

Community  
Health and  
Wellbeing

Shift the  
conversation

# MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

The Vaughan Community Wellbeing Report 2015



Serving people from diverse cultures

# WELCOME

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Since 2014, Vaughan Community Health Centre has co-chaired the Vaughan Community Wellbeing Coalition. All members of the coalition are committed to applying a holistic approach to planning and policymaking.

The coalition convened during a period of incredible growth. Vaughan's population has increased over 187% since it was moved from being a town to a city in 1991 and is now home to 320,530 residents. The coalition recognized that this expansion is driving Vaughan's economic progress, but development must also be sustainable and equitable.

To help stakeholders better plan to meet the evolving needs of the community while at the same time considering social, health, economic and environmental perspectives, the group assembled this first-of-its-kind report. It is a comprehensive look at the community and aims to create a baseline measure of health and wellbeing of the city's residents.

Called *Measuring What Matters*, the report uses the internationally recognized Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) to create a detailed, data-driven snapshot of Vaughan's quality of life. Its intention is to present evidence of concern, then move this evidence to action.

We are proud to be among the first municipalities using the CIW to gain a comprehensive look at our community.

Because the coalition recognizes that building a diverse, inclusive and progressive community requires multi-sectoral partnerships and collaboration, we invite new members to join the network and contribute to the long-term sustainable growth of the City of Vaughan.

## The Vaughan Community Wellbeing Coalition

While still in its early days, the Vaughan Community Wellbeing Coalition is made up of nine major players:

- Catholic Community Services of York Region
- City of Vaughan
- Human Endeavour
- Social Planning Council of York Region
- United Way Toronto and York Region
- Vaughan Community Health Centre
- Vaughan Public Libraries
- York University
- York Region District School Board

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: TAKING ACTION BASED ON EVIDENCE

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Vaughan is one of Canada's fastest growing municipalities. Compared with the twenty largest municipalities across the country, Vaughan ranks second in terms of population growth. In coming years this growth is expected to increase. This report has been developed to guide that growth in the best possible way. It presents evidence that Vaughan has many strengths to build on. A growing number of newcomers add to the city's vibrancy and diversity and, on the whole, Vaughan is prosperous. The average income is higher than the provincial average and the majority of residents have a post-secondary education.

However, important issues need to be addressed to ensure sustainable growth and optimal wellbeing for Vaughan's residents. Lack of affordable housing, long commuting times, as well as the associated need for improved public transportation are issues of concern. In some neighbourhoods, pockets of hidden poverty present another worry.

Poverty in Vaughan is likely linked to growing rates of precarious and low-wage work. According to Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO), in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area (GTHA), a relatively large number of people are struggling with insecure employment. This is especially true of immigrants, racialized groups and women. Today, only 60% of workers in the GTHA have stable, secure jobs. Everyone else faces some degree of precarity. People living on low incomes face additional pressure because it is difficult to find affordable rental housing in Vaughan, and those who need to live near

their workplaces may end up allocating large amounts of their income to housing, placing themselves in a vulnerable financial situation.

Our research also reveals other types of pressures on quality of life in Vaughan. Compared to their provincial and national counterparts, residents are spending more time commuting to work. Use of cars is also higher than the provincial and national averages. Considering that more than half of Vaughan's workforce is employed in other municipalities, it is no surprise that Vaughan residents report concerns about traffic congestion and access to public transit as two of their most pressing issues. For people living on low incomes, transit affordability is an especially high concern.

## But there is good news...

Some of these early warning signals about health and wellbeing in Vaughan have been flagged by the city's social service agencies, many of which are supported by the City of Vaughan and the York Region. A number of their innovative initiatives are featured throughout this report.

Equally important is the development of healthy public policy to ensure sustainable growth and ongoing improvement in Vaughan's health and wellbeing. The good news is that, as our coalition has developed this report, the City of Vaughan has actively engaged our coalition in developing ideas for action that respond to the evidence we have gathered. Recommendations have also been shared with the York Region.

## Recommendations

Our consultations resulted in four policy recommendations designed to build a sustainable city.

1. Increase affordable housing by adopting policies that support an increase in the supply of safe and legal secondary suites within existing homes.
2. Increase access to transportation by developing an effective mobility hub to accommodate interconnecting multimodal transportation options. In addition, the existing transit subsidies should be expanded to ensure families of all income levels have access to affordable transit.
3. Improve air quality by connecting the dots between long-term growth, transportation plans and health care costs. As a first step, consider introducing monitoring devices on fleet vehicles.
4. Promote local economic development by helping to foster an entrepreneurial economy with fairer and more equitable integration opportunities for newcomers and other marginalized communities.





Vaughan City Hall

# ABOUT THE CANADIAN INDEX OF WELLBEING: A MADE-IN-CANADA TOOL TO MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

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This report relies heavily on the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW), a powerful and highly praised research and evaluation framework that examines, tracks and reports on overall quality of life.

The CIW began its development in 1999 with the support of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation. Under one umbrella, an independent, non-partisan network of national and international indicator experts joined forces with a wide range of leaders, grassroots organizations and individual Canadians.

The goal was to develop an instrument that measures Canada's overall wellbeing in a rigorous and comprehensive way as an alternate measure of societal progress to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which fails to capture quality of life in its full breadth of expression. Equipped with data about the domains of life Canadians really care about, decision makers could "connect the dots" between social aspirations, public policy and hard evidence.

From the start, the initiative has been rooted in the Canadian experience. The index's

development involved extensive consultation with Canadians about the values they believe should guide this country: fairness, diversity, equity, inclusion, health, safety, economic security, democracy and sustainability.

Based on the feedback it received from the people of Canada, and on rigorous technical studies, the CIW research team created what is now known as the CIW framework: 64 indicators grouped into 8 domains or quality of life categories. Aside from its power as a measurement tool, perhaps the greatest attribute of the CIW is its capacity to help us see the "big picture". It also provides a broader lens to appreciate how everything is interconnected in ways we would otherwise fail to see. Viewing our communities differently is what will help us make wiser, more informed policy choices.



“If we want Canadians to be the healthiest people in the world, we have to connect all the dots that will take us there. To connect the dots, we have to know what they are.”

The Honourable Roy Romanow



Based on all the feedback it received from the people of Canada, as well as rigorous technical studies, the CIW research team created what is now known as the CIW framework: 64 indicators grouped into eight “domains” or quality of life categories.



**Community Vitality** measures the strength, activity and inclusiveness of relationships between residents, private sector, public sector and civil society organizations that foster individual and collective wellbeing.



**Democratic Engagement** measures the participation of people in public life and in governance, the functioning of Canadian governments and the role Canadians and their institutions play as global citizens.



**Education** measures the literacy and skill levels of the population, including the ability of both children and adults to function in various societal contexts and plan for and adapt to future situations.



**Environment** measures the state of and the trends in Canada’s environment by looking at Canada’s environmental goods and services.





**Healthy Populations** measures the physical, mental and social wellbeing of the population by looking at different aspects of health status and certain determinants of health.



**Leisure and Culture** measures activity in the very broad area of culture, which involves all forms of human expression including the arts and recreational activities.



**Living Standards** measures the level and distribution of income and wealth — trends in poverty, income volatility and economic security, including the security of jobs, food, housing and the social safety net.



**Time Use** measures the use of time, how people experience time, what controls its use and how it affects wellbeing.

# THE APPROACH

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In 2013, Vaughan Community Health Centre was one of six pilot sites selected to participate in a provincial initiative funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation aimed at enabling agencies to adopt the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW). Due to its strong working relationship with the municipality, the Centre decided to use the CIW as a way to advance policy work. With this in mind, the Centre applied a community development approach to assemble a core group of partners who share a strong commitment to building healthy communities. In addition, the Association of Ontario Health Centres provided expertise and resources by identifying 32 data sources that matched or emulated the CIW's 64 indicators.

This report's main findings are based primarily on CIW indicators, supplemented by a range of valuable sources that give us a more complete picture of the changing landscape of the City of Vaughan.

These sources were, among others: Statistics Canada reports, Canadian Community Health Survey data, York Region information sheets, several City of Vaughan reports and analytics. In addition, we consulted relevant research releases by leading foundations such as the Metcalf Foundation's April 2015 report *The Working Poor in the Toronto Region: Mapping working poverty in Canada's richest city* and the May 2015 report by the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) research group, *The Precarity Penalty: Employment Precarity's Impact on Individuals, Families and Communities and What to do about It*, a joint initiative with McMaster University and United Way Toronto.

Of course, statistics tell only part of the story. This paper also presents eight initiatives that address some of Vaughan's most urgent issues led by coalition members.

