

7.3 FUTURE RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

Through the development of this research project, further research considerations arose. Investigating more departments or selecting more interview participants would increase the range of observations and findings. It would also provide a more comprehensive analysis of which departments or authorities handle each age-friendly domain.

As most of the work being done regarding rural age-friendly planning is being undertaken by municipalities and NGOs, looking at municipal governments more in-depth would provide a more detailed scope of which levels of government handle each domain in Manitoba. Another potential research direction that could be explored is the influence of different working groups like the Seniors Integration Working Group or Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat. As there is not much documented public information on

these working groups, this could provide a clearer picture of the role that working groups have played in the past and in what capacity they should be reinstated.

To better understand how to sustain age-friendly initiatives long-term, future research should also consider a new way of assigning responsibilities or mapping how different departments handle specific domains. Some of the main barriers to implementing rural age-friendly initiatives are working in siloes and a lack of understanding of age-friendly principles. While assigning a specific domain to a department provides a starting point to incorporate age-friendly principles, it siloes the domains in a way and does not clearly convey that they are interrelated.

7.4 FINAL THOUGHTS

While the Government of Manitoba still has room for improvement regarding age-friendly planning in rural communities, the research shows that there is at least a foundation to be built off. The provincial government was instrumental to Manitoba becoming an age-friendly leader. They have also shown in the past that the responsibility of helping Manitoba become more age-friendly does not have to fall solely on NGOs and local governments. This is not to say that the work being done by NGOs and local governments is not good. NGOs and local governments have made many positive impacts to communities across Manitoba. However, the burden of this work should be shared to make it more sustainable. From the literature, it was stressed that leadership is needed from all levels of government to achieve age-friendly goals. My research strongly reaffirms this sentiment. The province of Manitoba should reconsider the level of priority and involvement that is given to supporting the ageing population.

In conclusion, this research project highlights the role, or lack thereof, that the Government of Manitoba has in implementing rural age-friendly strategies and initiatives. This project shows that more needs to be done and the potential ways that the provincial government can address this. To continue making Manitoba an age-friendly leader, the provincial government must take new directions to supporting communities become more age-friendly.

EPILOGUE

At the time of my research, there was no news on what direction the Government of Manitoba wanted to do to address senior's concerns. I recommended that one direction the provincial government could take was re-establishing a sub-department or working group that would focus on addressing the concerns of older adults. After the research was completed, the Government of Manitoba addressed this key recommendation. They announced that they will be opening a senior's office with a seniors' advocate by November 2025. While details are limited, this announcement highlights the opportunity for future research on the how the provincial government's roles in rural age-friendly planning are affected by this.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW GUIDE

Prior to the interview beginning, I will explain the project, review the consent form and make sure the participant is knowledgeable about and comfortable with the interview process, knows about their right to withdraw at any time during the interview, and can withdraw from the study prior to completion of the analysis (February 2025). I will also ask my research participants not to make any references to specific individuals or households, so as not to compromise confidentiality issues.

Probing questions are listed as sub-bullets points under its respective primary question. Optional questions are indicated using italicized square brackets (i.e., [ ]) in front of the question, which includes the scenario in which the question may be asked.

*These questions are specifically for a Community Member Representative

Introduction

1. What is your position in your [specific workplace]?
2. How long have you been in this position?
3. Could you briefly describe your roles and responsibilities with [specific workplace]?

Familiarity with Age-Friendly Planning

1. Are you familiar with the World Health Organization's Global Age-Friendly Guide?
    a. *[If yes]* How often do you refer to this guide when working on planning documents or policies?
2. Are you familiar with Age-Friendly Remote and Rural Communities: A Guide?
    a. *[If yes]* How often do you refer to this guide when working on planning documents or policies?
3. *[If participant is familiar with either guide]* How easy is it for you to navigate and use these guides?
4. *[If participant is not familiar with any guide]* What resources do you use
5. What policy or design tools would make the presentation of age-friendly components more efficient for you to use in your work?
6. What kind of programs and/or support systems would make implementing age-friendly strategies easier?

