

PART 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF POPULATION GROWTH

2.1 GTA GROWING BY ABOUT THE POPULATION OF BARRIE EVERY YEAR

The pace of population growth in the GTA over the last twenty years has been high and sustained. No five year period since 1981 has seen less than an average yearly increase of 60,000 people, and the last five years from 1996 to 2001 had a growth rate averaging around 90,000 people a year³. In the last ten years the GTA has increased its population by approximately 850,000 people, from about 4.2 million to about 5.1 million — a 20 percent increase.⁴

This means that every six to ten years the GTA has to provide room for the population of the pre-amalgamation City of Toronto or about 600,000 people including jobs, roads, community services, parks, shopping and everything else that these people need. The new urban areas to serve the growing population were often very small places thirty or so years ago. Brampton had a population of 18,467 in 1961 and its population in 2001 was 325,428. Markham had 4,294 people in 1961 and 208,615 in 2001. Oakville had 10,366 people in 1961 and 144,738 in 2001, while Vaughan had 15,873 people in 1971 and 182,022 in 2001.

By any standards, the rate of sustained growth has been dramatic and in some ways unprecedented. However, to keep this growth in perspective, a number of US Census Metropolitan Areas have grown faster than the Toronto Region. For example: Portland, Oregon CMA grew by 26.3 percent in the ten years between 1990 and 2000; Atlanta CMA by 38.9 percent; the Las Vegas CMA by 83 percent; Denver by 30 percent; Dallas by 29.3 percent; and Houston by 25.2 percent. Nevertheless, the Toronto Region, with a 20 percent growth rate over the past ten years, still ranks as one of the fastest growing large cities in North America.



Source: Derek Griffiths - Canadian Imaging Associates Inc.

In the last ten years the GTA has increased its population by approximately 900,000 people, from about 4.2 million to about 5.1 million - a 20 percent increase.

2.2 WHY IS THE POPULATION OF THE GTA GROWING RAPIDLY?

In order to understand what the growth issues are for the GTA it is important to know why the Region is growing so fast, whether this is likely to continue into the future, and the costs and benefits of this growth.

³Greater Toronto Coordinating Committee, *Final Draft Report of the GTA Steering Committee on Population and Employment Forecasts for the Greater Toronto Area: A Report to the Greater Toronto Coordinating Committee* (Toronto: Greater Toronto Coordinating Committee, 2000).

⁴City of Toronto Urban Development Services, *GTA Population and Employment Projections to 2031* (Toronto: City of Toronto, 2000).

The Strong Economy has Attracted People to the Region

There are two intertwined factors affecting rapid population growth in the GTA. First the Region has a good economy and there has been a high rate of job creation over the last twenty years attracting people from throughout Canada and abroad. Second, the Federal Government's immigration policy has resulted in large numbers of people moving to the GTA. For example, between 1991 and 1996, 43 percent of all of Canada's immigrants (446,515 people) settled in the GTA.⁵

The rate of net in-migration to the GTA varies with the strength of the economy—as jobs increase rapidly so does in-migration to the GTA and vice-versa. According to an important recent population study by Strategic Projections used in preparing the population projections for municipalities in the GTA, the extent to which the GTA will continue to have high rates of population growth depends on two main factors:

“the economic environment that prevails in Ontario outside the GTA, in Canada outside Ontario and in the rest of the world outside Canada.... The most critical element in the world economic outlook for the GTA.... is not the outlook, per se, but whether within that environment the GTA remains competitive, improves its competitive position, or falls behind.

The GTA's future also depends on the urban structure and built form put in place within the GTA over the next several decades”⁶

Therefore, if the GTA is to continue to grow rapidly as expected there must continue to be strong growth in the economy within a well-planned environment.