Finally, to help shape public policy based on solid evidence, the coalition identified some viable, constructive policies. **Based on consultations involving local stakeholders, four key policy recommendations aimed at government leaders are outlined at the end of the report.**

# LIVING STANDARDS

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The Living Standards domain measures the level and distribution of income and wealth — trends in poverty, income volatility and economic insecurity, including the security of jobs, food, housing and the social safety net.

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According to the CIW’s provincial report, *How are Ontarians really doing?*, living standards in Ontario have, unlike the GDP, declined substantially and not shown signs of recovering following the 2008 recession.

The CIW’s research highlights that low- and middle-income working individuals and families are feeling more and more vulnerable and struggling with wildly fluctuating living standards that lag far behind the rest of Canada. Income inequality in Ontario remains another “sobering reality,” according to the study.

Local CIW findings add to the growing body of evidence from other groups such as PEPSO and the Metcalf Foundation. PEPSO reports that *employment insecurity is high in the GTHA, with only 60% of workers having stable and secure jobs.* Meanwhile, the Metcalf Foundation’s research shows *Toronto is experiencing the highest rate of working poverty in Canada.*

It appears similar pressures on living standards are becoming more prevalent in Vaughan. Although compared to national and provincial averages, *Vaughan has a high proportion of high income residents and relatively low numbers of low income residents,* more and more people are feeling financial pressures and dealing with precarious employment. Living standards are especially under pressure in specific neighbourhoods of the city.

## **Housing affordability is becoming an issue for Vaughan residents**

Challenges for people on low incomes are compounded by rising housing costs. When income does not keep pace, affordable housing becomes out of reach for people living on low incomes. Home ownership becomes even less feasible for people who are precariously employed. Rental accommodation is also difficult to secure with long waiting lists for affordable units.

# The Reality of the Rental and Ownership Market in York Region

## The **Reality** of the **Rental** and **Ownership** Market in **York Region**

From 2011 to 2031, we estimate that an additional

**13,700** seniors and youth

will be renters. If the private market maintains the same pace as in 2012, we'll have about

**600** new units



### Rental market

88% of the rental units constructed in 2012 were built with government funding

2012 Private Sector Vacancy Rate - well below a healthy rate of 3%

1.6%

2007 - 2011

Rental housing construction accounts for only 1% of all housing starts from 2007 to 2011.

in 2011 **17,705**

York Region households (5.5%) were home to multiple families, growing by 65% from 2001, outpacing the growth of all other household types

Wait list rises by **63%**

from 2008 to 2012 leaving more than **10,000** households waiting for Social Housing

What happens to our businesses if **workers move away** because they **can't afford** to live here?

### Ownership market

**2012**

Average home prices in York Region

- Re-sale condominium: \$332,860
- Re-sale townhome: \$422,081
- Re-sale single detached: \$702,035
- New single detached: \$686,438

Who ~~can't~~ afford to buy a home here

- Nurse
- Police Officer
- Teacher
- Cook

2002 → 2012

Median house price went up by **87%**

however

Median hourly wage only rose by **26%**

Source: Infographic used with the permission of York Region Community and Health Services

## INCOME DISTRIBUTION: VAUGHAN

Population in, by decile group, after-tax income adjusted by family size, 2010	Vaughan	Ontario	Canada
Population in private households (count)	286,305	12,651,795	32,852,320
In bottom half of Canadian distribution (%)	36.6	46.5	50.0
In lowest decile (%)	6.6	9.3	10.0
In second decile (%)	6.2	9.1	10.0
In third decile (%)	7.4	9.3	10.0
In fourth decile (%)	7.7	9.3	10.0
In fifth decile (%)	8.7	9.5	10.0
In top half of Canadian distribution (%)	63.4	53.5	50.0
In sixth decile (%)	9.3	9.8	10.0
In seventh decile (%)	10.9	10.1	10.0
In eighth decile (%)	12.5	10.7	10.0
In ninth decile (%)	14.3	11.3	10.0
In highest decile (%)	16.4	11.6	10.0

**Source:** Adapted from Statistics Canada. (2014). NHS Focus on Geography Series - Vaughan.



# KEY FINDINGS

## Incomes under strain

Between 2000 and 2012, the number of residents living on low income in York Region grew by almost 61%. Among all low income groups, seniors and working age individuals experienced the highest growth in numbers.

In addition to the growth of people living on low incomes, working poverty is a concern for Vaughan. Between 2006 and 2012, it increased from 6.0% to 7.1%.

In 2006, the highest rates of working poverty in the city were concentrated in parts of Maple and Concord. In 2012, high rates of working poverty also affected much of the south-eastern part of the city.

## Housing is out of reach

In 2011, Vaughan's homeownership rate was 92.2%, the highest among Ontario's ten largest cities, much higher in comparison to Ontario and Canada at 71.4% and 69.0%, respectively.

The average monthly cost of shelter in Vaughan was \$1,609 (\$1,636 for owner households and \$1,283 for renters), which is higher when compared to the provincial average of \$1,181.

A high proportion of households spend 30% or more of household income on shelter costs.

According to a 2015 Ontario Non-Profit Housing Corporation report, the Region of York is the municipality with the third largest number of households (11,455) on waiting lists for rent-geared-to-income housing.

## Community Showcase: Make Rental Happen

Building a complete community in York Region starts with building a healthy housing market with a full mix of housing options for all income levels. However, York Region has the lowest proportion of rental housing in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and a very low vacancy rate. In 2014, the average cost of a new single detached home in the Region increased to over \$890,000. And in the last decade, house prices have increased an average of 87% in the Region, while hourly wages have only risen 26%. The cost of housing has become a serious issue for moderate income households and has pushed ownership out of reach for lower income populations.

The Regional rental housing vacancy rate hovers around 1.5%, compared to the 3% that experts say indicates a healthy rental market.

Fortunately, housing is a strategic priority for York Region. In 2013, the Human Services Planning Board of York Region developed the *Make Rental Happen: Creating the Conditions to Build Private Market Rental Housing* advocacy plan. As a part of this plan, the Board is collaborating with all levels of government, the building industry and corporate leaders to help create the conditions needed to re-engage the private sector in developing market rental housing.

# COMMUNITY VITALITY

The CIW's Community Vitality domain looks at the social relationships which foster individual and collective wellbeing. A vital community is inclusive, safe, nurtures a sense of belonging and is able to adapt and thrive in the changing world. The neighbourhood one lives in affects the quality of life of individuals and families.

Between 1998 and 2013, both property and violent crime rates in Vaughan have been declining. In fact, for the larger York Region, these measures have decreased and remain consistently lower than the rates reported for Ontario as a whole.

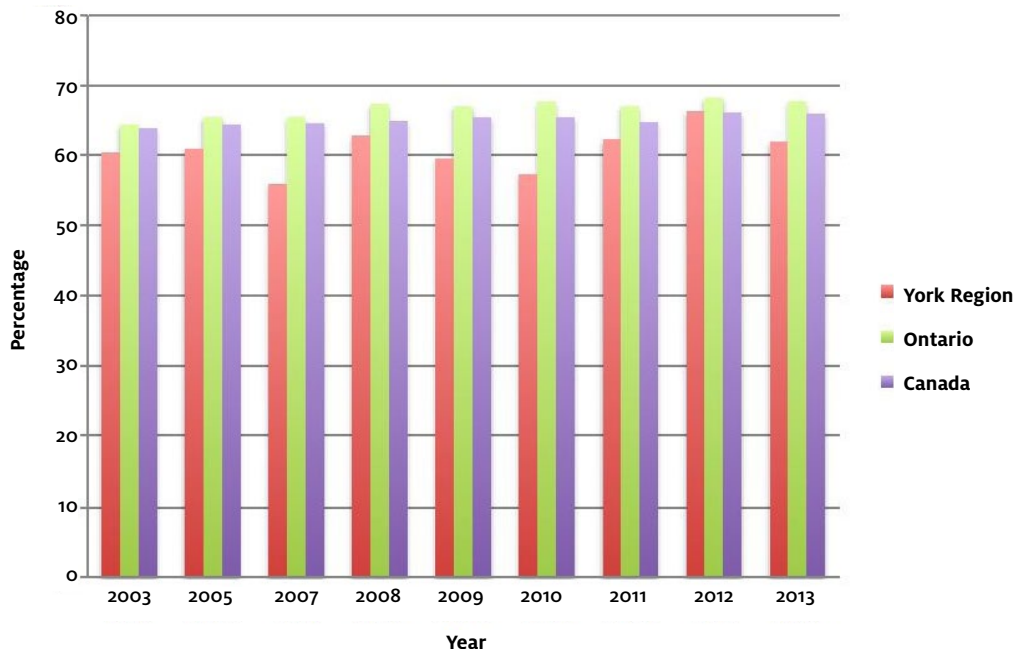
However, the sense of belonging to their community reported by York Region residents is not showing great improvement.

