



Building sustainable rural age-friendly communities



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The Trent University Research Team

Introductions to
our
*“Building
sustainable rural
age-friendly
communities”*
collaborative
team

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Principal Investigator



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Presentation outline

1. Rural aging research at TCAS
2. Rural age-friendly sustainability research: Overview of 2 projects
3. Concluding comments



Acknowledgements

SSHRC  CRSH



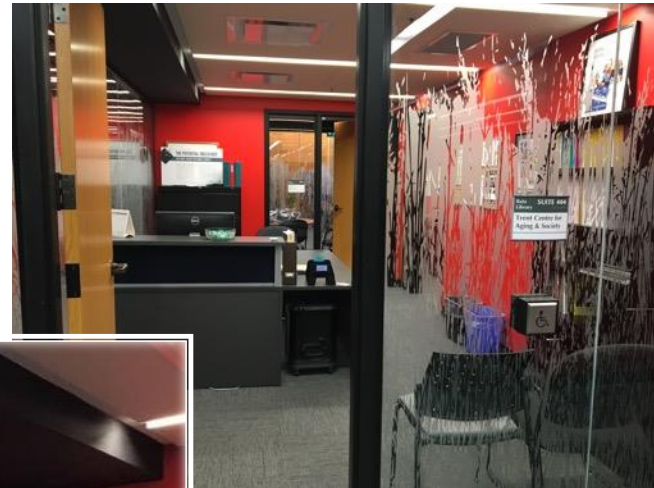
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du Canada

Canada 

Welcome to the new TCAS@Bata!

trentu.ca/aging



Background: Sustainability in AFCs

- Project background:
 - ▣ Rural municipalities may face challenges
 - ▣ Overreliance on volunteers
 - ▣ Population changes increase need for programming/program sustainability challenged by population decline
 - ▣ Limited research on rural AFC sustainability
- Project aims:
 1. AFC sustainability limiting & strengthening factors
 2. Recommendations to support AFC sustainability
 3. Develop methodological research framework
- Project 1: Pilot project. “Experts’ perspectives on building in AFC sustainability”
- Project 2: Major project. Five-site case study. “Building sustainable rural age-friendly communities”

Project 1: Experts' perspectives on building sustainability into age-friendly programming

- Pilot study site: Rural & small town Newfoundland and Labrador
- Participants: $N = 12$ rural age-friendly program coordinators
- Procedure: Telephone interviews



MUN Harris Centre to release population projection for Newfoundland

SaltWire Network

Published: Sep 05, 2017 at midnight

Updated: Sep 30, 2017 at 6:29 a.m.