The Strategic Projections report looked at possible scenarios for population forecasts for the GTA that considered how the economic success of the GTA would impact on population growth. The report makes it clear that there is a consensus of opinion among those few economic forecasters who look as far as 30 years into the future. With the ageing of the population and the increase in productivity, real GDP in the USA is expected to slow from projected increases of 2.5 percent on average over the next ten years to, 1 percent in the period from 2021 to 2031. Similar and even more dramatic examples of these trends are expected for other major trading partners such as Europe and Japan. As the report states: “even if the GTA was to maintain its share of these markets it would experience a gradual slowdown in output and economic growth.”

Immigrants Have Come To Fill Jobs

The other side of this job growth equation is that there have been people to fill the jobs due to high rates of in-migration into the GTA, largely fuelled by immigration into Canada. The majority of Canadian immigrants have settled in the GTA. Population projections for the GTA stress the role of migration in meeting the population projections:

⁵City of Toronto Urban Development Services, Profile Toronto: Immigrants in Toronto, Issue number 2 (Toronto: City of Toronto, 1998).

⁶ Strategic Projections, GTA Population and Employment Projection: Final Report (Toronto: Strategic Projections, 2000).

“Net in-migration, rather than natural increase, is the primary source of population growth in the GTA. Strong net in-migration is required over the projection period to reach the forecasted growth: federal immigration policy plays a key role in this assumption.”⁷

“The only critical demographic factor for the future of the GTA is net migration.”⁸

Federal Immigration Targets Affect Growth in the GTA

Immigration levels are set by the Federal government and account for 65 percent of the population growth in the GTA. The difference between births and deaths accounts for 33 percent of the population growth, while net in-migration from other provinces averages about 2 percent of the growth.

Federal immigration estimates for 2001 are 235,000 and immigration targets for 2002 are set at 210,000 to 235,000. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Hon. Eleanor Caplan, confirmed on October 31st, 2001 that she was committed to increasing immigration levels to approximately 1 percent of the population over the long term. Which would mean yearly targets are closer to 300,000. If this higher level of immigration is met it will lead to faster population growth in the GTA than has been forecast. The major population forecasts for the GTA are based on immigration levels remaining at about the 225,000 people.

2.3 LAND IS BEING DEVELOPED TO ACCOMMODATE THIS NEW POPULATION

There is considerable concern about growth in the GTA that is often expressed as concern over sprawl. The term sprawl in this study implies that the urbanizing areas are under-utilizing land through low densities for housing and employment. Further on in this report we will look at how well land has been used in the Toronto Region. However, it is clear that the land consumed for urban purposes in the GTA has been used to house a very rapidly increasing population. This is contrary to the experience in parts of the United States where several urban areas such as Buffalo have seen their populations fall in absolute terms while the area that is urbanized has increased dramatically.



Source: Urban development Services, City of Toronto



Planning policies for a range of housing, recreation services and transportation need to adjust to changing demographic patterns

⁷ City of Toronto Urban Development Services, *GTA Population and Employment Projections to 2031* (Toronto: City of Toronto, 2000).

⁸ Strategic Projections, *GTA Population and Employment Projection: Final Report* (Toronto: Strategic Projections, 2000).

Yes, there has been a rapid increase in land that is urbanized in the GTA, but it is much less clear if it should be called sprawl in the same sense that the term is understood south of the border. The population of the GTA increased by 20 percent in the last ten years and the urbanized area has expanded to accommodate this population. The rate of population growth has been particularly fast in the last five years and building activity in both the GTA Regions and the City of Toronto has reflected the need to house this population. But, as we will describe in more detail later in this report, the growth over the past few years has been denser than in the past thereby contributing to the intensification of existing urban areas within the GTA.

2.4 HIGH PROJECTED GROWTH RATES FOR THE NEXT TEN TO TWENTY YEARS

The population forecasts for the GTA all show continued high growth rates for the next ten years, after which the rate of growth is expected to slowly taper off. The population forecast prepared by the GTA Regions and the City of Toronto for planning purposes (See Table 1) shows a growth rate of 1.9 percent a year to 2011 (figure adjusted to account of 2001 Census); 1.1 percent from 2011 to 2021; and a much slower rate of 0.7 percent a year from 2021 to 2031.⁹ The population increase is forecast as approximately 1 million from 2001 to 2011, approximately 1.7 to 2021 million and about 2,150,000 additional people to 2031.

