

# LOCAL

## Census illustrates tale of two cities

BY FRED VALLANCE-JONES

Hamilton's population has officially snuck past half a million for the first time, but the hole in the middle of the doughnut is getting bigger.

The first numbers out from the 2006 census show 504,559 people called the city home as of last May, up a modest 2.8 per cent from 2001.

But most of those people are choosing to live in suburban areas, not established neighbourhoods, especially in the lower city. And that represents a real challenge to local and provincial politicians who seek to have precisely the reverse happen.

"I think we, as a society, are waking up to the fact that maybe we went too far with suburbanization," said Tom McCormack, an economic and population forecaster based in Milton. The problem of shrinking core areas

City	Pop., 2006	change
Toronto, Ont.	2,503,281	0.9
Montreal, Que.	1,620,693	2.3
Calgary, Alta.	988,193	12.4
Ottawa, Ont.	812,129	4.9
Edmonton, Alta.	730,372	9.6
Mississauga, Ont.	668,549	9.1
Winnipeg, Man.	633,451	2.2
Vancouver, B.C.	578,041	5.9
Hamilton, Ont.	504,559	2.8
Quebec, Que.	491,142	3.1

is acute in the lower part of the old City of Hamilton, where more than 5,000 fewer people lived than in 2001, a drop of 3 per cent. Only growth on the south Mountain kept the overall population of the old city about even. The contrast with the five former

suburbs couldn't be starker. There, the population increased by 10 per cent over the same five years. The census tract that includes new development in the Meadowlands of Ancaster exploded by an astonishing 85 per cent.

The director of demography for Statistics Canada, Pamela White, says it's a trend seen in peripheral communities right across the Golden Horseshoe. "It's Vaughan, Whitby, Richmond Hill, Markham. They have population growth rates at four times the national level."

Milton grew by 71 per cent, the fastest rate for any municipality in Canada. The town was quick to issue a news release yesterday pointing out that the large percentage increase was because of the small population there to begin with.

Still, McCormack said the numbers show why policies such as Ontario's

Places to Grow plan are needed. It seeks to redirect development to urban cores.

Area cabinet minister Dr. Marie Bountrogianni is confident the policy can work, despite the trend in the opposite direction.

"Downtown Hamilton has been identified as an urban growth centre," she said in a statement.

"This plan will help our government provide Hamilton with a more efficient use of infrastructure, including public transit."

Hamilton's mayor, Fred Eisenberger, says he's counting on so-called "intensification" policies to pay off by the time the next censuses are taken in 2011 and 2016.

But actually getting people to choose existing areas over brand-new subdivisions will be a challenge. "The discipline needs to be that we

don't expand the urban boundary and allow more lands to come on line which then would encourage more sprawl development," Eisenberger said.

Ward 1 Councillor Brian McHattie has witnessed approval after approval for new subdivisions during his time at City Hall.

"We are going to have to get a lot more creative in providing incentives and all the things we haven't had to take the new growth ... and move it to the lower part of the city where we have the existing infrastructure."

A bright spot for Hamilton is the 2.6 per cent increase in the population of the downtown core from 2001 to 2006. That's on top of a 10 per cent rise in the five years previous to that.

"It's a great sign," Eisenberger said. "We are on the right path." *fvallance-jones@thespec.com* 905-526-2499

# Community snapshots

Hamilton is a city of diverse neighbourhoods growing at varying rates. Here is a look at two communities that help tell the story.

## Immigrant population growth lags

BY SHARON BOASE

If Hamilton was doing a better job of wooing new immigrants, it could dramatically improve its flagging population numbers, says a city immigration expert.

"We're in a competition, not only with Toronto but with cities like London, Ontario, and Winnipeg, Manitoba," says Madina Wasuge, executive director of the Centre for Civic Inclusion. "We really need to create a competitive edge in our workplaces, our environment and our neighbourhoods."

Census figures released yesterday show Hamilton grew only 2.8 per cent in the last five years compared to a whopping 14.4 per cent in Oakville and 9 per cent in Burlington.

It's a discouraging reminder of Steeltown's lacklustre efforts to draw newcomers to the community.

According to figures from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Hamilton was the destination of choice for just 1.7 per cent of immigrants who came to Canada in 2005.

That puts us in 8th place on a list of Canadian cities — miles behind Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, and even trailing the likes of wintry Winnipeg.

"If people want to maintain our quality of life here in Hamilton, we have to encourage growth," noted Joe-Anne Priel, general manager of community services for the city.

"Immigration is actually going to be what saves us because we're not having enough babies."

Every year for the past decade, Hamilton has attracted between 1.2 and 1.7 per cent of immigrants to Canada. While it has edged up slightly in the last five years, it's nowhere near what it will take for Steeltown to thrive.

In just another four years, our workforce will be entirely dependent on immigration because of an aging population. Unless we start drawing immigrants in greater numbers, Hamilton's economic engine is going to run out of gas.

The city has a few initiatives in the works to address the problem, including an immigration strategy city hall will kick off this fall by organizing a roundtable similar to the one that's tackling our 20 per cent poverty rate.

Next week, the Hamilton Immigrant Workforce Network will unveil a model to be shared with all community employers to help them through the ins and outs of inclusive recruiting, hiring, promotion and retention practices.

They're all good, they're just not enough, says Wasuge, whose new organization looks to include newcomers in all facets of community life.

Almost the same size as Hamilton's census metropolitan area, Winnipeg managed to snag 2.4 per cent of immigrants last year and has been soundly trumping Hamilton for several years.