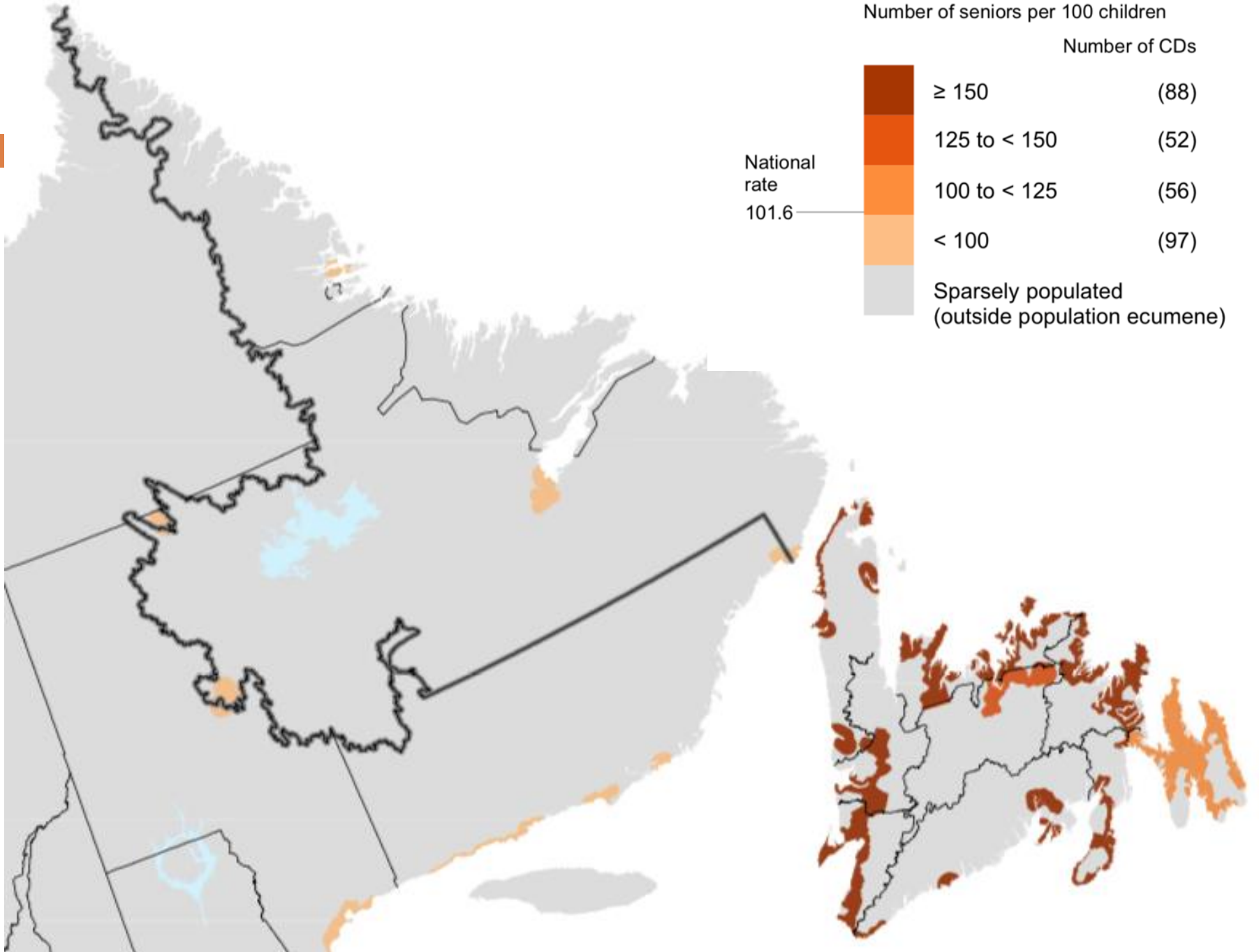
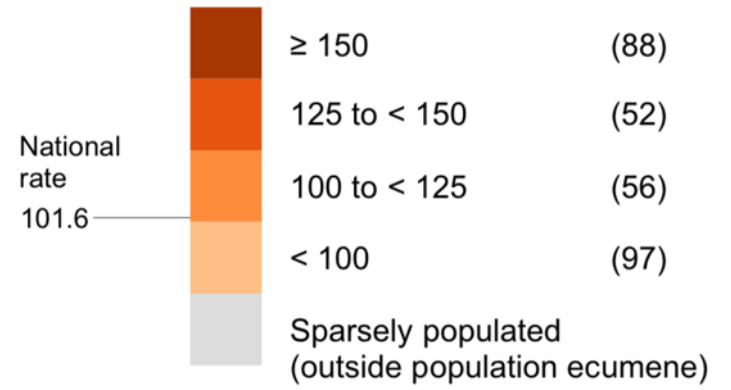


There are 37 houses under the hill in Bauline, a Northeast Avalon town of about 500 people that looks out over Conception Bay.

Newfoundland's island population will experience "notable aging" in the next 20 years, Memorial's Harris Centre says, and in most areas, the number of residents will decline.

Number of seniors per 100 children

Number of CDs



Project 1: Experts' perspectives on building sustainability into age-friendly programming

