

Robert J. Fulton, Consultant

97 Chudleigh Ave.
Toronto, Ontario M4R 1T4
telephone (416) 481 - 7803
fax (416) 481 - 4299
e-mail: r.fulton@rogers.com

Community Profile of Leeds and Grenville

Extra-ordinary challenges

Community Assets

Golden opportunities

Executive Summary



Community Profile of Leeds and Grenville

Leeds & Grenville is a unique community even within the context of its neighbours in Eastern Ontario. In many respects, Leeds & Grenville presents *extra-ordinary challenges* to the local CAS to protect children and support families.

On the other hand, there is clear evidence of community resilience, key improvements both socially and economically, and good outcomes with youth even for disadvantaged groups. These are *community assets*.

Finally, there are several *golden opportunities* to intervene early in a targeted way that will solve the child welfare concerns in the long term.

- (1) *Community asset*: All Eastern Ontario counties are growing. Leeds & Grenville grew by 2.7% or 2,600 people. Growth happens when more people move into the county than move out. Growth is a vote of confidence by newcomers. Newcomers also bring new energy, wealth and social capital to an area.
- (2) *Youngest children returning*: The good news for the child population is that the rate of decline in the youngest age group has slowed down considerably, suggesting that we may be approaching a return to growth in the next five years.
- (3) *Falling enrolment in primary school*: The 5 to 9 year old age group is declining – over the decade - by 17.3% compared to a decline of only 3.5% for the entire province. This age group will continue to decline by about 1,000 children in the next five years as the youngest age cohort enters this phase of life – producing stress in the schools over falling enrolment.
- (4) *Young adults are moving out*: Young adults ages 20 to 44 years are declining in Leeds & Grenville, as they move from rural and small towns to the big cities such as Ottawa.
- (5) *Older adults moving in*: Adults age 45 and up are growing strongly in Leeds & Grenville and these people make more money and are generally wealthier than their younger counterparts. This has improved the economic outlook in Leeds & Grenville. This is the group that is moving into the county and they often come with their teenage children.
- (6) *The challenge ahead*: Elders (65 and up) are growing, but only modestly; nevertheless, they will put more pressure on the health care system. The Province has responded by investments that are increasing the number of health professionals in the county (170 additional nurses and doctors).
- (7) *Extra-ordinary challenge #1* – Lone parents are increasing in Leeds & Grenville (as they are throughout the Province), but internally, they now represent 39% of families with children in Prescott and 36% in Brockville.
- (8) *A golden opportunity#1* – There has been a huge increase in male lone parents to 800 or 20% of all lone parents. They have the struggle of parenting without a partner for social and economic support plus, as men, they may not be as skilled in raising young children and may be subject to considerable stigma for attempting it. Male lone parents of young children should be offered parent education and support.

- (9) *Extra-ordinary challenge #2:* The number of children living on a lone parent household has grown by 32% in just five years in Leeds & Grenville. Even with the qualifier of adult children returning home, this statistic represents a serious trend that will challenge children's services and efforts to reduce child poverty.
- (10) *Extra-ordinary challenge #3:* Almost 10% of lone parents in Prescott, Edwardsburgh and Brockville (125 lone parents in the three towns) are under the age of 25. Across the county, there are an additional 500 lone parents between ages 25 and 34. Young lone parents have the greatest needs across all types of families due to higher levels of parental stress, economic stress, stigma and domestic violence (from dates and ex-spouses).
- (11) *A golden opportunity #2:* Brockville (16%), Gananoque (15%) and North Grenville (18%) have the highest percentage of families in which all children are under the age of 6 years on Census Day 2006 (1,845). When the caregivers have been "parents" for less than 6 years, they are in the stage of family life when they are most vulnerable and most open to education on effective parenting.
- (12) *A golden opportunity #3:* Brockville is showing a 21% increase in children under the age of 1 year or 235 babies in total. Adding the findings related to the age of the mother in lone-parent households in Brockville, plus the two patterns suggest that a surge of parent education and parent support programs in Brockville is a critical need.
- (13) *Community asset:* Housing stats on Leeds & Grenville shows a 4% increase in new housing; compared to the population growth of 2.7%, the growth in new housing is moderate enough not to undermine house values. At the same time, the fact that housing is growing slightly faster than people helps to reduce over-crowding, houses in need of major repairs and rental accommodations in high rises – all of which are potent risk factors for crime.
- (14) *Extra-ordinary challenge #4:* A substantial majority (71%) of the population of Leeds & Grenville lives in rural areas or very small towns with less than 5,000 people. Statistics Canada has identified significant risks associated with life in rural and small town Canada:
- boys in small town regions have the highest prevalence of being overweight or obese.
 - one in four boys report heavy drinking practices in small metro regions, small cities, small towns, and northern regions.
 - Rural families have lower incomes, but counteracting the bad effect of lower incomes within rural areas, the distribution of income is "more equal" than in urban areas.
 - Rural residents receive relatively more in social transfers and pay relatively less in taxes.
 - The highest rates of crime are found in small cities (population 15,000 to 50,000). The lowest rates are found in the big cities (over 100,000).