Community Member Representative*

7. How is the community engaged in the planning process?
8. What projects do community organizations take lead on?
    a. Are these projects typically supported by any grants or initiatives by governments or agencies?
    b. What kinds of programs and/or support systems would have made tackling these projects easier?

Planning Process

9. Based on the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Frameworks components (transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, community support and health services, and outdoor spaces and building) what component do you think that you work most closely with?
10. I'm interested in hearing about your most recent or most memorable completed project relating to that component. Can you walk me through the project, beginning with why it was initiated?
    a. What were the main objectives of the project?
    b. How did you get involved in the project?
    c. *[If another person/department/authority is mentioned]* How did you get in contact with them?
    d. *[If another person/department/authority is mentioned]* How did they contribute to the project?
    e. *[If another person/department/authority is mentioned]* Can you describe the hand-off process once they get involved?
11. How did your department get involved in the process?

12. Who were the other key actors involved in this project?
    a. What stage(s) were they involved?
13. What was the collaboration process like between your department and others?
    a. [*If there was no collaboration*] Can you describe the hand-off process between your department and the other departments?
14. Were there any challenges you faced at any project stage?
    a. How did you overcome that challenge?
15. *[If no information was made publicly available]* Was there a planning or policy document that was published related to this project?
16. Can you think of anything else that takes place while working on this project?

Conclusion

17. Is there anything else you would like to add, or any questions you may have?

APPENDIX B – INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT MATERIAL

University of Manitoba

INFO SHEET

CITY 7050: CITY PLANNING CAPSTONE PROJECT

Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture

(Course Instructor: Dr. Rae Bridgman)

Name of Student: Alandra Barairo

Title of Project: Old Connections & New Directions: The Government of Manitoba's Role in Implementing Rural Age-Friendly Strategies

Summary of Project: Rural communities in Manitoba are rapidly ageing and require support from the government to address the unique needs and challenges of an ageing population. As over one-third of Manitoba's population live in rural or remote communities, understanding and implementing rural age-friendly strategies is important so residents can stay and actively age in their communities. This research project will identify how age-friendly components (transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, community support and health services, and outdoor spaces and building) are implemented in rural Manitoba by mapping which provincial department is responsible for each component and how departments coordinate with each other to implement age-friendly initiatives. The project also aims to identify what design tools are needed for planners and other authorities to efficiently integrate age-friendly initiatives and strategies.

Specific Activities to be Completed by Project Participant and Time Frame: 30-60 minute interview with researcher

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Student Name: Alandra Barairo

Student's University Contact Information: barairoa@myumanitoba.ca

Course Instructor: Dr. Rae Bridgman, Professor

Department of City Planning, University of Manitoba

Telephone:204-474-7179 Email: rae.bridgman@umanitoba.ca

Email Recruitment Script

Subject: Request for Participation: University of Manitoba Capstone Research

Dear [participant's name],

My name is Alandra Barairo and I am a graduate student in the Master of City Planning program at the University of Manitoba. I am currently taking the Capstone course with Dr. Rae Bridgman and being advised by Dr. Richard Milgrom. As part of my Capstone course, I am conducting a study on the planning process and implementation of age-friendly strategies and initiatives in rural Manitoba.

I am interested in interviewing you about your involvement in the rural planning process in Manitoba and familiarity with age-friendly planning. For more specific information on the project, I have attached a research information sheet. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can decline to participate at any stage of the process. The interview will take place via UM Zoom. Your participation should take no more than half an hour to an hour of your time.

Research confidentiality will be maintained, and I would like to assure you that the study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board (REB 2). If you have questions for the Ethics Board, please contact humanethics@umanitoba.ca or call 204-474-7122.

If you have any questions about the study, please let me know. Or if you would like additional information to assist in reaching a decision about participation, please also feel free to contact Dr. Rae Bridgman at rae.bridgman@umanitoba.ca

Once you have made your decision and are interested in participating, please email me at barairoa@myumanitoba.ca to schedule the interview.