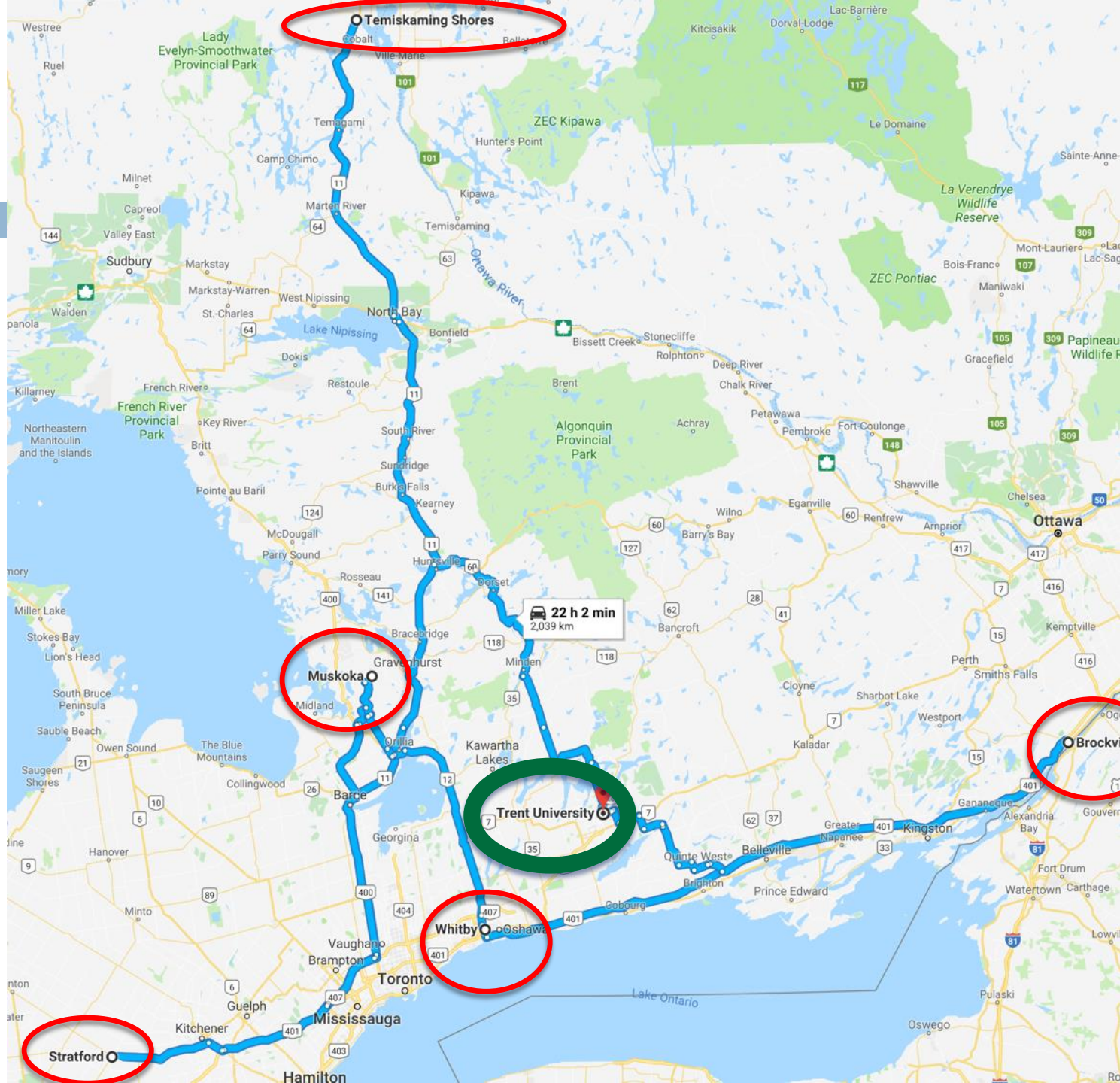
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Project 2: Building sustainable, rural age-friendly communities

- 5 case studies in rural Ontario of varying geographies
- The nature of the 5 communities: Northern resource-based, agricultural, rural-recreational, urban fringe, small town
- Procedure: In-person interviews
- Participants: $N = \sim 10-15$ rural age-friendly program coordinators/site, including feature interview with key coordinator
- Materials: Interview protocol
- Data analysis: Qualitative thematic content analysis





Temiskaming Shores

Muskoka

Trent University

Whitby

Stratford

Brockville

22 h 2 min
2,039 km

Materials: Interview topics

1. How program came together
2. Role of WHO framework
3. Challenges (planning and implementation)
4. Successes (planning and implementation)
5. Nature of community's affect on sustainability
6. Factors limiting sustainability
7. Key ingredients of sustainability
8. Burnout
9. Financial capacity/partnerships/champions/municipal involvement/community support
10. Effect for older people of programs
11. Lessons learned for new AFC programs
12. Individual motivation



