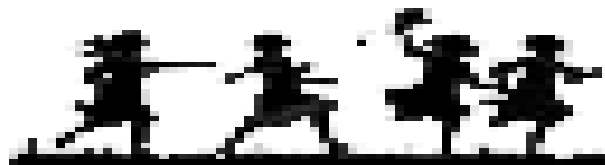


# Quality of Life Report 2000



Peterborough City and County



Peterborough Social Planning Council  
December 2000

A United Way  
Member Agency



The **Vision** of the Peterborough Social Planning Council is to be an organization that facilitates active, broad based citizen participation in shaping healthy communities in Peterborough city and county; acts as a catalyst for positive, sustainable social change; and promotes understanding that social justice is in everyone's interest.

and our **Mission** is

Through research, community development and public education, the PSPC works to build a strong community.

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## Executive Summary

The Peterborough Social Planning Council is pleased to provide our second Quality of Life Report, an update to our 1998 report. The report compares quality of life indicators in 1999 with the same indicators from a decade ago and depicts trends over the past decade in these same indicators. The spheres of our community's life that are examined are health, social, economic, environment and citizenship. We recognize quality of life as the product of the interplay among social, health, economic and environmental conditions which affect human and social development.

In the last decade, we have witnessed progress in some areas, setbacks in others. Considerable progress in the environmental sector has been offset by continuing declines in the social and health sectors. We have regained our economic position but experienced some decline in the area of citizen participation.

The indicators show improvement in the number of people on social assistance, in recycling, in the number of babies born with healthy birth weights, the number of e-colis in the Otonabee River, in effluent spills and the number of children taken into care by Children's Aid. We have held our own in donations to the United Way, labour force participation and municipal election participation. The bad news is in decreasing access to social housing, treatment programs for children with special needs and long-term care facilities, reduced public transit use, declining voluntarism, climbing cancer rates and consumer bankruptcies.

Some of the data in this report is well known in our community and serious efforts are being made to realize improvements where applicable. Other information is not widely available, may surprise some readers and hopefully inspire us to cooperative action. The Quality of Life Report is unique in that it gathers data from local agencies, public institutions and all three levels of government in one document and allows us to compare trends from year to year as well as from the beginning and end of a decade.

The Social Planning Council has a longstanding mandate to conduct research of value to the community and to help build a strong, healthy community through public education and planning. We hope the report will be used by the many organizations working to build a healthier community and by governments that have the capacity to make a fundamental difference.





## Introduction

Quality of life is a term that is widely used in our community. Individual citizens, when talking about quality of life, tend to speak in terms of personal health, relationships with family and friends, appreciation of others for their skills and efforts, and basic financial security. Citizen quality of life and community quality of life are intertwined, and both are complex.

In the mid-1990s, we witnessed major changes in virtually all aspects of our lives. Major economic restructuring followed the free trade agreements and recession. In response to Provincial demands, the Federal Government eliminated fundamental national criteria and standards for social programs and downloaded or discharged themselves from a number of responsibilities, housing being a prime example. In Ontario, our provincial government followed suit, downloading such programs as ambulances, social assistance, child care and housing to municipalities. At the same time, both senior levels of government made deep cuts in health, education, environment and social spending, directly affecting individual recipients of transfer payments as well as public institutions serving critical community needs.

Social Planning Councils across Ontario recognized a need to measure and analyze the impact of restructuring and cuts in public services. A *Quality of Life Index* was developed in 1997 by the Ontario Social Development Council and Social Planning Network of Ontario. The Index addressed a set of indicators that are representative of conditions in the social, health, environmental and economic sectors. In Peterborough, we use all of but one of the twelve standard QLI indicators (data on one is not available here) but we have included six of our own indicators, three of which depict the level of citizenship participation in community life. This is the first time we have incorporated a citizenship sector in our QLI report. All indicators must meet the some basic criteria; they must be relevant to quality of life and the data must be regularly available, reliable and credible.

Since the Quality of Life Index was developed, there has been a resurgence of interest in alternative models on measuring the state of our communities. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has developed its own model for measuring the health and well-being of communities. The Canadian Policy Research Network is undertaking a major national study of Canadian's views on quality of life issues and measurements. A University of Toronto study of the field has identified more than 850 indicators that have been used in various state of the environment or state of the community reports across



Canada. This interest underlines the growing consensus that productivity measures such as the GNP and GDP and common local indicators such as building permits or housing starts are incomplete and sometimes misleading measures of our well-being.

## Methodology and Data Sources

The Quality of Life Index is based on a mathematical formula that assigns values to indicators in the Index. The values are based on changes in the indicators and are adjusted for changes in local population. 1990 was chosen as the base year to allow comparisons of post-restructuring and downsizing years to previous years. The base year was assigned a value of 100 points. Each sector (health, social, economic, environment and citizenship) has equal value, in the base year, at 20 points each. Individual indicators within each sector also have equal value. The index then measures the rate of change for each indicator and each sector to come up with the score for the year being reported on.

