

ONTARIO PLANNERS' VISION - LEADERSHIP - GREAT CHANGING

ONTARIO Planning

JOURNAL

JULY/AUGUST 2006, VOL. 21, NO. 4

Mobility Under Attack

Are Older Canadians Ready
to Live Without Their Cars? *Page 3*

Quality of life may never be the same



OPPI 2006 Planning Symposium

Preview, page 14

The Shape of Things to Come:
Improving Health through Community Planning
September 28-29, 2006, Nottawasaga Inn, Alliston

The Changing Demography of Canadian Communities: New Answers Needed

Energy, Health and Aging Population a Powerful Trinity

By Dena Warman, Dan Leeming and Diane Riley



Planners need to reinterpret future plans

This is the third and concluding article in a series about issues of pressing concern to planners: the first was "Energy: The End of Cheap Oil" (Vol. 20 No.6), the second "Public Health and Welfare: An Urban Planning Perspective" (Vol. 21 No 1). Each article addresses issues to do with the convergence of key areas of change: the end of cheap, easily accessible energy; serious problems in health and welfare related to the built environment; and the changing face of Canada's population. This article examines the issues raised by the changing demographic profile and aging society of Canada. It concludes with a summary review of the implications raised by all three articles in this series.

Canada's Aging Population

The world's population structure is changing. The population of developing countries continues to rise rapidly, while developed countries population rate continues to slow as health care improves and women choose to have smaller families.¹

The results of a changing population structure will be multi-fold, including effects on immigration policy, health spending and economic competitiveness.

- Canada's population pyramid is becoming inverted, as shown on page 11.
- People aged 65 and over represent about 13 percent of the total but by 2031 this will have increased to 25 percent: that means that one in every four people will be a "senior citizen."²
- By 2056 Canada's median age could be as high as 50.²
- The working-to-aged (over 65) ratio is currently 100:44; by 2031 this ratio could be 100:61.²
- According to Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, Dr Scott, "there are more babies born to women over 40 years of age than to those under 20 in the GTA; we are an aging society." (CBC Radio One interview, February 2006).
- The workforce is aging across the developed world and industries are beginning to face not only a shortage of employees but a tremendous loss of expertise as experienced workers retire.³

- Compounding labour shortages and increasing health care requirements is the fact that health care workers and educators are themselves aging, with insufficient numbers of younger people being trained to take their places.

As the Canadian population ages and fewer babies are born, the supporting cohort will be burdened by the dependent cohorts, consisting of children, the aged and the infirm. The effects on cities and regions will be an intense concentration of people with greater need for services and assistance.

Changing Households and Location Preferences

Demographics in Canada are undergoing a dramatic shift away from the settlement profiles that planners have understood and have been accustomed to over the past 50 years. The make-up of the young nation of Canada has been subject to change throughout its 400 years of growth since Western settlement. This has been due largely to each successive wave of immigration, cultural characteristics of new arrivals, economic prosperity, and settlement patterns. It is important now to stand back and assess what current realities and future projections have to tell us as planners. Taken together, these issues collectively demand that planners reinterpret how the future is planned; the wide ripples of change will affect many other areas essential to the well-being of individuals and of society.

- 80 percent of new immigrants to Canada (up to 250,000 a year) choose to live in urban areas; with 60 percent choosing Toronto.
- According to a recent Region of York study on GTA growth rates, 128,000 people per year move to the Greater Golden Horseshoe (equivalent to the entire Province of Prince Edward Island). This makes the GTA the third-fastest growing region in North America after Atlanta and Dallas/Fort Worth (little wonder then that the U.S.-based Urban

Land Institute (ULI) has opened a chapter in Toronto).

- The Province of Ontario's "Places to Grow" study estimates that as much as 70,000 ha remains for development within the ecologically defined boundaries of the GTA. The Urban Development Institute estimates that the amount is much smaller, at 53,000 ha. The build-out of remaining lands could occur within the next 25 years or sooner, depending on densities used. The laws of supply and demand will likely force land values higher, and pressure will continue on second tier lands beyond the "Green Belt."
- The number of household units is growing even faster than the population (even smaller units/greater demand for diversity).^{2&5}
- Multi-unit housing developments accounted for 47 percent of housing starts in 2005 compared with 37 percent in 1998. This trend is expected to continue, with estimates as high as 50 percent by next year.⁵
- Changing lifestyle preferences to later marriage, fewer children, shorter commutes, proximity to downtown/amenities — attract young professional and empty nesters to mid and high-rise living.⁵

Canada's major population growth is through immigration. In the future, immigration will become a competition to attract the best workforce from other countries. This will continue to perpetuate cultural change, especially in urban centres. The changing lifestyle and household patterns, along with diminishing land supplies and more restrictive building requirements, demands a new approach to urban development.