	1996	2001	2011	2021	2031
GTA	4,781,000	5,234,000	6,260,000	6,975,000	7,450,000
Toronto	2,463,000	2,556,000	2,855,000	2,915,000	3,000,000
Peel	882,000	1,018,000	1,185,000	1,350,000	1,400,000
York	612,000	751,000	1,010,000	1,200,000	1,360,000
Durham	474,000	522,000	710,000	900,000	1,000,000
Halton	350,000	387,000	500,000	610,000	690,000

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996, Includes Census Undercounts. 2001, 2011, 2021, 2031: GTA Population and Employment Projections to 2031, Toronto Urban Development Services, City of Toronto, June 2000, adjusted to accommodate 2001 Census figures from Statistics Canada.

The percentage increase is much greater for newer municipalities than the City of Toronto which is forecast to grow by 1 percent a year over the next ten years, then falling to 0.2 percent per year in the following ten years. The Durham Region is expected to grow at an average rate of 3.4 percent for the next ten years and continue to grow at 2.7 percent per year. (See Tables 2 and 3.) The Region of Peel is forecast as having a slower growth rate (1.9 percent a year to 2011) than the other Regions largely because the City of Mississauga has now developed almost all the land available within its municipal boundaries.

⁹ City of Toronto Urban Development Services, GTA Population and Employment Projections to 2031 (Toronto: City of Toronto, 2000).

	2001	2011	2021	2031
	%	%	%	%
GTA	9.8	30.2	45.2	55.1
Toronto	4	14.6	17.1	20.5
Peel	16	37	55.7	61.3
York	23.1	63.9	95	121.1
Durham	10.5	48.5	88.6	109.7
Halton	10.4	39	70.4	93.2

Source City of Toronto, Urban Development Services: GTA Population and Employment Projections to 2031, June 2000 adjusted to accommodate 2001 Census figures from Statistics Canada.

	2001-2011	2011-2021	2021-2031
	%	%	%
GTA	1.9	1.1	0.7
Toronto	1.1	0.2	0.3
Peel	1.6	1.4	0.4
York	3.5	1.9	1.3
Durham	3.6	2.7	1.1
Halton	2.9	2.2	1.3

Source: City of Toronto Urban Development Services, GTA Population and Employment Projections to 2031, City of Toronto Urban Development Services, City of Toronto, June 2000, adjusted to accommodate 2001 Census figures from Statistics Canada.

The number of retirees due to the ageing of the baby boomers does not have a dramatic impact until after 2011 when the first of the baby boomers begin to hit retirement age. As the proportion of older people increases there is likely to be an increased demand for housing other than single-family housing. During this decade there will also be fewer people entering the labour market and, as mentioned previously, this will likely result in slower economic growth.

Seniors in the GTA

The fact that the population is ageing in municipalities throughout the Greater Toronto Area needs to be addressed in all planning and policy goals. Current demographic trends reveal that municipalities will have to provide housing, transportation, social services and recreational opportunities for its ageing population. In Toronto, while the total population increased by 14 percent over the last 25 years, seniors (65+) increased by 87 percent over the same time period. In 1971, 8 percent of the population was over 65. By 1996, 13 percent of the population was over 65. By 2029, the proportion of seniors is expected to increase to about 20% of the total population. Comparably, in York Region, the senior population is predicted to grow from 8 percent to 20 percent over the next 20 years.