### Five Step Example - Social Housing Waiting List

1. 1990 Rate:  $349 \text{ applicants} \div 117,006 \text{ people} \times 10,000 = 29.8$
2. 1999 Rate:  $677 \text{ applicants} \div 125,528 \text{ people} \times 10,000 = 53.9$
3.  $(29.8 - 53.9) \div 29.8 = 80.8\%$  (% change)
4.  $6.6 \text{ (base value)} \times .808 \text{ (% change)} = 5.3$   
(change in QLI Value)
5.  $6.6 - 5.3 = 1.3$  (current QLI Value)

To calculate the value of an indicator, the data for the base year is divided by the total population and then multiplied by 10,000 to get the rate per 10,000. The same step is used to obtain the current rate. The current rate is then subtracted from the base rate, divided by the base rate and multiplied by 100 to get the percentage change (positive or negative) in the indicator. The percentage change is then multiplied by the base value assigned to the indicator to determine the change in QLI value. The percentage change is then added to (if

positive) or subtracted from (if negative) the base value to realize the current QLI value. A chart, on page 22, summarizes the base and current values for all of the indicators in our Index.

At the local level, we do not use exactly the same indicators as our provincial counterparts. We use water quality rather than air quality because we do not have access to pre-1999 data on air quality. We use public transit as an additional environmental indicator and children's therapy (at Five Counties Children's Centre) as an additional social indicator. We do not have historical data on social assistance beneficiaries and use data on recipients instead. For the first time we are using an additional set of indicators representing citizen participation which we view as integral to quality of life and a vital sign



of a healthy community. All indicators are capable of moving in a positive or negative direction. The following is a list of indicators used in the standard, provincial QLI and the indicators used in our local report.

Ontario Indicators

Peterborough Indicators

**Economic**

Bankruptcies  
Labour Force Participation  
Unemployment

Bankruptcies  
Labour Force Participation  
Unemployment

**Environment**

Recycling/Tonnes Diverted from Landfill  
Air Quality  
Effluent Spills

Recycling/Tonnes Diverted from Landfill  
Untreated Water Quality - E.coli  
Effluent Spills  
Public Transit

**Social**

Social Assistance Beneficiaries  
Admission to Children's Aid  
Social Housing Waiting List

Social Assistance Recipients  
Admission to Children's Aid  
Social Housing Waiting List

**Health**

New Cancer Cases  
Long Term Care Waiting List  
Low Birth Weight Babies

New Cancer Cases  
Long Term Care Waiting List  
Low Birth Weight Babies  
Children's Treatment Waiting List

**Citizen Participation**

none

Voter Participation  
Donations to United Way  
Voluntarism

**Data Sources**

Where data was not available for 1990, we have used the earliest year available. While most current year data appears as 1999, some data is for the calendar year and some is for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000. Wherever possible, we use both County and City data - our urban and rural communities depend on each other and share many



common quality of life values. In this report, we have added county data on recycling and social assistance recipients to data that was published in our 1998 QLI Report. All but three indicators include County information.

The information in this document has been accessed from or provided us by many sources. We are particularly appreciative of the agencies and individuals that have sought and compiled information for us. They include:

City of Peterborough  
County of Peterborough  
Family Counselling Services & Volunteers & Information Peterborough  
Five Counties Children's Centre  
Human Resources Development Canada  
Kawartha Haliburton Children's Aid Society  
Ministry of Community and Social Services  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Ministry of the Environment  
Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy  
Ontario Cancer Registry  
Peterborough County-City Health Unit  
Peterborough Community Access Centre  
Peterborough Housing Authority  
Peterborough Regional Health Centre  
Peterborough Utilities Service  
Town of Lakefield  
Township of Douro-Dummer  
Township of Asphodel-Norwood  
Township of Otonabee-South Monaghan  
Township of North Kawartha  
United Way of Peterborough & District

## **Our Results**

The quality of life in Peterborough City and County, as measured by the Quality of Life Index, has declined marginally since the early 1990s. From a benchmark score of 100 in 1990 (or base year), the overall score for the five sectors combined, has declined to 94.2. To a large extent, local trends mirror those at the provincial and national levels. Our economic recovery has been achieved at the expense of our health and social services.



The following section provides graphic presentations of the general trends, charts and interpretive information for each of the indicators and, finally, a summary chart that compares the base QLI value and the current QLI value for each indicator and for the

index in general.

### **How We Compare with Other Communities**

Previous provincial QLI Reports have resulted in erroneous media reports about the *best* or the *worst* place to live in Ontario. The QLI cannot accurately be used to compare communities. Every community that uses the QLI started at a different place, thus the only comparison that can be made is in regard to the extent of progress or setbacks in each community. Due to the fact that we are using a different set of indicators in this report than is used in many Ontario communities, this report is best used as it is intended, as a tool to measure trends in our own community.