- Hawkesbury (19.4%), Prescott (19.2%), Addington Highlands (19.1%) and Cornwall (19.0%) had the highest rates in Eastern Ontario of families living below the low income cut-offs in 2001, which are adjusted for the cost of living by community size. The next highest rates are in the vicinity of 15%. On balance, having nearly 20% of your families below the low income cutoffs is an unusual, highly disadvantaged community.
 - the urban-rural continuum has an impact on access to mental health, social support, stigma, timeliness of access to shelters for domestic violence and the presence of informal community sentinels of child abuse. The later point refers to the fact that high risk families in an urban environment encounter more people (from day care providers, neighbours, medical staff and teachers) who could act as an early warning system to detect child abuse.
- (15) *Community asset:* Families in Leeds & Grenville are more likely to remain in the same house (65% across five years). This is much higher than many neighbouring counties and the Province as a whole. *Residential stability is a tremendous asset leading to enhanced social capital as long as the people affected do not feel trapped in a bad situation.*
- (16) *Community asset:* Leeds & Grenville and Lanark have one of the best records for safe sex in the province.
- (17) *Community asset:* Teenage childbirth in the period from 2001 to 2006 has fallen significantly from the rates in the 1990's (25.6 per 1,000 teens). The teenage birthrate has fallen to 11.6 per 1,000 teenage girls – reflecting the safe sex statistic.
- (18) *A concern about community health:* The life expectancy tables indicate that Leeds & Grenville and Lanark have a lower life expectancy and lower “disability free life expectancy than many other jurisdictions in Southern Ontario – by a factor of about 2 years. This is not a lot, but it does reflect a hazard of living in rural areas and small towns, where the available of doctors is not as great as in the large cities.
- (19) *A concern about Special needs children:* The proportion of special needs students across the Province is 12%; In Leeds & Grenville, special needs students represent 20.7%.
- (20) *A community asset:* According to the Remington report, the proportion of students in grade three who met the Provincial standard in reading is 60.3%. Given the exceptionally high percentage of special needs students, the end result is a tribute to the excellence of education in Leeds & Grenville. ‘
- (21) *A golden opportunity #4:* Data from the National Longitudinal Study has found that children from rural and small towns, as well as children from low socio economic groups and low income families scored below their peers on basic academic skills and social competency (even after a good beginning by age 3). Researchers also found that the bad outcomes could be reversed if (and this is the prevention opportunity)
- Children were *read to daily* (improves all academic and social skills)
 - participated regularly in organized sports (improves communication and number skills)
 - had lessons in art (improves number skills, copying and symbol use)

- Cooperative play was highest with regular participation in *unorganized* sports
- All of the above was highest with high positive parent-child interaction. The quality of parent-child interaction is clearly a critical driver in the child's readiness to learn. This suggests that parent supports and parent education programs are very important.

The two sets of interventions (providing organized and unorganized sports, involvement in the arts, such as music, drama and drawing) plus parent education and parental supports to improve the parent-child interactions and increase parental “reading to children” constitute a project in building social capital.

- (22) *Extra-ordinary challenge #5: PALS (Participation and Activity Limitations) is a Statistics Canada survey of the population with limitations to full participation and function in Canadian society because of a physical condition, mental condition or health problem which has lasted or is expected to last 6 months or longer. 40% of the population over 12 years in Leeds & Grenville has limitations. This places the county in rank #4, quite a bit above the Provincial average (32%). This result is worse than other counties in the East and Eastern Ontario, in general, is at risk on this measure.*
- (23) *Concern about substance abuse: The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) has been conducting research on drug use in secondary school since 1977. A total of 21.3% of students from grade 7 to grade 12 report binge drinking at least once during the four weeks prior to the survey.*
- (24) *Extra-ordinary challenge #6: The public health unit of Leeds & Grenville and Lanark counties has a rank of #8 in percentage of heavy drinkers (20.2% or 28,000 people over 12 years of age). Compared to the Provincial average (16.2%) and every other county in Eastern Ontario (which are lower by 2% to 3%), this outcome for Leeds & Grenville and Lanark PHU is very serious.*
- (25) *Extra-ordinary challenge #7 - The public health unit of Leeds & Grenville and Lanark counties has a rank of #2 in serious injuries. This is also a grave concern to CAS agencies, since a high level of accidents are highly correlated with accidental death, accidents among younger children and death from child abuse.*
- (26) *Community asset: The public health unit of Leeds & Grenville and Lanark counties has a rank of #28 in reported level of high stress (22.1%) which is quite a bit below the provincial average (26.2%).*
- (27) *Signs of resiliency: Unemployment rates in Leeds & Grenville for the years 2001 and 2006 are above average but still heading down. They are 6.4% and 5.7% respectively. Unemployment rates are very high in Brockville (9.5% and 7.6%) but at least they are coming down.*