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Results: Cross-cutting themes across the two projects

- Challenges to sustainability:
 - ▣ Volunteer burnout
 - ▣ Limited funding
- Factors strengthening sustainability:
 - ▣ Municipal collaboration
 - ▣ Generating community support
 - ▣ Targeted recruitment
 - ▣ Community champions



Challenges: Volunteer burnout



“The people that you see here in volunteer roles, they aren’t only involved in one committee; they’re involved in *all* of them. Its getting to the point now, like some people have said, next year is our 50th anniversary, that will be my last year. **We’ve been at it since we were 18 years old. And we are 70.**”

Challenges: Limited funds



We need a coordinator. We cannot do it without a paid coordinator, so that is our biggest challenge right now.”

Strengths: *Municipal collaboration*



“One of the greatest steps that can be taken on this age-friendly journey is **to get buy-in from the municipality**. It's an ongoing challenge; we had everybody all geared up, every council member was onside. **And then we had an election**, and some of the old council members disappeared, and then it became a case of reacquainting and getting buy-in from the new councillors.”

Strengths: Generating community support



“Well it’s a matter of **just talking to people**, and getting them engaged. Fostering the idea that this is community, community matters, we all live here, we all have family that, in some way, shape, or form, is connected to living in the community, and we all have older people in our lives.”

Strengths: Targeted volunteer/committee recruitment



“We’re constantly recruiting good people at the table. We had a retired nursing manager [...], she was able to bring her expertise and leadership in health care issues relevant to age-friendly transportation. So, that kind of expertise you really need, and you can only get at that when you have **good people around the table**. And, you know, **people like to be invited to share in a successful program.**”

Strengths: Community champions



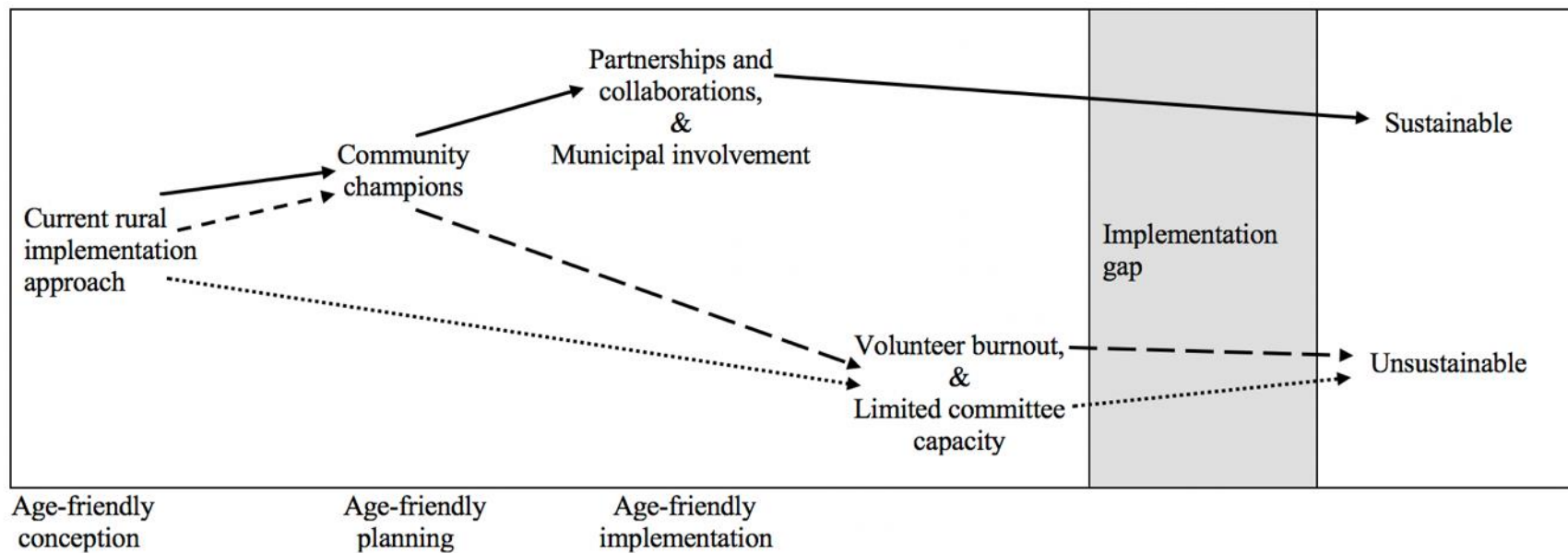
“What it’s all about is finding local champions. You know, people who’s **got the expertise, got the time...** I’ve always said, the success of any organization is **having the right people around the table** that can bring their **expertise and leadership** to any idea that you might be proposing. You need local champions of a cause.”