The sense of belonging reported in York Region is generally lower compared to Ontario

and Canada, from 60.4% in the past decade to 62.0% in 2013. While the trend could be different in Vaughan, the indicator is still a sign that residents may not feel connected to this fast-growing community.

This could be cause for concern. The sense of belonging indicator is noteworthy because if you feel you belong to a community, and that community makes you feel valued and accepted, you are less likely to suffer from poor health.

## Belonging to community, York Region, Ontario and Canada, 2003-2013



**Indicator:**  
Belonging to community – proportion of the York Region population reporting a “very strong” or “somewhat strong” sense of belonging to their local community

**Source:** Statistics Canada. Table 105-0501 - Health indicator profile, annual estimates, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces, territories, health regions (2013 boundaries) and peer groups, occasional, CANSIM (database).

# KEY FINDINGS

## Decline in property crime

The data shows that between 1998 and 2013, the property crime rate for Vaughan/Markham decreased by 53.6%. This declining trend was similar to that observed in Ontario.

## Decline in violent crime

Similar to the falling property crime rate, violent crime in York Region (Vaughan/Markham) has been declining since 2000, a trend that also applies to the province as a whole.

## Project Feature: HOPE – Healthy Outcomes of Preventive Engagements

HOPE is an award-winning wellness program for immigrant seniors. It is designed to reduce isolation and improve health and wellbeing by catering to social, physical and psychological needs. For these efforts, HOPE has received much recognition, including the 2010 Innovation Award from the Ontario Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care.

Run by non-profit organization Human Endeavour, the program began in 2005 with just six seniors. Today, over 700 seniors at seven locations across the York Region participate in a wide variety of activities and services: low impact exercises, settlement presentations, social activities, technology education, tele-health monitoring, touch screen-based cognitive enhancement activities, mobile library visits, community gardens, and mental health and wellbeing. All programs meet the linguistic and cultural needs of diverse seniors in their neighbourhoods.

To address the challenges of costly transportation, HOPE runs a volunteer-driven

transportation initiative that every year provides 10,000-12,000 one-way rides to seniors.

The program's latest addition is the HOPE Adult Day Program for frail seniors with Alzheimer's and associated dementia, stroke and other conditions. This is run in collaboration with the Vaughan Community Health Centre and Mackenzie Health. The added benefit of simply helping frail seniors is that it eases the stress on their caregivers.

Through partnerships and collaborations with mainstream organizations and other stakeholders, HOPE delivers its innovative programming. It is **Community Vitality** in action. The program demonstrates how community service providers coming together can pool their resources and implement programs that improve community wellbeing.

“It’s important because you get out of the house. You can’t stay in the house every day and watch TV and do nothing. At least you come over here and get to chat with friends and get different opinions. And we help one another when we can. And that’s how we have the day go by. [...] I look forward to coming every day that I come here.”

Antonio Pileggi, Adult Day Program participant. This program is part of the HOPE wellness program delivered at Vaughan Community Health Centre.



HOPE Adult Day Program

# DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

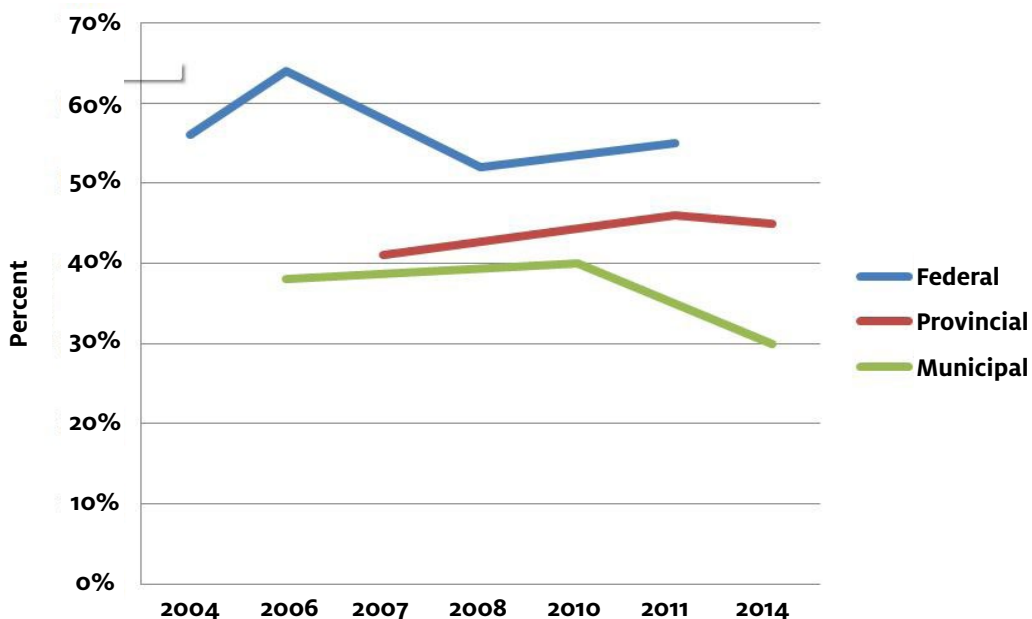
The Democratic Engagement domain measures the participation of citizens in public life and in the governance of their communities. It also measures the functioning of Canadian governments with respect to openness, transparency, effectiveness, fairness and equity.

In line with the downward trend across the country, a decreasing number of Vaughan residents are turning out to vote. For provincial elections, there appears to be a slight increase in voter turnout. However, voter turnout is lowest in municipal elections, with 40% voting in 2010 and 30% in 2014.

The declining municipal vote highlights the need to encourage Vaughan citizens to cast ballots. There is also a need to identify the causes of such low voter turnout, as well as the populations that are least likely to vote. Equipped with this information, targeted strategies can be developed to increase voter turnout.

The significant drop in voter turnout indicates that residents may be disengaged from municipal issues. This could be related to York Region residents feeling a lower sense of community belonging, as this paper reports in the Community Vitality domain.

## Voter turnout in federal, provincial and municipal elections, Vaughan (2004-2014)



**Sources:** Elections Canada. (2015). Past elections; Elections Ontario. (2015). Official Past Election Results; City of Vaughan. (2015). Elections – Results.



## KEY FINDINGS

### Decline in voter turnout

Among elections at all three levels of government, Vaughan's voter turnout is lowest in municipal elections, with 40% in 2010 and 30% in 2014.

### Representation of women in council

While women make up 51.1% of the Vaughan population, they are underrepresented in the government. Only 33% of City Council members are women. Despite this underrepresentation, the percentage of women in Council is above the 30% threshold identified by the United Nations to adequately reflect women's concerns.



“These programs are very successful and I’ve found that when people arrive here they need lots of information.[...] And this program gives you the power and you feel that someone is there to help you. And this is the great feeling you have when you walk out of that program. You feel that the world is with you. And this is great. I think that after that you feel secure.”

Fouzia Mansoor, volunteer, Catholic Community Services of York Region/Settlement and Education Partnership in York Region

## Project Feature: Welcome to Canada Orientation Day for Newcomers in York Region

Launched in 2007, the Welcome to Canada Orientation Day (WTC) is a one-day program for newcomer elementary and high school students enrolled in all York Region’s public and Catholic schools and their parents. This school year, WTC Day brought together 425 students and their parents. An initiative of the Settlement and Education Partnership in York Region (SEPYR), a partnership program of Catholic Community Services of York Region, York Region District School Board and York Catholic District School Board, the program is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

SEPYR’s mandate is to assist newcomer families in York Region schools with their settlement needs. In addition, the initiative

helps to raise educator awareness about immigration and integration issues faced by newcomers.

WTC Day aims to: educate all newcomer families about the Canadian education system, school policies and practices; increase awareness of the various programs and services available in the community; and provide an opportunity for students and parents to network and meet others.

In addition, before the start of the school year, SEPYR implemented newcomer orientations in high schools and elementary schools in 16 locations across York Region, including Vaughan.

# EDUCATION

The Education domain is a strong predictor of wellbeing and quality of life. Education achievement is linked to higher levels of wellbeing, especially amongst young adults, and helps to equip individuals with the tools they need to participate in social and economic life.