Cheers,
Alandra Barairo | She/Her
B.Env.D | Master of City Planning Student
University of Manitoba

barairoa@myumanitoba.ca

[If participant replies yes]

Thank you for agreeing to participate, I truly appreciate it. Please keep in mind you can decline to participate in the study until February 2025, without any negative reaction from anyone involved in the study. I have attached a consent form to this email. Please thoroughly read through this form. If you are comfortable with the research, interview process, data storage, and other information listed in the consent form, please sign the form and email it back to me in PDF format prior to the interview.

I am typically available to meet on [researcher's availability]. When would be most convenient for us to meet?

[*Participant replies]*

Thank you. I am able to meet at [date and time offered by participant]. I have also attached the interview questions that will guide the interview to this email.

I look forward to our meeting and to provide you with more information about the study. If you have questions or if anything changes and you are unable to meet, please reach out to me via email.

[If participant replies no]

I respect your decision. Thank you for your time and consideration. Have a wonderful day!

Oral Script

Hello,

My name is Alandra Barairo and I am a graduate student in the Master of City Planning program at the University of Manitoba. I am currently taking the Capstone course with Dr. Rae Bridgman and being advised by Dr. Richard Milgrom. As part of my Capstone course, I am conducting a study on the planning process and implementation of age-friendly strategies and initiatives in rural Manitoba.

I am interested in interviewing you about your involvement in the rural planning process in Manitoba and familiarity with age-friendly planning. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can decline to participate at any stage of the process. The interview will take place on Zoom and your participation should take no more than half an hour to an hour of your time.

Research confidentiality will be maintained, and I would like to assure you that the study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board (REB 2).

Do you think you would be interested in participating in this study?

[If participant replies yes]

Thank you for agreeing to participate, I truly appreciate it. Prior to the interview, I will also require that you read through a consent form. If you are comfortable with the research, interview process, data storage, and other information listed in the consent form, I ask that you please sign the form and email it back to me at barairoa@myumanitoba.ca in PDF format prior to the interview. Can you provide me with an email address to send the consent form to?

Please keep in mind you can decline to participate in the study until February 2025, without any negative reaction from anyone involved in the study.

I am typically available to meet on [researcher's availability]. When would be most convenient for us to meet?

[*Participant replies*]

Thank you. I can meet at [date and time offered by participant]. I will send you a meeting link and the inter-

view questions that will guide the interview via email.

[Participant replies]

Thank you. I look forward to our meeting and to provide you with more information about the study. If anything changes and you are unable to meet, please reach out to me via email at barairoa@myumanitoba.ca.

[If participant replies no]

I respect your decision. Thank you for your time and consideration. Have a wonderful day!

APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

University of Manitoba

CITY 7050: CITY PLANNING CAPSTONE PROJECT

Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture

Title of Project: Old Connections & New Directions: The Government of Manitoba's Role in Implementing Rural Age-Friendly Strategies

Student Principal Investigator: Alandra Barairo, Master of City Planning Student

Department of City Planning, University of Manitoba

barairoa@myumanitoba.ca

Student Advisor: Dr. Rae Bridgman, Professor

Department of City Planning, University of Manitoba

Telephone:204-474-7179 Email: rae.bridgman@umanitoba.ca

Conflicts of Interest: None of the researchers have any conflicts of interest in this study.