Towards New Answers

The prognosis for demographic change in Ontario can be characterized by increased population growth driven by immigration, with an aging population living in denser housing forms concentrated in urban centres such as the GTA. The implications of this demographic pattern for planners are very significant. There is clearly a growing need for change but even though for many the potential solutions will seem all too familiar in principle, these are seldom put into practice. Below we present physical, economic and social ideas that will help Canada and its cities work with its demographic forecast.

Physical Considerations

- Life-cycle housing, the means to continue to live in the same community through-

out the various cycles of your life, is now more important than ever. To be able to "age in place" means that you can stay in touch with family and friends, cultural ties, medical services and familiar and favourite places such as parks, shops and walks. In order to respond to an aging society, communities need to incorporate far more of the following: granny flats and garden suites, separate interior apartment units, bungalows, condominium and assisted living apartments, and long-term care facilities. All of these options need to be fully integrated throughout a community, closest to primary needs and not segregated as separate uses.

- With household formation growing faster than population growth, the need for more diverse, smaller, affordable homes will continue. The 60sq m. (600sq ft) condo-apartments may seem (to some) much too small, but they are in fact popular first-time homes and a foot in the homeownership market for many. These multiple units need to be integrated throughout communities and provide strong reciprocal support to transit, cultural, and retail services.
- Multigenerational housing is needed by many families. Aging parents still play a significant role within the homes of their children and grandchildren. Expanded families sharing one house satisfy many objectives of compact form, economics of scale in reducing energy demands, socialization, and assistance of seniors.

Economic Considerations

- Federal and provincial budgets need to start adjusting priorities to meet the changing social needs of Canada's population. With fewer school-aged children and more seniors, funding dollars will need to shift from education to health.
- Employment policies need to be revisited. New ideas include phased-in retirement, raising the age of retirement or revamping flexible working regulations.
- The changing workplace from physical labour to desk jobs can increase the age of retirement. As well new technologies often make jobs less physically demanding. Mental and physical dexterity can be continuously improved with the commitment to life-long learning and a willingness to continually train at every age.
- As people live longer, healthier lives, many want to continue working in some capacity beyond 65. This trend is held back by current retirement policies and practical considerations such as the loss of retirement income. Current policies act as

a disincentive to stay on in a part-time or on-call capacity.

- Flexible workplace policies will support the live/work options provided by the land use desegregation trend. Retirees may work without being subjected to commuting or traditional working hours, which can encourage integrated communities that are active at all times of day. As urban areas become denser, live/work spaces provide transitions between density and use.
- Current workplace policies do not encourage flexible working situations, for example part-time workers have diminished security and fewer benefits. Retirees are faced with a choice to not work or to work in a non-ideal setting. The loss of skills and experience can be devastating to a single department or entire corporation, changing the views on working age and capacity will not only help companies stay economically viable, it will keep seniors in a healthy net of social interactions.

Social Considerations

- Greater social integration will continue to be needed and this should be based on age, culture and gender. While some urban centres have adapted to the growing



environmental research associates

Established in 1971

- Environmental Planning, Assessment, Evaluation & Management
- Restoration, Remediation & Enhancement
- Impact Assessment, Mitigation & Compensation
- Aquatic, Wetland & Terrestrial Studies
- Watershed & Natural Heritage System Studies
- Natural Channel Design & Stormwater Management
- Peer Review & Expert Testimony
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Wildlife Control/Bird Hazards to Aircraft

22 Fisher Street, P.O. Box 280
King City, Ontario, L7B 1A6
phone: 905 833-1244 fax: 905 833-1255
e-mail: kingcity@lgl.com

pains of rapid culture change, many other centres are just beginning to deal with this phenomenon.