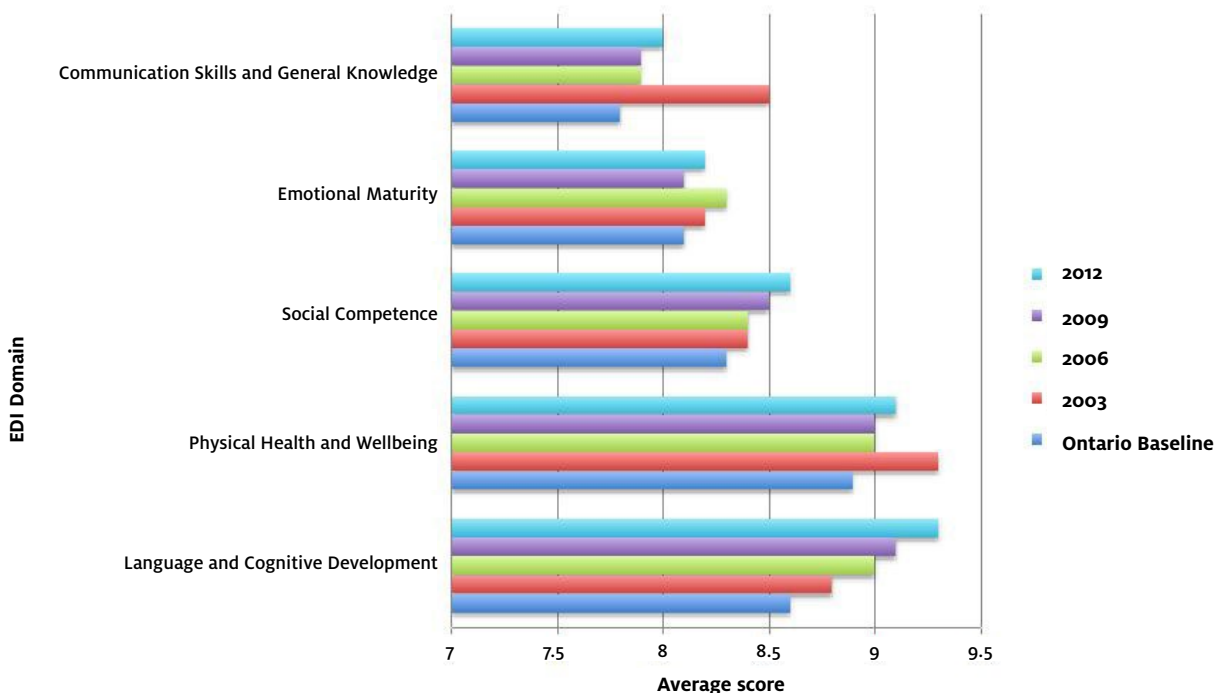
Vaughan is a highly educated community, with more Vaughan residents reporting a post-secondary education compared to provincial and national averages.

Despite this overall positive trend, there are neighbourhoods in the Vaughan community showing declining results in certain EDI domains where children are struggling.

Results of the 2012 York Region report on Early Years Development Instrument (EDI) showed that, overall, compared to the Ontario baseline, senior kindergarten children living in York Region were doing well in both areas of learning and developmental health. Children are also scoring better than in the past.

The good news is that York Region District School Board assesses EDI data, along with other social determinants such as income, to determine how programs, services and policies in various neighbourhoods can support young children and their families to improve early learning outcomes.

## Average scores for the five Early Years Development Instrument Domains, York Region, 2003-2012



**Source:** York Region Community Health Services. (2014). The Early Development Instrument (EDI), York Region Results – 2012.

## KEY FINDINGS

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### Targeted support for early learning and development of children in specific neighbourhoods

Although since 2003 scores were higher than the Ontario baseline, children “scoring low” in the EDI domains for York Region showed some variations at the neighbourhood level, even when compared to other York Region neighbourhoods. Children “scoring low” were found in:

- Maple, Teston and Kleinburg (Physical Health and Wellbeing development)
- Concord-Vaughan and Woodbridge West (Social Competence development)
- Woodbridge West (Emotional Maturity development)
- Maple and Concord-Vaughan (Communication Skills and General Knowledge development)

Although scores appear to be lower for Vaughan than other areas in York Region, the scores in these neighbourhoods were higher than the Ontario baseline and the highest for these neighbourhoods since 2003.

### Top services used are family- and child-related

Family- and child-related services are among the top services used by Vaughan residents. However, they are ranked as the top five of ten services where residents feel underserved. Data suggest that childcare demands in the city are being met through unpaid care provided by family members living in multigenerational households/families.

### Vaughan ranks high for people with a university degree

63.2% of adults 25 years of age and over have completed some form of post-secondary education, compared to the Ontario and national averages of 60.3% and 59.6%, respectively. Results also showed that in Vaughan, 31.9% of adults 25 years of age and over had a university degree, compared to 26.0% in Ontario and 23.3% in Canada.

## Program Feature: Building Blocks for Kindergarten

The preschool years, ages 3 and 4, are extremely important for consideration of the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children. Early learning and development opportunities have long lasting impacts. The York Region District School Board recognizes schools in neighbourhoods affected by poverty can be exemplary places to learn, but require targeted programs to meet the needs of the children and families living in poverty.

With that in mind, the York Region District School Board designed Building Blocks for Kindergarten, a program for junior kindergarten students entering school in September who may have had little or no preschool experience or who may have difficulty in the transition to school. Schools offer a half-day, four-week, school readiness program during the month of July.

This program is facilitated by a kindergarten teacher and, where possible, an early childhood educator from the Ontario Early Years neighbourhood agency and an education assistant and/or child youth worker from the school board. The program is made up of three components: literacy education, social/emotional needs and parental and community engagement.

Parent, family and community participation is integral to the program. This is achieved by organizing routine classroom visits by parents and providing them with resources that could easily be used at home. Parents can also participate in positive learning programs that help support their children's development. The program has been successful and it has grown over the years. In fact, 13 schools in Vaughan alone participated in 2015, an increase from previous years.



“We’ve actually received a lot of feedback from parents who’ve had their children participate in the program. And they’ve reported back to us that they’ve seen [their children gain] confidence, increase their social skills and improve their oral language and literacy development — so for literacy development it’s really about being able to identify their name, some letters of the alphabet [...] The program also helped the children [...] establish routines and readiness for kindergarten. But we also heard from parents that it also helped them understand about the different community resources that they have available to them...”

Linda Aihoshi, Advisor, Inclusive School and Community Services, York Region District School Board



# ENVIRONMENT

The environment is vital to our wellbeing and ability to thrive in the future. Our awareness of and concern for the sustainability of our environment is reflected in the way that we, as individuals, influence and interact with our surroundings. The Environment domain assesses our impact on the environment.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are high in this rapidly growing commuter city and are projected to increase significantly if nothing is done to address this rising trend.

## Action must be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Vaughan's fast growth is expected to continue until 2031. New residents and businesses and the activities they engage in add to Vaughan's GHG emissions.

In addition, as seen in the Time Use domain, a large number of Vaughan residents drive cars to work, a significant contributor to GHG. Ozone levels for Vaughan, accurately measured at the North Toronto and Newmarket locations, are high.

Action is required to reverse the trends observed in GHG emissions and ozone levels to prevent notable impacts to the environment and human health.



Source: City of Vaughan



# KEY FINDINGS

## Air pollutants

While the annual air quality reported in Toronto North and Newmarket was within the index range for 'good' air quality with 'no known harmful effects,' both stations reported maximum ozone concentrations in 2012 that were significantly above the provincial criteria for good air quality. For Newmarket, ground-level ozone concentrations measured at this station exceeded the provincial standard on 35 occasions.

This was the third highest across the province, after Grand Bend (109 occasions) and Sarnia (41 occasions). Interestingly, across the province, ozone concentrations observed in urban areas were lower.

## GHG emissions in Vaughan are on the rise

The Vaughan community produced approximately 1.7 megatons of equivalent carbon dioxide per year or 6.8 tonnes per person per year.

Divided by sector, an estimated 29.9% of annual GHG emissions were emitted from industry,

26.6% from residential (or energy) use, 21.6% from commercial and institutional uses, 19.8% from vehicles and 2.1% from residential waste. Given the rapid growth of the city's population, GHG emissions are expected to reach just over 2.6 megatons in 2026 if no action is taken to reduce emissions.

## The water quality in Vaughan ranges considerably

According to data gathered from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's Regional Watershed Monitoring Program, sites within the Vaughan community with high forest cover exhibited good water quality, while highly urbanized areas with limited forest cover (<5%) showed poor water quality. Between 2005 and 2009, sites in the main Humber River, East Humber River and Cold Creek subwatersheds all exhibited 'good' water quality, while both the Black Creek subwatershed of the Humber River and the West Don subwatershed of the Don River exhibited 'poor' water quality.

