

Small Ontario municipalities least prepared to support aging adults

December 21 2017

Small municipalities in Ontario are less likely than larger centres to be able to accommodate the needs of their aging populations, according to a report from the University of Waterloo.

The report, Prepared for the Silver Tsunami: An examination of municipal old-age dependency and age-friendly policy in Ontario, Canada, examined the current and projected demographic profiles of 159 Ontario municipalities with populations over 10,000 people.

The report found that smaller municipalities were the least likely to have started any municipal-level planning for [older adults](#), despite expected increases in service and mobility needs of their aging population.

"When we look at jurisdictions like British Columbia where age-friendly principles have been made mandatory in the creation of statutory planning documents, we see a longer history and greater uptake on age friendly projects, such as the age-friendly outdoor fitness park in Keremeos", said Maxwell Hartt, who co-authored the release while doing his PhD at the University of Waterloo. "When we look at Ontario, we find that smaller communities are less likely to have the capacity, funds or political will to enact these kinds of policies for older members of their communities.

"It's also possible many of these communities are unaware of the magnitude of their ongoing demographic shift and the kind of impact that will have on the kind and level of services they're expected to

provide."

As part of the report, Hartt and Samantha Biglieri, a PhD candidate at Waterloo's School of Planning, performed a systematic review of what kind of age-friendly policies each Ontario municipality had adopted.

The report recommended that to help municipalities become more age friendly, they should follow the model of British Columbia and examine how municipalities are implementing strategic plans, how budget dollars are allocated and how age-friendly planning is incorporated into municipal success indicators.

"As we age, our access to the world shrinks, which makes the role of the surrounding city in our health and wellbeing more important than ever," said Biglieri. "With the number of Canadians over 65 now outnumbering those under the age of 15, there are so many opportunities for municipalities to support older adults in context-specific ways that can make a tangible difference in their lives."

In 2007, the World Health Organization (WHO) called on municipalities to take steps to assist their citizens to age well in place. The WHO's Age-Friendly City policy encouraged municipalities to look at a number of factors in their planning, including outdoor and indoor spaces, transportation, housing, social participation, inclusion, civic participation, employment, community support and health services.

The [report](#) appears in the *Journal of Urban Affairs*.

Provided by University of Waterloo

Citation: Small Ontario municipalities least prepared to support aging adults (2017, December 21) retrieved 16 August 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-12-small-ontario->

[municipalities-aging-adults.html](#)

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.