Planning policies that consider the needs of seniors can include:

- improving access to a range of affordable housing in their communities;
- planning mixed use communities linking housing, health services, recreation and retail opportunities;
- encouraging public transportation that meets senior's needs and enables people to participate in activities, programs and maintain physical and mental health;
- encouraging pedestrian-friendly urban design including safe intersections, accessible transit, benches near bus shelters, stops and along pedestrian routes; and
- providing services for people with limited English language skills or English as a second language;

In order to address the needs of seniors in municipal planning policies, task forces and working groups including seniors have been established throughout the GTA. Some examples include the City of Toronto Senior's Task Force, The Region of York's Council on Ageing and the Region of Durham's Dementia Task Force.

Sources: City of Toronto City Council, *Final Report of the Toronto Seniors' Task Force – Executive Summary*, City of Toronto. Online. Available: http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/council/seniorstf_final.htm and York Region, *Where To From Here? Responding to Homelessness in York Region, A Report of the York Region Homeless Task Force*, York Region, 2000.

2.5 WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE POPULATION OF THE REST OF SOUTH CENTRAL ONTARIO?

South Central Ontario municipalities, excluding the GTA have been growing at different rates. All except some of the smallest centres have grown from 1991 to 2001. The information for the Counties (including the separated cities within them) and Regions is shown in Table 4. Most of the population growth is occurring in urban areas. Some municipalities have been growing at a respectable and manageable rate, such as Waterloo and Guelph, while Barrie and Orangeville have grown at exceptional rates of 56 percent and 38.9 percent respectively. Hamilton, although directly adjacent to the GTA and favourably located nearer the US, border has been growing relatively slowly.

	1991	1996	2001	2011	2021	2028
Dufferin County	39,900	47,000	52,543	61,200	72,200	80,100
Simcoe County (includes Barrie & Orillia)	288,700	339,900	388,361	472,100	571,800	645,700
City of Barrie	62,700	79,200	103,700	132,200	155,600	
City of Orillia	25,900	27,800	29,100	33,600	39,100	
Waterloo Region	377,800	418,300	451,670	512,600	569,800	606,100
Wellington County (includes Guelph)	159,600	176,700	193,900	218,400	240,600	255,400
City of Guelph	88,400	95,800	106,200	121,800	137,300	
Brant County (Includes Brantford)	110,800	123,500	118,000	135,100	144,100	149,400
City of Brantford	82,000	84,800	86,400	96,900	105,400	
Haldiman&Norfolk County	98,700	106,100	105,652	119,600	125,600	128,300
Hamilton- Wentworth	451,700	481,800	505,000	534,600	563,600	580,900
Niagara Region	393,900	414,800	422,891	445,300	464,900	476,800
Northumberland County	78,200	84,000	79,822	93,200	97,900	100,400
Peterborough County (includes Peterborough City)	120,000	126,700	129,632	138,700	146,300	151,000
Peterborough City	68,400	71,500	73,500	76,900	80,800	
Kawartha Lakes	63,300	69,700	71,254	84,200	97,000	106,400

Source: Historic: Statistics Canada. Includes Census Undercount, except for Barrie, Orillia, Guelph and Brantford. Adjusted to accommodate 2001 Census figures from Statistics Canada. Projections: Ministry of Finance, except for Municipal Projections in Barrie, Orillia, Guelph, Brantford and Peterborough City.

Forecast High Growth Rates North of GTA

Forecasts to 2028 for South Central Ontario by the Ministry of Finance show high growth rates in some of the Counties and Regions surrounding the GTA, while others are not expected to grow as fast (see Table 4). In particular, Simcoe County (including the City of Barrie) and Dufferin County (which includes Orangeville) are expected to grow very rapidly, at an annual rate of 2.4 percent. Barrie is projected to grow at an annual rate of 2.7 percent to 2026, although the Strategic Projections Group estimates annual growth for Barrie will be much higher at 4.2 percent. These forecasts do not take into account the impact that major infrastructure changes, such as highways, transit or possibly trunk sewer and water lines, might have on population distribution. Rather these numbers are based on historic and forecast changes in demographic and employment patterns.