## Water Quality for subwatersheds in the Vaughan community, 2005-2009

Township	Watershed	Waterbody	2005-2009
			Grade <sup>2</sup>
Vaughan	Humber River	East Humber River	B
King	Humber River	Cold Creek <sup>3</sup>	A
Vaughan	Humber River	Humber River	B
Vaughan	Humber River	Black Creek	F
Vaughan	Don River	West Don River	D

**Source:** Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. (2015). Regional Watershed Monitoring Program [Custom cross-tabulation of data].

## Project Feature: Eco-Friendly Garden of HOPE

Conserving and protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility. Increased awareness, social education and encouragement at the community level are critical to developing strong consciousness that could result in significant reduction of GHG emissions.

Human Endeavour and its partners have been implementing a number of activities and initiatives that involve community members, taking a hands-on approach to preserving the environment. The centerpiece of their efforts is a community garden.

Launched in 2011 at the historic Michael Cranny House, the headquarters of Human Endeavour, the [Eco-Friendly Garden of HOPE](#) (community garden) is a hub of community engagement and education, with a focus on

preserving the environment and promoting awareness for a greener planet.

In 2015, the Government of Canada provided a grant under its New Horizons for Seniors Program to help set up an inter-generational education centre at the garden. It enabled seniors to transfer their experience and knowledge about gardening and its relationship with environmental protection and preservation to young children. The garden also uses solar panels to generate energy for the green house plantation, and the centre offers training on how to set up solar energy panels for production of energy in private households and on measures to reduce water waste and usage.



“I found the garden by walking. I usually take walks in the parks, and I stumbled upon the garden. I thought it's a nice project to get involved in. [...] We meet once a week. It's very beneficial for all of us because we look forward to Thursdays when we do the gardening program. We start off by planting, we water, we sit back and admire everything that we've done. Then we go for walks around the park, around the area, we talk to our neighbours. And after we come back then we have a meditation session [...] after that we usually have a snack and we socialize. It's very nice being outdoors, it's very nice watching the neighbours stop by and say 'hi!' to us. Actually, if we didn't have the garden, I don't think that we would be as well-adjusted as we are right now.”

Shirley Gocool, volunteer, Eco-Friendly Garden of HOPE



“I created the community garden posters for children because during my summer job, I saw the other children playing and eating and learning stuff while they were outside. In case there are new children coming by, I decided to draw these pictures to make it more welcoming ... so they can learn at the Human Endeavour building. I drew these pictures so they can be reminded about the environment, especially solar, water, wind energy.”

Mubariz Sheikh, placement student



Eco-Friendly  
Garden of HOPE



# HEALTHY POPULATIONS

The Healthy Populations domain measures the physical, mental and social wellbeing of the population by looking at different aspects of health and certain lifestyle factors known to have an impact on it.

*Note: Due to lack of available data for Vaughan, York Region health data has been used as a proxy for the Vaughan community. Trends in Vaughan may be different from those observed in York Region.*

Our research finds positive trends in how York Region residents are rating their health and mental health — an overall increase of ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’. It is also worth noting a significant reduction in teen smoking.

Diabetes prevalence is on the rise in Ontario and Canada. Although York Region’s diabetes rates are below the provincial and national rates, many York Region residents are being diagnosed with diabetes, pointing to the need

for a focus on decreasing diabetes prevalence. Health services are among the important issues identified by Vaughan residents. However, in York Region patient satisfaction with hospitals and emergency room services is poor and has not improved over time.

Given the importance of these issues to residents and their growing healthcare needs, the Region of York, the City of Vaughan and the provincial government are collaborating to build the new Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital. In addition, provincially funded team-based primary health services have opened in Vaughan (i.e., a Family Health Team and Community Health Centre).

## Program Feature: Vaughan Community Health Centre Diabetes Education Program

What is chronic disease? In simple words, it is a long lasting medical condition that stays with you. It can be managed, but cannot be cured. However, it can be prevented if the right steps are taken at the right time. Some of the most common chronic diseases include diabetes, arthritis, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart disease, stroke and so on.

Vaughan Community Health Centre has recently established a Chronic Disease Prevention and Management Program. Among the services currently offered is the [Diabetes Education Program](#). It provides individual and group counseling to clients at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes or living with Type 2 diabetes. Individual sessions are

tailored to meet the needs of each client at any stage of diabetes management. In a supportive environment, clients are counseled to make positive changes in lifestyle. Clients are supported in: blood sugar management, training on how to use a glucometer, blood pressure monitoring, foot assessments, healthy eating, individual meal plans, reading food labels, stress management, physical activity and more.

The Diabetes Education Team includes registered dietitians, registered nurses and a chiroprapist. The dietitians and nurses are also certified diabetes educators. Exercise counseling and group exercise programs are also offered by registered kinesiologists and exercise instructors.



“It was 10 years that I was dealing with diabetes, since 2004, when I [discovered] the Vaughan Community Health Centre and it has made a great impact on my life. [Trying] to do the right things alone was hard, especially the nutrition and the exercising part. It wasn’t as diligent and structured as it is now. So I found a lot of information very helpful from my nutritionist and my nurse practitioner that worked with me... It’s been a year since I’ve been here. I’ve been on track in terms of exercise programs, seeing the kinesiologist at the Vaughan Community Health Centre and he’s given me a program to work on at home, as well, so I’ve found that has made a tremendous difference in my life. Before coming to the centre, my sugar levels weren’t balanced as they are now, they were up and down drastically and I was tired a lot of the times. But now with the training and the education I received here, I’ve seen a change for the better in my life.”

Carmine D’Addese, Client, Diabetes Education Program, Vaughan Community Health Centre



Vaughan CHC  
Diabetes Education  
Program

## KEY FINDINGS

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In 2013, 59.9% of York Region's population aged 12 years and over reported their health as 'excellent' or 'very good'. The Ontario and national proportions were 59.8% and 59.4%, respectively. With the exception of 2005, when the proportion for York Region was higher than Ontario and national averages, York Region's self-rated health was similar to that reported for the province and Canada from 2003 to 2013.

In 2013, 77.4% of the York Region population aged 12 years and over reported their mental health status as 'excellent' or 'very good,' similar to the numbers reported for Ontario (70.9%) and Canada (71.1%) in the same year.

### Diabetes prevalence

In 2013, the self-reported diabetes (all types of diabetes) prevalence reported for York Region was 5.5% compared to 6.7% in Ontario and 6.6% in Canada. Although below provincial and national rates, the trend in York Region is similar in that diabetes prevalence has increased since 2003 and is cause for concern.

### Youth smoking rate appears to be declining

The *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey* examines physical and mental health, as well as risk behaviours among youth, including substance abuse, eating habits, physical activity and violence. In 2013, the survey found that 11% of York Region students in grades 9 to 12 reported smoking cigarettes in the last 12 months, compared to 11% in 2011 and 14% in 2009. This was similar to the percentages reported for Ontario students.