- (28) *Extra-ordinary challenge #8:* Forty-one percent (41%) of all unemployed people in Leeds & Grenville are youth between 15 and 24 years. Youth unemployment has moved from 14.7% (2001) to 15.3%. Youth unemployment in Leeds & Grenville is much higher than in Ottawa (13.8%), Stormont (13.2%), Lennox (12.3%) and the Province as a whole (14.5%).
- (29) *Extra-ordinary challenge #9:* Leeds & Grenville lost 880 manufacturing jobs (a 19% decline). The reason why these job losses have not devastated the unemployment numbers is that manufacturing represents only 7% of the workforce in Leeds & Grenville.
- (30) *Extra-ordinary challenge #10:* Within the manufacturing sector, the job losses have fallen unevenly on *machine operators* and *assemblers* (the skilled trade workers). In Leeds & Grenville, *assemblers* have borne the brunt of job losses (-51%). Assemblers also lost jobs in Ottawa, (-59%), Stormont (-30%) and in Lanark (-29%). Internally, the job losses for assemblers are even higher in certain places:
- North Grenville (-81%)
 - Augusta (-64%)
 - Front of Yonge (-64%)
 - Elizabethtown (-62%)

For people in these townships, the unemployment feels far more hopeless because of how widespread the job losses are for specific sub-groups.

- (31) *Community Asset but one that may not benefit everyone:* The largest segment of the job market is in sales and service, which represent close to one quarter of all jobs in Ontario and across the Eastern region. These jobs have grown everywhere, more than replacing the loss in manufacturing.

However, many human beings have still lost a great deal. The personal skills and education of skilled workers do not fit well and are not valued in sales and service. For an individual county, such as Leeds & Grenville where 755 skilled workers lost their jobs, the percentages do not matter. What matters is that these people do not have much hope of restoring their former lifestyle and status.

- (32) Sales and service has created 1,500 new jobs for L & G between 2001 and 2006. Jobs in the tourist industry have increased by 108% in Leeds & Grenville (or 260 jobs). Most of these jobs (85) have been created in Gananoque.
- (33) *Extra-ordinary challenge #11 - the percentage of young adults who have not graduated from anything.* 32% of teenagers in Ontario dropped out of school between 1999 and 2003. Many have returned to school and completed their grade 12 and many did not go back to school or to some other training program. Overall, 12% of young people (20-24) never graduated from anything. In Leeds & Grenville, the

never graduated group represent 16% of the young people. This percentage is higher than most other counties except for Lanark and Hastings. Internally, Brockville (19%) shows a high rate of *never graduated*. This is an important marker of the social and emotional well being of the young people, sub-division by sub-division.

Educational achievement is a critical foundation for both our social/emotional well being and our economy. When the number of people who did not graduate from anything **or** have only high school is much higher in a particular area compared to its neighbours or starts to increase significantly, then the collective *socio economic status* is lower. This is very bad news for a Children's Aid Society because low SES doubles the rate of maternal depression, substance abuse and antisocial personality disorders in men, which are potent predictors of child abuse.

- (34) *Extra-ordinary challenge #12:* Has the population of low socio-economic status increased or decreased? Yes - Across the province, 44.6% of the population over 20 has high school or less in 2006, compared to 39.9% an *increase of 4.8% in this indicator of low SES*. Looking at the data from this point of view, Leeds & Grenville has seen its low SES (by education) marker increase by 4.9%, which is still better than the provincial average, but reverses decades of a steady decline in the low SES population.

This outcome is driven by the high number of young people who are not graduating from high school as teenagers. Most of them eventually return to get their high school diploma, but it takes them much longer to recover as young adults, which limits their chances to attend and graduate from community colleges. The net result is that the low SES population in Leeds & Grenville grew by more than 5,000 people between 2001 and 2006. That translates into much higher risk for child abuse and neglect (see theory #3)

- (35) *Child Protection Caseloads:* On average across Ontario, 5% of families (4,652 per 100,000 families) were under the supervision of a CAS in 1992. By 2006, this had increased to 6% of families in the community (5,843 per 100,000 families). This represents a 26% increase overall. The 26% increase in supervision rates is probably due to systemic factors that affect all agencies, which includes changes in legislation and the new risk screening tool. In order for a family case to receive ongoing supervision from a CAS, there must be a clear and present to eh child, based on standardized assessment and often court review.
- (36) *High rates of protection services in Leeds & Grenville:* Almost 10% of families in Leeds & Grenville (9,553 per 100,000) are under the supervision of the CAS. This represents a 48% increase over the rates in 1992. One half of this increase is probably due to local risk factors. Compared to the rest of the Province, Leeds & Grenville is now ranked as #12 in rate of families served up from #22 in 1992.

- (37) *Valid reasons for high protection rates:* This outcome mirrors the concerns raised in this report. The rate of protection cases served is highly correlated with the rate of heavy drinkers ($r = 0.60$) and the percentage of the pop with physical, mental or health limitations ($r = .41$).

Robert Fulton
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