2.6 WILL THIS RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH CONTINUE?

Population forecasts for the GTA to 2031 are based on the premise that population growth rates will fall steadily after 2011. However, even the projected rates of growth may not be sustained under quite plausible alternative scenarios.

One way that the projected population growth may not materialize is if the Region loses its attractiveness as a place to invest. As we have just seen, employment growth is the necessary prerequisite for population growth in the GTA. There have been many warnings recently from important sources about the deteriorating health of the GTA as a place to create new jobs and businesses. The Golden Report, Board of Trade reports, *Toronto Competes: An Assessment of Toronto's Global Competitiveness* and other reports prepared for the City of Toronto, the Canadian Urban Institute and the former Greater Toronto Services Board have all warned that there are forces that may prevent the expected level of growth in the GTA.¹⁰



Source: Urban Development Services, City of Toronto

Road congestion has been identified as the most significant factor that might prevent the GTA from realizing its potential for economic growth.



¹⁰ See Synopsis of GTA Based Readings prepared for this study by GHK Canada for a full annotation of reports on the GTA.

Warnings about Threats to the Quality of Life in the GTA

“Many aspects of quality of life depend on the transportation system. Declining transportation service levels limit individual choice in almost every aspect of life from residential and work location to access to shopping, recreation and social support networks.”

IBI Group and Hemson Consulting Ltd, Funding Transportation in the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton-Wentworth. (Toronto: IBI and Hemson Consulting Ltd, 1999).

“Toronto’s growing social problems, combined with under-investment in new infrastructure, are placing the Region’s competitive advantage – its quality of life – at risk.”

The United Way of Greater Toronto. Toronto at a Turning Point: Demographic, Economic and Social Trends in Toronto. Toronto: (Toronto: The United Way, 1999).

“Ongoing issues that affect quality of life in the GTA include lack of transit funding, air quality and rental housing affordability.”

“The continued future prosperity of the GTA will depend on several key determinates: its ability to produce, attract, and retain well-educated and talented labour; the quality of its natural and built environment; its continued success at balancing social diversity and harmony while minimizing socio-economic polarization; the vibrancy of its cultural life and institutions; and quality and supply of infrastructure and supporting transportation and communications.”

Gilbert, Richard, Larry Bourne and MERIC Gertler. The State of the GTA in 2000. (Toronto: Greater Toronto Services Board, 2001).

“The cost of road congestion to businesses could reach \$3.0 billion annually, or 1.3 percent of Regional GDP by 2021.”

“Cars and light trucks cause approximately 60 percent of ground level air pollution. Air pollution causes 1,000 premature deaths in the GTA each year and costs approximately \$1 billion annually.”

The Toronto Board of Trade. A Strategy for Rail-Based Transit in the GTA (Toronto: The Toronto Board of Trade, 2001.)

There is general agreement that the main threats to the GTA include road congestion which leads to “frustration of the movement of goods and people throughout the area”, the lack of affordable housing and the high cost of renting, and the provision of good public services including schools, universities and health care which in some cases are direct economic factors for businesses choosing to locate in an area with a high quality of life.

Road congestion has been pointed out as the single most significant factor that might prevent the GTA from realizing its potential for economic growth. Its cure requires a different urban form that is supportive of public transit and the necessary investment in transit. If the Province and the local municipalities do not choose to, or due to limited resources cannot,



Source: Urban Development Services, City of Toronto

plan for a land use pattern that is sustainable and continue to invest in all the important factors that have made the GTA successful to date, then it is likely that the GTA will grow less rapidly than forecast.

The GTA may fail to meet the population forecasts if the quality of life in the Region and the ability to attract and retain jobs deteriorates (and the forecasts

used for planning purposes assume that the GTA will grow faster than the world economies and in particular the US economy). However, a slower rate of growth than projected because the area is a less desirable place to do business and live, is not a desirable scenario either. It certainly would be better to continue to grow and make the necessary investments to ensure that the quality of life in the GTA is maintained or improved.