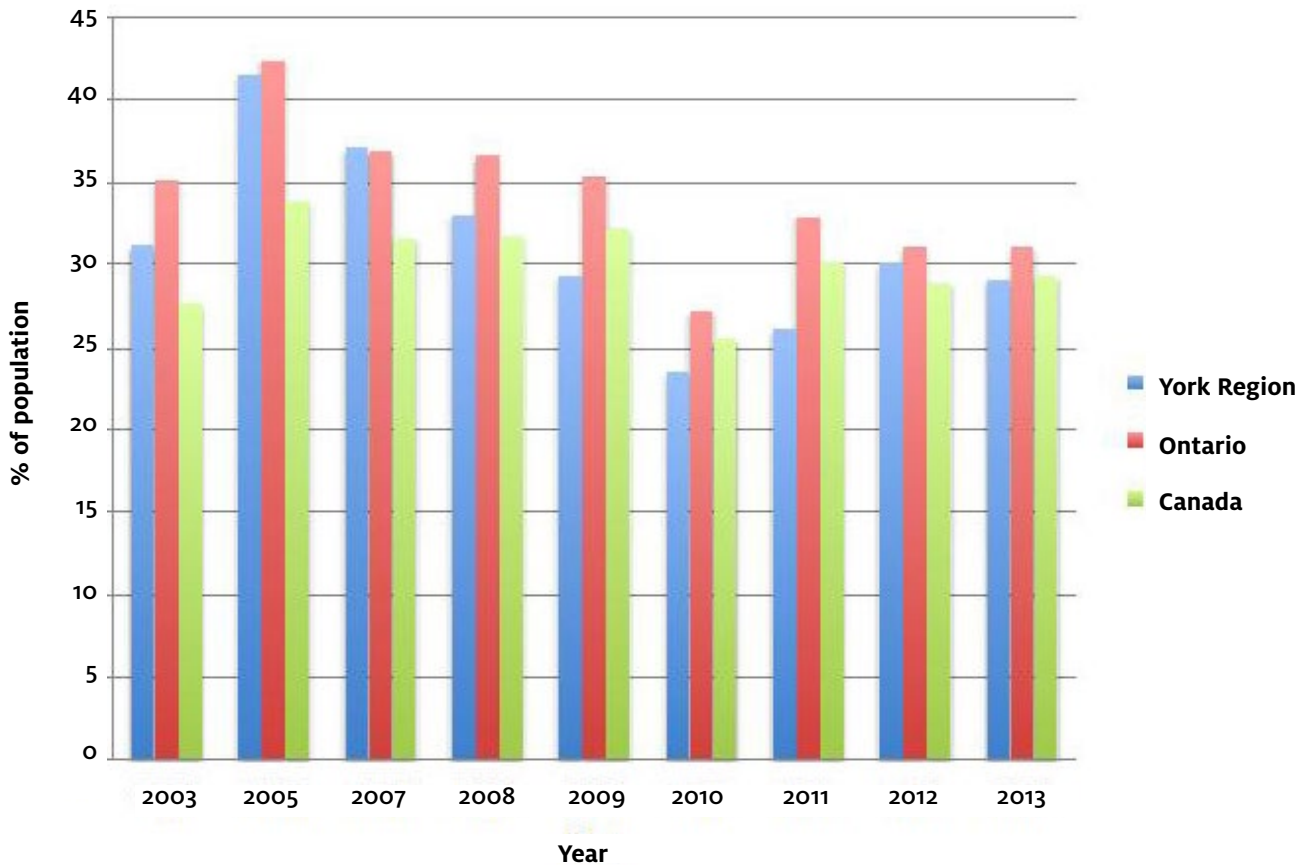
### Satisfaction with health services is low among residents and did not show any improvement over time

The *City of Vaughan Citizen Satisfaction Survey* reported that in both 2011 and 2012, residents placed hospitals and emergency health care among the most important services. Despite being identified as services of high importance, satisfaction levels with hospitals and emergency services were low — only 58% of residents in 2011 and 59% in 2012 reported that they were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' with such services. Satisfaction levels remained unchanged over time.

### Influenza immunization rates for York Region have consistently been lower than the rates reported for Ontario

Overall, the influenza immunization rate reported for York Region peaked at 41.5% in 2005. A similar trend can be observed in Ontario. However, the rates reported for Ontario tend to be higher than those reported for York Region.

## Influenza immunization, less than one year ago, population aged 12 years and over, York Region, Ontario and Canada, 2003 – 2013



### Notes:

1. Based on respondents who reported when they had their last influenza immunization. The 2009 data on influenza immunization may include immunization for H1N1 received in the fall of 2009. In 2010, the questionnaire was modified to collect data on the “seasonal” influenza and H1N1 vaccines separately. After 2010, the H1N1 separate module was no longer part of the questionnaire as the H1N1 vaccine was given in combination with the seasonal influenza vaccine.
2. Data as reported for York Region

**Source:** Statistics Canada. (2014). Table 105-0501 - Health indicator profile, annual estimates, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces, territories, health regions (2013 boundaries) and peer groups, occasional, CANSIM (database).

# LEISURE AND CULTURE

The Leisure and Culture domain measures activity in the very broad area of culture, which involves all forms of human expression including the arts and recreation activities.

The proportion of people living in York Region who are physically active during leisure time is low compared to provincial and national averages. What's more, lower rates of physical activity may contribute to the higher diabetes prevalence reported for York Region, as shown in the Healthy Populations domain.

According to the City of Vaughan's *Active Together Master Plan*, an apparent decline in reported household participation in team sports is indicative of the evolving demographics of the city, where residents are getting older and the community is becoming increasingly diverse, with immigrants making up a large proportion of the population. This suggests that the types of recreation programs and services need to evolve with the interests of the community. Despite an apparent decline in team sport participation, there is a need for an increase in subsidies for leisure and recreation programs as not all residents can afford to pay for these programs.

Annual data shows that the City of Vaughan's subsidy for leisure and recreation programs, (which is funded through three different sources), increased steadily from \$297K in 2012 to \$463K in 2014. Subsidy programs help encourage participation by removing financial barriers.



“The RecAssist program was developed by the Recreation Department in 2009 because we were seeing a growing need in the community for assistance in taking the programs that we provide. We had parents, families contacting us saying ‘we want to see our kids in swimming lessons, we want to be able to go to the fitness centre and work out, but we really need assistance because we have many other bills and expenses to pay.’ [...] The need for the programming has increased dramatically over the last six years since we’ve implemented it. We’re expecting that it will continue to grow.”

Paul Compton, Acting Director, City of Vaughan,  
Recreation Services



# KEY FINDINGS

## Walking is by far the most popular activity reported by Vaughan households

As part of its *Active Together Master Plan*, the City of Vaughan conducted an assessment of household participation in various recreation and leisure programs. Overall, the majority of residents enjoy walking for exercise, with at least 68% reporting participating in this activity.

## Physical activity generally lower for York Region

Data from the *Canadian Community Health Survey* indicates that between 2003 and 2013, the proportion of the York Region population that was moderately active or active during leisure time was generally lower than the national and provincial averages. Only 49.8% reported being moderately active or active, compared to 54.2% in Ontario and 55.2% in Canada. During this period, time spent in

physical activity lasting over 15 minutes was lower in York Region, while the national and provincial averages fluctuated.

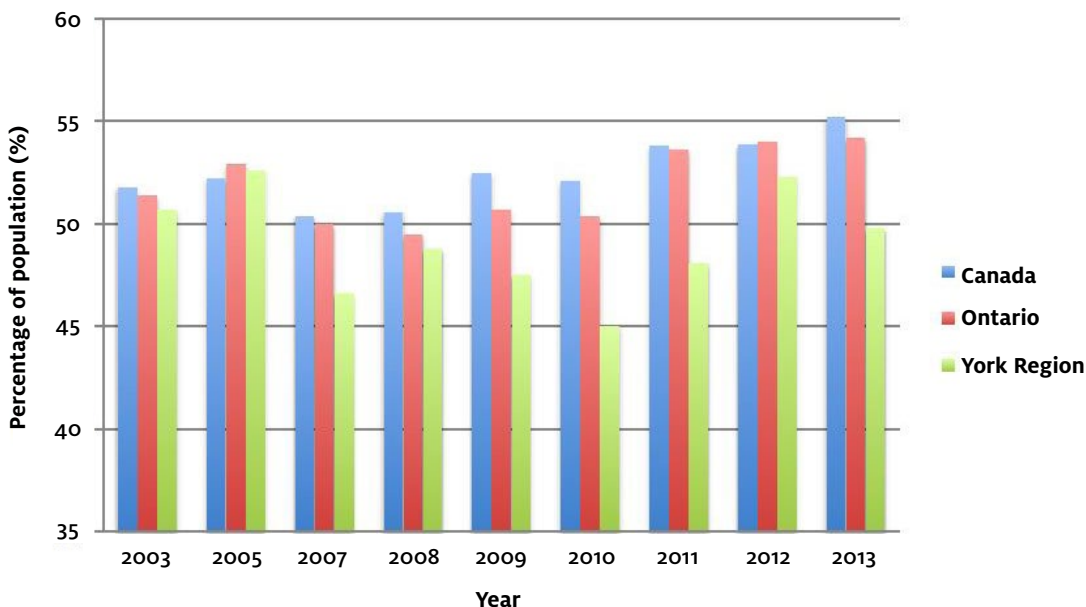
## Art, theatre and vacation time

Close to half of the Vaughan population reported attendance at performing arts events, but rated art galleries and theatres as a leisure activity of low importance.

Between 1996 and 2009, there was an increase in average number of nights away on vacation across Canada, Ontario and York Region, but York observed the highest increase.

The average number of nights York Region residents spent away on vacation is generally higher than the averages reported for Ontario and Canada. In addition, residents are taking longer vacations, as seen in the increase in the number of nights away on vacation.

## Physical activity during leisure time, moderately active and active, Canada, Ontario and York Region, population aged 12 years and over, 2003-2013



**Note:** Level of physical activity determined based on survey responses to questions about the nature, frequency and duration of their participation in leisure-time physical activity.