This Consent Form, a copy of which you can download or print, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information. It is very important that you understand:

- what is being asked of you,
- what the risks and benefits of participation are, and
- how the information you provide will be used and stored

Purpose of Study and Description of Course Assignment

City Planning graduate students must complete a Capstone Project as part of their Master's degree. The goal of the project is for students to conduct in-depth research on an issue of importance for planning practice. The students' information-gathering projects will be presented in class and will form the basis for a written report at the end of term. In this case, my objective is to explore the rural planning process in Manitoba to understand how age-friendly strategies are implemented. The projects are undertaken under the supervision of the Course Instructor, Dr. Rae Bridgman (see contact information below), in accordance with the protocols of the Human Ethics Secretariat of the University of Manitoba for research involving human subjects. The research has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board (REB 2) of the University of Manitoba and approved. A copy of this Consent Form has also been reviewed and approved. Consent Forms listing From Policies to Porches: Implementing Age-Friendly Strategies and Initiatives in Rural Manitoba and the specific activities to be completed by participants will be submitted to the instructor to keep on file for information purposes. Once the research is completed and the final report is produced, consent forms will be destroyed by June 2025, at the end of the academic year. It is anticipated that interviews with participants will last no longer than approximately an hour. Interviews will take place through the University of Manitoba secure

Zoom platform.

Study Procedures

If you decide to take part in the study, we will meet for a 30 to 60 minute interview through UM Zoom. With your consent, I will audio record our meeting. In the case that no consent is given to audio record the meeting, I will take notes during the meeting.

Study Risks

The risk of participating in an interview is no greater than risks encountered in your daily life. One potential risk is a breach of confidentiality: that information may be shared in ways that enable you to be identified. To mitigate this risk, quotes from interviewees will be attributed to their job category/type.

Study Benefits

Direct benefits may include the opportunity for participants to share their perspective on a planning issue or challenge. Indirect benefits are that the final Capstone Projects will contribute to planning knowledge and may result in new strategies or policy directions to address planning issues and challenges.

Compensation

There is no compensation for this study.

Confidentiality

The data collected through this research is confidential. This means that participants' names or any other personal or identifiable information will not be included in presentations or reports arising from the study, unless permission has been granted through the Consent Form. Audio recordings and transcripts will also be secured to ensure confidentiality as mentioned in the data section.

Audio-Taping

With your permission, interviews may be audio-recorded and transcribed at a later date, so that analyzing the material will be completed with greater ease and efficiency. Such audio-recordings will be kept securely and destroyed after they have been transcribed. Your name or any other personal information will not be included in the presentation or report materials arising from the study. Where information occurs within a session transcript that will be included in the final project report or presentation, names and other identifying personal information will be omitted.

Questions or Concerns

Designated University of Manitoba personnel may check that this study is being done safely and properly. To do this, they may visit the study site or review the research records. We will tell you if someone outside the research team will be there while you are participating. If this makes you uncomfortable, please tell a member of the research team, who will ask the personnel to return at another time. This study has been reviewed and approved by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. However, this does not mean that participation is risk-free. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Human Research Ethics at humanethics@umanitoba.ca or (204) 474-7122. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this study, you may contact any members of the research team listed on the first page or the Office of Human Research Ethics.

Use of Data, Secure Storage and Destruction of Research Data

All the information you provide as a participant in this study is confidential which means we as the research team must keep it safe. We will do our best, however, it is not possible to guarantee absolute confidentiality. We will only share your personal information if required (court order or law).

All information w will be securely stored in encrypted files on the University of Manitoba-provided Individual File Storage system OneDrive under the researcher's personal University account, and subsequently destroyed at the end of course (by the end of June 2025).

Information collected from participants will be used as part of the Capstone Project. Unless explicitly permitted, all names and other identifying details will be obscured/anonymized. The results from this project, including anonymized details, may be used for conference presentations and/or publication in journals and other academic and professional resources. Students' completed Capstone Projects will be publicly available through the University of Manitoba's website (https://umanitoba.ca/architecture/department-city-planning/student-work).

Copies of consent forms will be securely kept on file by the Course Instructor for information purposes only for two years and then destroyed, in accordance with University ethics policies.

Dissemination

The study results will be shared through 1) the publication of a master's capstone project report; 2) a summarized report of the study results to be sent to interested participants. The study results may also be shared through conference presentations and journal publications in relevant academic fields.

