

### Part 3 overview

Idyllic images of rural Canada, with their close-knit communities and bucolic greenspaces are both true, and simultaneously, more complicated. Rural older adults in Canada face multi-faceted issues related to public transportation, sustained voluntarism, demographic decline, and access to health and social services. All issues that vary greatly between different areas.

#### Takeaways for practice

- The provincial government plays an integral role in supporting older adults in rural places due to the limited capacities of rural governments and amalgamations of multiple towns over large geographies. At times, the increased role of the provincial government is effective, such as the commitment of funding to municipal age-friendly planning. But not always, such as the integration of services into one-stop shops that pushed services out of communities, requiring longer travel times.
- There is a need for contextual solutions to rural problems. Rural Canada is not homogeneous and programming/services must be adapted to the context to be effective.
- There is need for transportation alternatives that are context-specific, like a door-to-door service in one community or a small bus with a route in another.
- Ensuring financial stability for older adults to age in place is integral, including support for transportation, and housing accessibility modifications.
- Internet must be considered an essential service in Canada. Access to high-speed internet will help rural older adults take advantage of the multitude of telemedicine and virtual care resources, as well as participate in social groups online.
- Rural areas can have strong networks of community care and reciprocity which provide informal care beyond the classic 'caregiver–care recipient' relationship. However, it is important to recognize that voluntarism is contingent and fragile, and can create unequal geographies of service provision.
- When planning with older adults, it is integral to focus on their agency and their assets, not exclusively on their vulnerabilities. Older adults have needs that must be met, but they are also providing care to their communities in different ways.

#### Questions to consider

- How does the town you live in officially understand the needs of older adults, and who has power to make decisions?
- How does your municipality engage the older adults in your community? Who is left out from those conversations?
- If your town is committed to being age-friendly, what measures are they taking?

## Aging People, Aging Places

- What is your town doing when it comes to arranging transportation for older adults in the area, and affordable/accessible housing?
  - Is maintenance a part of your town's age-friendly plans? How do they prioritize maintenance of sidewalks, clearing of snow?
  - How are the non-profit organizations supported by the town?
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