## Program Feature: RecAssist Program

One of the real challenges for municipalities experiencing rapid growth is to ensure that opportunities to participate in recreational activities keep pace. This could be through the construction of new facilities and/or putting into place programs that enable everyone to have access to these activities, especially young people and those that might not be able to afford it.

In the case of the Region of York and the City of Vaughan, this need is even more pronounced because people living in this region are considerably less active relative to provincial and national scores. To its credit, the City of Vaughan has a program geared specifically to assisting low income people to gain access to recreation opportunities.

Established in 2009 and administered by the city's Recreation Services Department, RecAssist is a fee-assistance program that subsidizes the cost of recreation and culture programs for low income individuals and families. The program provides funding for activities that include swimming lessons, summer camps, fitness classes and children's sports.

RecAssist prides itself on having no administration costs. Every penny raised through the support of individuals, city staff, local businesses, service clubs, community groups and other funding bodies goes to funding these programs.



“[I have been] teaching yoga and tai chi for the RecAssist program for a few years now. And I’m very happy that these programs exist because they give an opportunity for people [with lower incomes] to participate in exercise programs. [...] For example, I teach tai chi which is excellent for balance and fall prevention. And this is [important for people with] low bone density, osteoporosis ... they can fall and it’s very expensive to treat those people. [My participants are also] much happier, they have a zest for life [...] and they are improving year after year.”

Mirela Nanu, Yoga teacher, Tai Chi health instructor

# TIME USE

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The Time Use domain measures the use of time, what controls its use and how it affects wellbeing. How individuals use and experience time makes a significant contribution to their wellbeing.

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Vaughan residents report spending more time commuting to work compared to provincial and national figures. Moreover, 81% use their cars, slightly higher than provincial and national averages. Of note, only 13% use sustainable transit, compared to approximately 20% in Ontario and Canada.

Considering that more than half of Vaughan's workforce is employed in other municipalities in York Region and beyond, it is no surprise that traffic congestion and public transit/subways are the two leading issues reported by Vaughan residents as the most important issues facing the community. Higher commuting time negatively impacts health and, when combined with traffic congestion, leads to reduced satisfaction with work-life balance. The city has identified public transit needs to be addressed.

Lack of free time is the top barrier to participating in recreation and leisure activities, according to surveys conducted for both the 2008 and 2013 *Active Together Master Plan*. The report suggests that commuting across municipalities for work, which is done by more than half of Vaughan's workforce, contributes to lack of time for leisure activities. Combined with shift and weekend work, these two factors create challenges for Vaughan residents in accessing community facilities, services and programs. As such, the report highlights the need to enhance access to municipal programs and services, potentially through extended or flexible operating hours.

This is happening. For instance, Vaughan Public Libraries have increased hours of operation by 30% in the past seven years, extending open hours later into the evening, all day Sundays, offering after-hours study halls during exam periods and extending morning hours. Evening and weekend family programming has also been incorporated for the convenience of working parents. Additionally, an increased number of ebooks, databases and downloadable movies and magazines were made available for customers on a 24/7 basis.

Lack of free time to participate in recreation activities has implications for physical activity, and is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke, and diabetes. As seen in the Healthy Populations findings, diabetes prevalence is increasing among residents of York Region. The city must continue to make headway, keeping in mind how each of these facets impacts the other.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Vaughan residents spend more time commuting to work compared to provincial and national averages

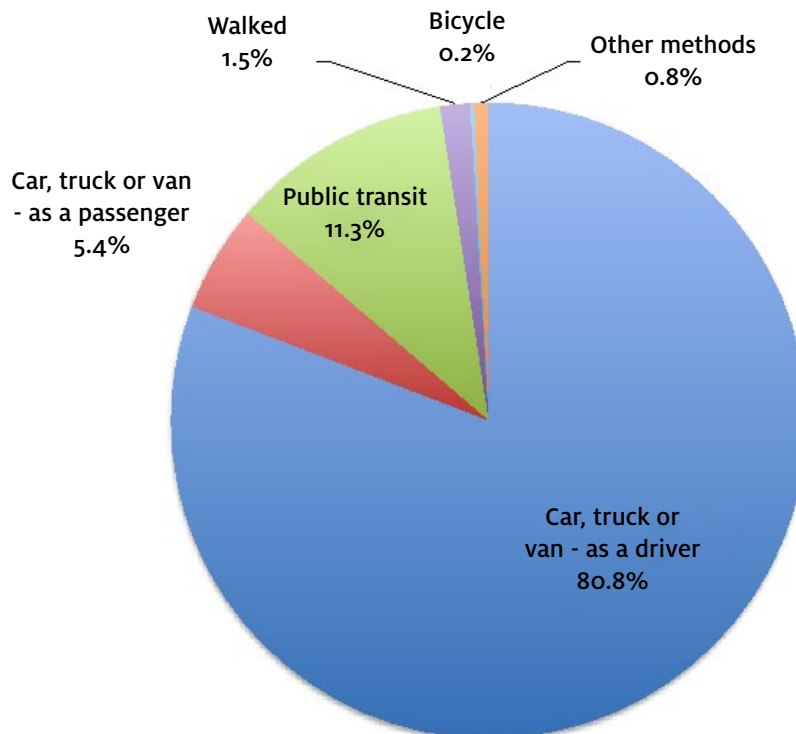
Commuting duration was 30.1 minutes, compared to 20.8 minutes for Ontario and 20.5 minutes for Canada. The highest proportion, or 80.0%, of the Vaughan population reported driving a car, truck or van. This trend is similar to the trend observed provincially and nationally (72.5% and 74.0%, respectively), where the mode of transportation was the same. The proportion of the Vaughan population which reported using a sustainable mode of

transportation (i.e. public transit, walking and bicycling) was 13.0%. This is low compared to 20.3% in Ontario and 19.1% in Canada.

### A higher proportion of Vaughan residents spend their time providing unpaid care to seniors

Data from the 2006 Census showed that 21.0% of the Vaughan population aged 15 years and over reported spending hours providing unpaid care or assistance to seniors. This was compared to 18.5% in Ontario and 18.1% in Canada.

### Distribution of the Vaughan population reporting various modes of transportation



**Source:** Statistics Canada. Vaughan, CY, Ontario. National Household Survey (NHS) Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE.



## Project Feature: Toronto-York Spadina Subway

According to a major research study on Time Use by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, Canadians are caught in a time crunch, struggling to meet the demands of the workplace, their families and their own need for physical and mental repose. Better infrastructure, more public transit options and walkable neighbourhoods can help to improve our quality of life and our environment. With a completion date scheduled for 2017, the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension will link commuters between the City of Toronto, through the York University campus to the York Region and serve as an anchor to the Region's much needed and evolving transportation network.

The extension will include six stops, 8.6 kilometres of track, of which 2.4 kilometres are in York Region. The extension will include three subway stations in York Region: Pioneer

Village Station (formerly Steeles West Station), Highway 407 Station, and will end at the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Station — a brand new transit hub slated to be lined with retail, entertainment and cultural facilities.

Each of the stations in York Region will have a bus terminal and the existing surface bus network will be restructured to connect with the subway stations. Commuter parking lots will be located at Pioneer Village and Highway 407 stations. It is expected that these efforts will help curb the transportation woes that have been red flagged in this report.

The project is jointly funded by the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario, the City of Toronto and the Regional Municipality of York.



**Source:** City of Vaughan. Rendering of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Canadian Index of Wellbeing was created to serve as a tool to help citizens and their elected representatives make informed decisions that result in healthier and more vibrant communities.

Based on this report's key findings, our coalition convened consultations with numerous stakeholders including representatives from the City of Vaughan, York Region District School Board, United Way Toronto and York Region, Social Planning Council of York Region, regional non-profit social service agencies such as Catholic Community Services of York Region and Human Endeavour, York University, and the Vaughan Community Health Centre.

## These discussions resulted in four key policy recommendation areas:

1. Increase affordable housing
2. Increase access to affordable transportation
3. Improve air quality
4. Promote local economic development

It should be noted that one of the key criteria in selecting the policy recommendations is that they fall under local municipal and regional jurisdictions. This is not to suggest that the provincial and federal governments do not also have a very important role to play. Rather, these are areas over which municipalities have some leverage to effect change.

A special effort was also made to build on the foundation of existing policy work, to avoid duplication of some of the excellent work already underway or in place. This has the added benefit of ensuring that the policy recommendations are grounded and have a greater likelihood of being implemented.





Source: City of Vaughan

# HOUSING: INCREASE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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At first glance, Vaughan shows little sign of people struggling on low incomes. And yet, appearances can be deceiving. In the Metcalf Foundation's 2015 report, *The Working Poor in the Toronto Region*, research revealed that the working poor are moving northward to the suburbs.