The next ten years, in which rapid growth is expected to continue, are crucial to creating and maintaining the quality of life in the GTA. If current trends continue, the level of congestion in the GTA will be unmanageable and may drive business away.

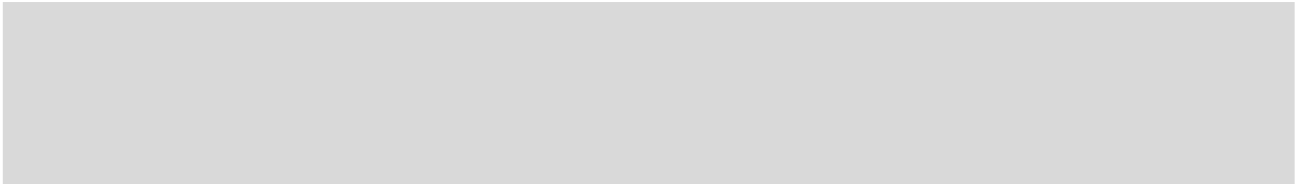
Growth rates would also be reduced if federal immigration targets were to be reduced. The impact of a reduction in immigration on the economy of the Region is poorly understood and would likely be undesirable, particularly in light of the ageing population structure. However, in-migration is the demographic factor that leads to high rates of population growth and immigration targets are set politically. If the GTA must cope with rapid growth, it is important to understand whether the benefits outweigh the costs and what the ideal rate of in-migration would be. To do this is beyond the scope of this report and beyond the scope of any policy intervention except at the Federal level. On the other hand, the GTA and the City in particular, by virtue of having to absorb high levels of new arrivals, bear a disproportionate share of impact, and hence financial responsibility for Federal policies regarding increasing immigration targets.

If the GTA continues to grow as forecast, the rest of South Central Ontario will likely meet the forecasts for their area. If the GTA was unable to retain its favourable economic position, then it is not clear whether the rest of South Central Ontario might benefit because it is less affected by such matters as road congestion, or whether its growth would also falter.

2.7 IT IS DIFFICULT TO GROW LARGE FAST AND EFFECTIVELY

Given the high rate of growth recently, it is remarkable that the expansion of the GTA has been as well planned and orderly as it has been.

In particular, high rates of growth for originally small suburban municipalities in the GTA can be difficult to handle. There are many problems in planning for rapid growth and adapting to a future in which a small town becomes a large city. For instance, the municipality may not have the staff to do more than cope, the politicians may not be thinking about and preparing for a large city in only twenty years and the current citizens may not want this future. There is a conflict between what is appropriate development for a town of its current size and a suitable urban form for a place several times larger. Money



for new transit to reduce reliance on the automobile may not be there, and nobody may understand the implications of all the decisions that are being made, just to keep up with current housing demand and growth in employment.

Outside of the GTA, in the rest of South Central Ontario, there are likely to be even greater pressures in some areas to accommodate expected high growth rates. In Simcoe and Dufferin Counties, based on recent trends, population growth is expected to add significantly to the size of Barrie, Orillia, Shelbourne, Alliston, Orangeville and the shores of Georgian Bay. These communities are still, for the most part, small towns and are not planning to significantly increase the size or intensity of their city centres, nor are they organizing to add density to their commercial strips. Barrie has been planning significant improvements to its city centre including its waterfront, but based on current trends, its projected population growth will rapidly dwarf the size and importance of its downtown in relation to its surrounding development.

It appears from these recent trends that the transformation from small town to either a large city with character, or an undistinguished sprawling conglomeration, is a choice that will be facing these communities in the near future. There is an essential need for a stronger commitment to planning particularly county planning, to adequately prepare an appropriate urban structure and ensure that the appropriate infrastructure investments are made as these areas evolve in the future.