Project implications

- Key finding: Limits to age-friendly sustainability = **implementation gap** between early stages and long-term viability
 - ▣ Limited funding scope
 - ▣ Volunteers relied upon to create systemic change
 - ▣ Limited capacity & burnout = short-term projects; limited sustainability
- Setting an agenda for *rural* age-friendly initiatives?
- Bridging the implementation gap:
 1. Champions
 2. Collaborations
 3. Municipal involvement



Fig. 1. Emergent challenges and opportunities to sustaining rural age-friendly initiatives



Typical rural age-friendly implementation pathways:

- > = Pathway 1: Age-friendly initiative likely to be sustainable
- - - - -> = Pathway 2: Age-friendly initiative likely to be unsustainable
-> = Pathway 3: Age-friendly initiative likely to be unsustainable

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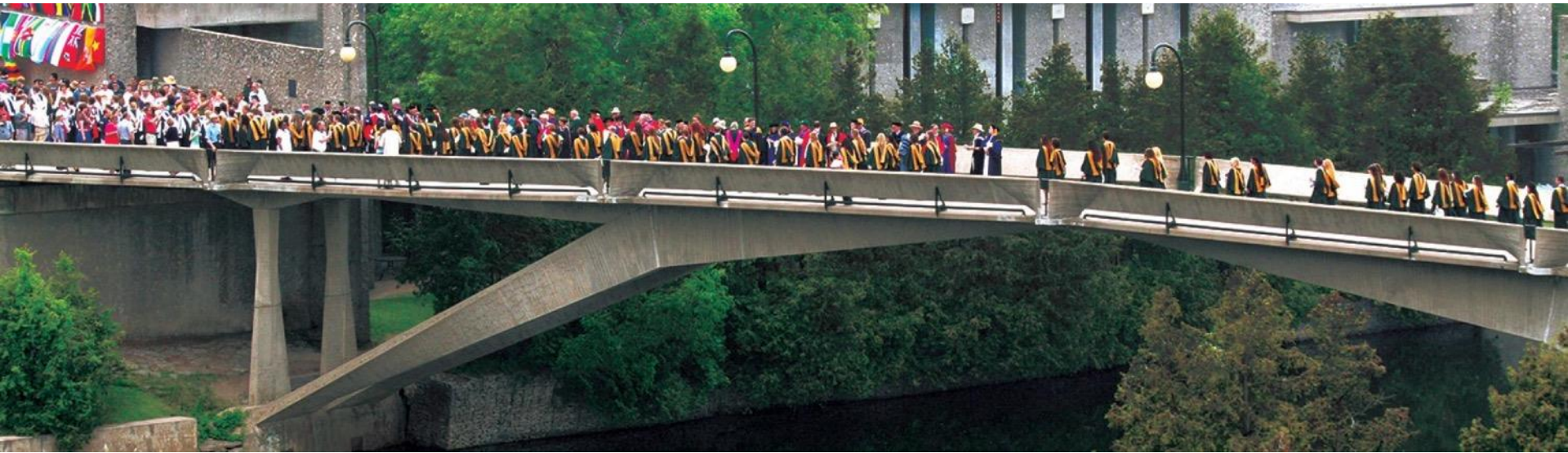


Concluding comments

- Sustainability *gap*: Funding scope, volunteer reliance, limited capacity, burnout
- Sustainability: Champions, collaborations, municipal involvement
- Key take-home point: Broader applications of rural aging research



Further information – thank you!



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Questions for the group:

1. What is one specific thing that you think may *challenge* the sustainability of your program?

and/or

2. What is one specific thing you can do to help avoid the sustainability gap?