- Supporting “age-in-place” development includes allowing different housing styles and sizes in neighbourhoods encouraging walkable environments that integrate work/live/play situations which encourage passive physical activity and the building of community bonds.
- The integration of “in-house” health care such as dental, medical and psychiatric services within larger seniors-oriented buildings in urban settings is essential. As noted by John Bentley Mays in a recent *Globe and Mail* column on architecture and seniors’ housing: “The incidence of depression and substance abuse unfortunately increase with age . . . along with professional aids to emotional and mental well being, seniors also need something of the vibrancy and pulse of urban life, engaged with the excitement of living.”¹⁶

Conclusions

The world is changing rapidly; planning is the profession that is supposed to be poised to anticipate and prepare for these changes. Oil has dominated Canada’s development—

the decline of cheap oil will have serious and continuous impact. Better health has been a defining feature of the developed world’s success, but chronic lifestyle-related disease (such as obesity, asthma and heart disease) and their overwhelming costs will shape the future. Canada’s suburban nation of two-children and two-car families has shaped the current built environment model—as the population is living longer, becoming more culturally diverse and choosing different housing options, the urban and suburban forms will evolve. These are the realities of the present; how well will professional planners respond?

Land uses need to continue to become more compact, diverse, and transit- and pedestrian-supportive, while encouraging greater mobility for all ages. Physical activity is still one of the best means of preventing obesity and cardiovascular, respiratory and mental health problems. These benefits are particularly important to the youngest and oldest members of society.

The opportunity exists to design new communities in a much more holistic manner to ensure greater sustainability of the environment and reduced energy costs. These communities would be based on com-

fortable, compact and diverse built form in line with the emerging LEED-ND design evaluation for communities.

The urban boundary has been defined within the green belt by ecological boundaries (the escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine) but the demand for developable land continues to go up. Based on the rules of supply and demand, this means two things: increased land costs, and a greater need for diversity in housing forms and land uses to meet affordability and personal needs. How these new communities are designed to ensure integration, diversity, transit support, linked and accessible high quality public places, employment opportunities and sustainable environmental and energy initiatives is up to us all (and possibly an increased appreciation of the potential inherent in brownfield reurbanization situations).

There is a significant overlap in the recommendations set out in the two previous articles in this series. The suggested actions to deal with demographic change become even more significant when overlaid with the need for solutions to our energy and public health problems. Our current system is very fragile, as witnessed by the increasing

Northway-Photomap Inc.
44 Upjohn Road, Toronto, ON - M3B 2W1
visit: www.northway-photomap.com
Bus: (416)441-6025 - Fax: (416)441-2432
email - info@photomapltd.com

**Federal and Provincial Map Dealers
Canadian Nautical Charts & Publications**

**Current & Historical
Aerial Photography Library
Photo-Lab Services**

**Land Information Services
Digital Ortho-Photography**

**3D LiDAR Modeling Scanner
Topographic Mapping
Volumetric Calculations
GPS Ground Control**

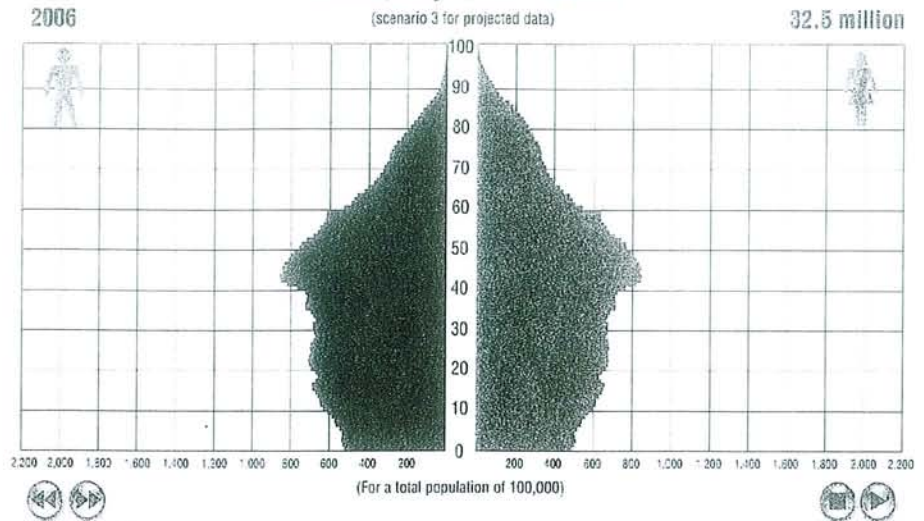
number of power blackouts in large urban areas such as Toronto. Climate change, epidemics, pollution and other manifestations of our current model of urbanization will increasingly tax this already overly taxed system. The convergence of the end of cheap oil, the looming crisis in health care, and the changing demographics must be a call to adjust the set. Planners must adjust their set of underlying principle: they must not only adapt to change but anticipate and plan for it. These will be the realities of Canada cities; many of the solutions to these imminent problems are, in principle, familiar to planners; the implementation of these solutions must start right now.