This presents a real challenge for Vaughan, where housing demands have resulted in an escalation of house prices. Not surprisingly, the costs for shelter are significantly higher in York Region, as evidenced by the proportion of households in Vaughan spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs.

While many factors contribute to the scarcity in rental stock — not just in Vaughan but right across the country — fortunately, there are things that the region and municipalities can do to increase access to affordable housing. Better still, there is a well thought out plan to do so.

To address the need for affordable housing, the Regional Municipality of York — composed of nine municipalities including Vaughan — has developed an ambitious 10-year plan entitled, *10 Year Housing Solutions: A Place for Everyone*. Contained in this document are four major goals:

- Increase the rental housing supply
- Sustain the existing rental housing supply
- Support home ownership affordability
- Strengthen the homelessness and housing stability system

In line with this plan, we recommend the adoption of policies that support an increase in the supply of safe and legal secondary suites within existing homes. The City of Vaughan is working on this issue by bringing into effect policies in both their official plans and zoning bylaws that allow for secondary suites.

Not only will this provide more safe and affordable shelter options for low income residents, it will also provide a legal source of extra income for families trying to pay down sizeable mortgages, as well as fixed income populations such as seniors.

Another lever that falls within the realm of municipal control is that of obtaining certain concessions from community developers (for example, identifying new development projects that are in the early stages and where additional affordable housing units could be added in exchange for increased density and/or height regulations).

This approach, known as 'community benefits,' would result in an increase of affordable rental housing, at no cost to the taxpayer.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Rental housing construction accounted for only 1% of all housing starts from 2003 to 2013 (Based on Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Housing Now*, 2004-2014).





5332  
23  
Thornhill Woods  
Southbound

YORK REGION TRANSIT

313

313

23 THORNHILL WOODS  
SOUTHBOUND

23 THORNHILL WOODS  
SOUTHBOUND



SOUTH PROMENADE

**Source:** York  
Region Transit.  
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# TRANSPORTATION: INCREASE ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSIT

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This report speaks to the need for the City of Vaughan and York Region to reduce automobile dependency and shift to greater use of public transit and active transportation. Strategies should be put in place to reduce traffic-related pollutants and to reduce present commuting times, which are above average when compared to provincial and national averages.

With continued growth comes increasing congestion. As a result, traffic congestion is top-of-mind for residents living in York Region and the City of Vaughan. In fact, people are four times as concerned about this issue as taxes or any other issue.

The good news is that York Region has developed *Vision 2051*, a blueprint to advance sustainable transportation and land use policies for the next 40 years.

Since 2002, York Region has also developed two strategic transportation plans. These plans establish the vision for transportation services, assess existing transportation system performance, forecast future travel demand and define projects and strategies to address road, transit and active transportation needs.

The Region's plans have enabled innovation in public transit, walking and cycling and led to the implementation of dedicated bus rapidways on Highway 7 and the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension project. Also included are ideas such as the need to reduce single occupancy vehicles by incentivizing drivers to carpool through the use of high-occupancy

vehicle (HOV) lanes. The Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension and the continued development of dedicated bus rapidways will be supported by YRT/Viva's Frequent Transit Network. The Frequent Transit Network will consist of express Viva and YRT services along key corridors in the urban areas of the Region providing high frequency and direct service, as well as efficient connections.

What's more, *Vaughan Tomorrow*, the city's consolidated *Growth Management Strategy – 2031*, is consistent with York Region's policies and also has a central focus on creating a cutting-edge official plan to provide for increased land use densities and efficient public transit.

Given the construction of the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension, one idea that would be timely is the development of an effective mobility hub to accommodate interconnecting multimodal transportation options. It is also important to ensure that public transit is accessible to residents of all income levels. The Region should look into expanding the existing transit subsidy program.





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Source: City of Vaughan



# CLEAN AIR: CONNECT THE DOTS FOR HEALTH

The links between poor air quality and negative health impacts are well-known. To improve air quality in Vaughan and reduce negative health impacts, we propose that Vaughan build on the positive work of the GTA Clean Air Council of which Vaughan is a member. The Council promotes the reduction of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and increased awareness of regional air quality and climate change issues in the Greater Toronto Area through the collective efforts of all levels of government.

As a next step, we recommend the City of Vaughan adopt a Municipal Anti Idling Fleet Policy that includes ‘Electronic Vehicle Monitoring Systems.’ In fact, as part of *Green Directions Vaughan*, the City’s *Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan*, one objective is to develop a comprehensive green fleet strategy. The City is continually working to reduce costs and emissions that result from its fleet. Installation of monitoring devices on fleet vehicles, which would complement this work, is currently being considered.

Also, far more work needs to be done by primary health care staff to educate their clients suffering from life threatening respiratory diseases such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), about the preventative steps they can take to avert the avoidable hospital visits associated with peak smog days.



“It’s well documented that certain populations, i.e. the very young and the elderly are more prone to [the effects of] poor air quality, especially if they are compromised with respiratory conditions such as asthma or COPD. So, when we have poor air quality as in the summer with smog and increased air pollution, these individuals are more affected and, in fact, it is very difficult for them to do their normal activities of living ...”

Kathryn Dickie, Respiratory Educator, Vaughan Community Health Centre



# PROMOTE LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: SUPPORT NEWCOMERS AND THOSE WHO FACE BARRIERS TO FINDING GOOD JOBS

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On average, 11,000 newcomers settle in York Region each year and a large number of them make the City of Vaughan their home. Upon arrival, they need social services to help them integrate and find jobs. Despite the majority of them being highly educated and skilled, our current social and economic systems do not seem to integrate them effectively. New immigrants report facing barriers to enter their fields and often end up taking multiple, menial, low-end jobs to survive and support their families.

What is needed is an integrated socio-economic systems approach that provides social services and economic opportunities, breaks down barriers and gives fair integration opportunities to newcomers and other marginalized communities. This integrated approach can be achieved through what is known as a **social economy**, which consists of businesses run by non-profits, community members or for-profits with a blended return on investment model that delivers both social services and economic opportunities. In this approach, social purpose is equally or more important than the bottom-line financial return of the business. That is the reason why it is called “a caring economy.” A social purpose enterprise could include a community laundry co-op, local market or providing transport services to seniors.

Although social economy is growing, it is not yet a well-recognized segment of our economy. It is

recommended that the City of Vaughan foster the development of integrated socio-economic projects where community residents can find solutions to their challenges by developing a network of community voices to identify systemic issues and work with government partners and other stakeholders to implement a plan to bring about transformative change.

Fortunately, there is positive work that is already taking place. Examples of this caring economy are already being observed in the City of Vaughan, which provides support to social enterprise and not-for-profits through its Vaughan Business Enterprise Centre (VBEC).

The City has provided support, guidance, promotion and referrals to Human Endeavour, which pioneered the establishment of a Social Economy Incubator called Enterprise Promotion and Innovation Centre (EPIC). This model has been replicated in Georgina and is being considered by other surrounding municipalities. At both its locations, EPIC is delivering promising results in addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by people with barriers to finding meaningful work. The key, then, is to build on such initiatives and sustain the positive momentum already underway.

“Our independently run social services and economic structures do not [do the best job integrating] newcomers, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups [...] in our economy and in our society. An integrated system of social services along with economic opportunity is needed to meet the needs of these groups and provide opportunities for them. Social economy implements this structure. It offers a blended return on investment, where along with profit, people and the environment are taken care of. In this social economy structure, social purpose is equal or more important than just profit-making. That’s why we call it an economy that cares. Human Endeavour, along with its partners Vaughan Community Health Centre and the Vaughan Business Enterprise Centre, has implemented the EPIC Social Economy Incubator that addresses the needs of these vulnerable groups by bringing these opportunities to Vaughan.”

Noor Din, CEO, Human Endeavour



Source: Human Endeavour

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[\(Lei, Cassandra, 2015\) Healthy Populations - Vaughan](#)

[\(Lei, Cassandra, 2015\) Leisure and Culture - Vaughan](#)

[\(Lei, Cassandra, 2015\) Living Standards - Vaughan](#)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Photos used are courtesy of the City of Vaughan, York Region, Human Endeavour and Vaughan Community Health Centre.

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**November 2015**



# Community Health and Wellbeing

Shift the  
conversation

**THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES AT**

[communityhealthandwellbeing.org](http://communityhealthandwellbeing.org)

[info@communityhealthandwellbeing.org](mailto:info@communityhealthandwellbeing.org)



Association of Ontario Health Centres  
**Community-governed primary health care**  
Association des centres de santé de l'Ontario  
**Soins de santé primaires gérés par la communauté**



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