Withdrawing

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You can choose to do only the activities and/or answer only the questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the study for any reason. You do not have to explain why. You will not be penalized in any way. Should you withdraw partway through the study, all of your information will be destroyed unless you have consented to allowing us to keep it. You may withdraw from the study until 02/25. After this date, we will start to analyze the information so it may not be possible to withdraw your information. To withdraw, please contact Alandra Barairo or Dr. Rae Bridgman at the phone number or email above.

Consent

By signing this document, I agree that:

- I have read the above information or had it read to me.
- I have had the opportunity to ask and have answered all of my questions.
- I understand what is being asked of me.
- I will be taking part in a research study.
- I may freely stop or leave the research study activities at any time.
- My information may be shared outside the University of Manitoba.
- I do not waive my legal rights by participating in the study

Notice Regarding Collection, Use, and Disclosure of Personal Information

Your personal information is being collected under the authority of The University of Manitoba Act. The University of Manitoba is committed to preserving your right to privacy. The information you provide will be used by the University to support our research. Your personal information will not be used or disclosed for other purposes, unless permitted by The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or The Personal Health Information Act. If you have any questions about the collection of personal information: Ph: 204-474-9462 or Email: fippa@umanitoba.ca

Thank you for participating in this project. Your cooperation and insights are very valuable, and are greatly appreciated!

I, _____, consent to the dissemination of material
[Name of Participant: please print]

provided to the student for use in their Capstone Project and in course materials. I understand that the information I provide will be incorporated in a presentation and report, and may be featured in a conference presentation or published article. I understand also that all research data will be treated as confidential, stored in a private and secure place, and subsequently destroyed at the end of the course (end of June 2025) by the student.

I agree to be audio-recorded.
Yes __ No __
I would like to receive a one-page executive summary of the results from this project. If yes, please provide your email address or mailing address below.
Yes __ No __
I would like to receive a copy of the final report. If yes, please provide your email address or mailing address below.
Yes __ No __

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

Participant's contact information (in order to receive a summary of the results from this project):

APPENDIX D – ETHICS APPROVAL

University of Manitoba | Research Ethics and Compliance

Human Research Ethics - Fort Garry
66 Chancellors Circle
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
humanethics@umanitoba.ca

PROTOCOL APPROVAL

Effective: November 19, 2024 Expiry: November 18, 2025

Principal Investigator:	Alandra Barairo
Advisor(s):	Rae Bridgman
Protocol Number:	HE2024-0303
Protocol Title:	*Old Connections & New Directions: The Government of Manitoba's Role in Implementing Rural Age-Friendly Strategies*

Liz Millward, Chair, REB2

Research Ethics Board 2 has reviewed and approved the above research. The Office of Human Research Ethics (OHRE) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans- TCPS 2 (2022).*

Please note the following important information about your protocol approval:

i. Approval is granted for the research and purposes described in the protocol only.

ii. Any changes to the protocol or research materials must be approved by the OHRE **before implementation**.

iii. Any **deviations** to the research or **adverse events** must be reported to the OHRE immediately through an **REB Event**.

iv. This approval is valid **for one year only.** A Renewal Request must be submitted and approved prior to the above expiry date.

v. A **Protocol Closure** must be submitted to the OHRE when the research is complete or if the research is terminated.

vi. The University of Manitoba may request to audit your research documentation to confirm compliance with this approved protocol, and with the UM *Ethics of Research Involving Humans* policies and procedures.

APPENDIX E – CORE CERTIFICATION

PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE 2022

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Alandra Barairo

successfully completed the Course on Research Ethics based on the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2: CORE 2022)

Certificate # 0000815521 **9 May, 2022**

APPENDIX F – CODING FRAMEWORK

THEME	CODES
Change in Government	Current Standard and Processes
	Leadership
	Transitions between Departments and Government
Working in Silos	Communication between Departments
	Collaboration and Partnerships
	Not Sharing Information/Collaborating
	Unfamiliarity with Age-Friendly Principles
Capacity and Sustainability	Ageism
	Funding
	Involvement of Municipalities/NGOs
	Lack of Staff