That's because Winnipeg is proactive about drawing newcomers, Wasuge says. Winnipeg actively markets itself to would-be newcomers, even going abroad to convince them it's a great place to live.

Winnipeg also has a program to assist and support foreign-trained doctors in landing Canadian credentials.

"It's a question of a family living in Hamilton telling a family living back home, 'I'm in a great city, I'm working, the environment is great, my workplace is inclusive, my neighbours are nice, my children go to a great school, we have the best health care here,'" says Wasuge.

"It's a question of marketing." *sboase@thespec.com* 905-526-2452



RON ALBERTSON, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

The Meadowlands in Ancaster was the city's fastest-growing area.



RON ALBERTSON, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

The Ainslie Wood area of Hamilton had the city's sharpest drop.

### Meadowlands

Meadowlands (south of Golf Links Road, east of Southcote Road) has grown the most since 2001, with a population jump of 85 per cent.

Drive through the area and you will find a prosperous, optimistic community that is racially and ethnically mixed.

Houses and condos are generally large, stylish and new, with manicured lawns. Problems are few and the area feels safe.



Sasi-Parsons

"It's pretty quiet, especially on this street," says Munira Hashemi of Harrogate Drive. She likes her new place, the many kids in the neighbourhood and great shopping areas.

Bev Harris, at a home business on the same street, has seen the growth these past three years but is surprised the population is up 85 per cent. "Wow. That's a lot."

Harris believes city planners have handled it very well. On the downside, "we used to have deer in here (in the back yard), but we haven't seen any in the last year and a half."

Judee Sasi-Parsons came from the east Mountain eight years ago because housing prices were reasonable and property taxes much lower. Ancaster, where Meadowlands is situated, was at that time its own municipality with its own taxes.

She's happy with the growing community. "You go with the changes. It's all good." People are very friendly and helpful, she says. "There's no riff-raff. You don't have to worry. You feel safe here."

Phil Cocca was attracted here two years ago by new housing. "For the future, we're looking for it to increase in value."

Although "it's booming, compared to two years ago," he's not surprised at the rapid growth. The only problem, more traffic, is manageable. "We knew it was going to be busy."

### Ainslie Wood

Ainslie Wood (south of McMaster University and Main Street West) actually saw a decline. The number of residents there fell by 24 per cent.

Residents say they are unhappy with their once quaint old neighbourhood and many are looking to move out. McMaster University students have taken over and their lifestyles and noisy parties have changed the place.



Schachtschneider

Lawns here are increasingly likely to be strewn with beer bottles and garbage. Window curtains are either non-existent or made up of old blankets. The small old bungalows with single driveways have students outside drinking beer and listening to music on a sunny warm day like yesterday.

"Everybody is selling. They want to get out," says Elizabeth Juszel, a 29-year resident. She's not surprised the population is declining. "If a house goes up for sale, the people who buy it turn it into an income property and rent it out to students."

Elizabeth Ross still finds the small street she has lived on for 40 years quiet, despite the students. Her only complaint is that one night when looking out her window after hearing noise, a student gave her the finger. "I thought, what did I ever do to you?"

But she acknowledges "people are selling their houses like crazy and they're getting bought up for student housing." Many of her old neighbours have moved out.

Rose Schachtschneider, 79, says the young families are gone. "My neighbour moved out because their house was getting too small with four children."

Schachtschneider is surprised, however, at the fast decline in the neighbourhood's population. Here since 1957, she still likes the area.

"It's not far to the stores, close to the bank and very close to church."

*cfragomeni@thespec.com* 905-526-3392

## Great school, but jobs are elsewhere, says engineer

BY KERRY WALL

When Syed Ali Jafri came to Hamilton five years ago, he was excited about studying engineering at McMaster University.

Now, less than a year after he earned his degree, he's planning to leave the city, for a variety of reasons.

"I'm looking at Mississauga," the 25-year-old computer engineer said.

While he says Hamilton's rental market is affordable, he's looking forward to living in a city where he can find a nearby job in his field.

"I had a job for five years in the sense that I was working at Tim Hortons," he said.

"It's great while you're in school, but there are very few white-collar jobs that most people would want after they have a university degree.

"Most of the (engineering) headquarters are in Burlington, Mississauga, Oakville," he said.

Jafri was born in Pakistan but studied in the United States before coming to Canada. He looks forward to being part

### More to come

Statistics Canada released the first round of its 2006 census results yesterday, publishing information about Canada's population and demographics.

There will be seven more data releases between now and May of 2008, dealing with topics such as Canadians' age and sex, marital and family status, language and citizenship, immigration, Canada's aboriginal population, labour, education, minorities and income.

The next set of data, on age and sex, will be released in July.

of the larger and very active Canadian-Pakistani community in Mississauga.

"I was involved in the Pakistani Students Association at McMaster, but that was for students," he explained. "There's nothing at the city level."



SHERYL NADLER, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Syed Ali Jafri loved McMaster University. Now an engineer, he wants to move. Hamilton's downtown isn't safe, he says.

Jafri also has concerns about crime in Hamilton.

"I would not want my girlfriend to walk down the street (in Hamilton) whether it was day or night," he said. "And if my parents are around, I wouldn't want them seeing people smoking crack on the streets or prosti-

tutes asking whether you're free?"

Despite planning to move, there is one thing he'll miss.

"I will definitely miss McMaster just because the campus is so great," he said. "It's not too huge and not too small. I still go there and hang out."

*Special to The Hamilton Spectator*