

Financial Capacity

Rural communities tend to have fewer programs and services available than their urban counterparts. This is due, in part, to the smaller population living in rural communities. However, there are other fiscal realities present in rural communities that make sustaining and delivering services a challenge.

Rural Reality: Rural communities have a smaller tax base from which to pay for local social and community services. Fundraising can be a particular challenge, given the smaller donor pool.^{4/5}

Impact on Families:

- » Families may not have access to supportive programs and services that are seen as 'extras', when agencies struggle to maintain even their most basic and core services.
- » The need to focus on core services may decrease the resources available for early interventions, leaving children and youth at a greater risk of not achieving their optimal potential.
- » When local programs and services are unavailable, families are burdened with the cost of accessing services outside of their home communities.

Rural Reality: Rural organizations have greater difficulty competing for open grants and funding. Eligibility conditions often don't match the needs of rural communities, and disqualification frequently occurs due to population criteria.^{6/7}

Impact on Families:

- » Fiscal challenges may hinder an agency's ability to respond to the changing needs of their community.
- » In the absence of additional funding, organizations may be compelled to charge user-fees for their programs and services.

Rural Reality: Rural residents experience a high cost of living.⁸

Impact on Families:

- » Rising costs of food and fuel have a significant impact on rural families, who tend to already pay more for food and fuel than people who live in cities.
- » When families lack the means to travel for services, they may be forced to go without.

Rural communities are an important and vibrant part of Eastern Ontario.

In fact, 25% of us living in Eastern Ontario are living in rural areas.^{2/3} To make decisions that work for our communities, we must take into account rural Ontario's unique strengths and challenges.

Population Split in Eastern Ontario ¹	Rural	Urban
Hastings	63%	37%
Lanark	62%	38%
Leeds and Grenville	68%	32%
Lennox and Addington	100%	0%
Ottawa	4%	96%
Prescott and Russell	82%	18%
Prince Edward	83%	17%
Renfrew	70%	30%
Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and Akwesasne	59%	41%

Things to consider...

- » How are your decisions improving the fiscal situation of rural community service providers?
- » What strategies are in place or being developed to ensure equitable eligibility conditions for grants and funding?
- » How are the high costs of living in rural communities being addressed?
- » How will you ensure the rural reality is taken into account when priorities are discussed and decisions are made?

Find more resources at www.child-youth-health.net

REFERENCES:

- 1 Kasdorff, D., and Erb, B. (January 2010). *Serving Victims of Violence in Rural Communities: Challenges and Best Practices*. Victim/Witness Assistance Program, East Region. Available online.
- 2 Community Information Database. *Community Profiles*. Available online.

- 3 Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus. (2007). *A Profile of Eastern Ontario (Regional Data Set)*. Available online.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Rural Ontario Municipal Association. (2011). *A Voice for Rural and Northern Ontario*. Available online.

- 6 Douglas, David J.A. (2003). *Towards More Effective Rural Economic Development in Ontario: Findings and Recommendations for Policies, Programmes and Practice*. Available online.
- 7 Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. (June 2008). *Beyond Freefall: Halting Rural Poverty*. Senate of Canada.