References

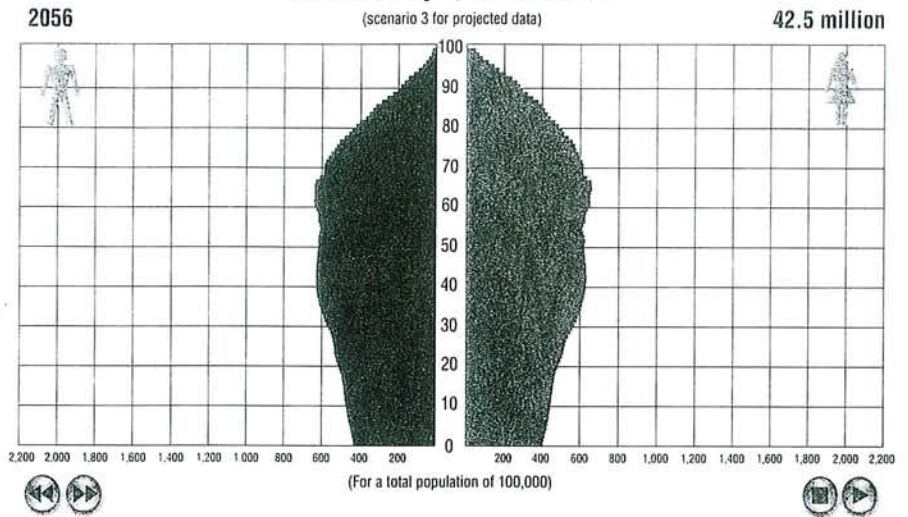
- 1 Scientific American, Special Issue, Crossroads for Planet Earth, September 2005
- 2 Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, Thursday December 15, 2005
- 3 *The Economist*, February 18-24, 2006, Turning Boomers into Boomeranges, pg 65 -67, How to manage an ageing workforce, pg 11
- 4 www.pir.gov.on.ca/userfiles/page_attachments/Library/4/GrowthOutlookForGGH
- 5 Scotia Bank, *Real Estate Trends*, May 23 2006
- 6 Bentley-Mays, J. *Globe and Mail*, March 2006.

Dan Leeming, MCIP, RPP, is a partner with the Planning Partnership in Toronto. Dr. Diane Riley is the Director of the Harm Reduction Network, a policy analyst with the Canadian Foundation for Drug Policy and the International Harm Reduction Association. She is also an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto. Dena Warman is a graduate of the London School of Economics. She worked at the Planning Partnership before joining C. N. Watson and Associates Ltd.

Age Pyramid of Population, Canada, July 1, 1971 to 2056



Age Pyramid of Population, Canada, July 1, 1971 to 2056



Source: Statistics Canada website (<http://www.statcan.ca/english/ads/91-520-XPB/ageflash.htm>) June 22, 2006

Sorensen Gravely Lowes
Planning Associates Inc.

- GROWTH MANAGEMENT
- POLICY FORMULATION
- ZONING BY-LAWS
- LAND DEVELOPMENT & REDEVELOPMENT
- COMMERCIAL PLANNING
- EXPERT TESTIMONY

509 DAVENPORT ROAD
TORONTO, ONTARIO M4V 1B8
TEL: (416) 923-6630 FAX: (416) 923-6916

URBAN STRATEGIES INC.

PLANNING & URBAN DESIGN
197 Spadina Avenue, Suite 600, Toronto, ON Canada M5T2C8
tel 416 340 9004 fax 416 340 8400 www.urbanstrategies.com