



MANITOBA'S *Age-Friendly* INITIATIVE

– *Manitoba Seniors & Health Aging Secretariat*

A significant proportion (23.6 %) of all Manitobans 65 and over live in rural Manitoba. In fact, over the next 15 years, it is expected that Manitoba's rural communities will see a population increase! Why, you might ask? Well, research shows that rural seniors tend to stay in their communities as they age. Furthermore, these sources are suggesting some people will retire from urban to rural areas. As well, farmers and others from outlying areas will move into town, and other older adults will return to the towns where they grew up. This is important information for municipal planners, businesses and service providers.

In fall 2008, the Manitoba Government, led by the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, responded to the reality of an aging population with the launch of the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative (AFMI). To date, 29 communities from across Manitoba are actively implementing the AFMI. With the active participation of these communities, Manitoba is positioned as a leader in the quest to become the most age-friendly province in Canada.

In February 2008, the first Age-Friendly Summit was held in the City of Portage la Prairie, where communities from across Manitoba were brought together to begin the age-friendly discussions. National and international experts in the field of aging

were also there to share information about projects that are happening throughout the world. Cities such as London, United Kingdom; New Delhi, India; Moscow, Russia; New York, United States; Tokyo, Japan, and Canadian cities such as Saanich, BC; Halifax, NS; and Sherbrooke, QC also share this vision.

Age-friendly work is continuing through out our fine province. For example, one community hosted a successful Age-Friendly Awareness Day where local organizations and businesses came together to learn more about becoming age-friendly. Another community has enhanced their walking path, another has put in park benches, and one community hosted an intergenerational activity to help with some of the isolation concerns expressed at a local meeting. This is just a few examples of what communities have begun in their pursuit to become more age-friendly – Bravo!

On March 6, 2009, the Seniors Secretariat and its partner, the Centre on Aging, University of Manitoba, hosted a one day workshop, Communities Connecting: Leading the Way. The workshop provided an opportunity for representatives from the 29 communities to come together to share their best practices, challenges and to brainstorm about the next steps in this exciting process.

Why is age-friendly such a good thing? The answer is because an age-friendly community improves the quality of life for people of all ages, not just seniors. For example, design features such as outdoor seating, stable walkways, green space and barrier-free access to buildings benefit people of all ages and abilities. Services and supports that address the needs of seniors allow them to remain in their homes and their communities and reduce the worry and stress on all family members. The entire community benefits from the participation of older persons in volunteer, paid work and civic activities. Finally, local businesses benefit from the patronage of older adult consumers.


The AFMI, led by the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat and its partner, the University of Manitoba Centre on Aging, relies on other strong organizations to ensure its success. To date, age-friendly activities are being carried on by business community, and others such as the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, the Active Living Coalition of Older Adults (ALCOA-MB), Creative Retirement Manitoba, Age and Opportunity, Manitoba Association of Multi Purpose Senior Centres, and Manitoba Society of Seniors.

Manitoba is pleased to have the 29 communities join the AFMI. These com-

munities are showing tremendous leadership and vision in their efforts to become more age-friendly. So if you live in one of these communities, find out what is going on with age-friendly and find out how you can be involved. Here's the list.

- RM of Roblin
- Village Cartwright
- Town of Morris
- RM of Macdonald
- Town of Gladstone
- Town of Arborg
- Town of Gilbert Plains
- Town of The Pas
- Village of Elkhorn
- Gimli
- Portage la Prairie
- Pinawa
- City Dauphin
- City of Brandon
- RM of Armstrong
- RM of Dufferin
- RM of Franklin
- RM of Ritchot
- RM of Springfield
- Shoal Lake
- Town of Carman
- Town of Gillam
- Town of Gretna
- Town of Morden
- Town of Rosburn
- Town of Ste. Rose du Lac
- Town of Stonewall
- Town of Virden
- Village of Crystal City

Congratulations to all for your amazing efforts!

Manitoba would like to encourage all local communities to join the AFMI and become part of a provincial, national and international effort to support active aging through developing age-friendly communities. 

For more information about the AFMI, or to register your community, contact:

Seniors & Healthy Aging Secretariat

822-155 Carlton Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3H8
Phone: 204-945-6565

Toll-Free: 1-800-665-6565

Email: seniors@gov.mb.ca

Website: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/shas/>



Top: The Gilbert Plains post office, with its shoveled ramp and wide door, is very age-friendly.

Inset: The availability of benches, like this Gimli storefront, is an age-friendly initiative.

Bottom: Snow-filled streets and sidewalks are either risky or impossible for seniors to navigate.