

FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

# QUALITY OF LIFE IN CANADIAN COMMUNITIES

## *Trends & Issues in Affordable Housing & Homelessness*

**THEME REPORT #4**

**FCM**  
Federation of Canadian Municipalities  
Fédération canadienne des municipalités

**CH2MHILL**



The FCM Quality of Life  
Reporting System

# MESSAGE OF SUPPORT – CH2M HILL



**C**H2M HILL CANADA TAKES A COMMON SENSE approach when it comes to improving the quality of life both at work and at home. Simply stated, our commitment to sustainable development and to high-quality of life communities represents a logical extension of our core values.

We add value to the communities in which we live and work by integrating the principles of sustainable development into our projects. In addition, we work with communities, professional associations, and both governmental and non-governmental organizations to help articulate, teach, and advance the principles of sustainability.

As a conscientious corporate citizen, CH2M HILL Canada actively supports a variety of key initiatives. We don't just talk about helping our communities; we walk the talk every day. From a sustainability perspective, we are proud to be a founding sponsor of the FCM-CH2M

HILL Sustainable Community Awards with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Since 2000, we have recognized and celebrated municipal leadership in championing sustainable community development and promoting best practices in addressing environmental issues in municipal operations. From a perspective of contributing to high-quality of life communities, CH2M HILL is pleased to contribute to the funding of the fourth theme report in FCM's Quality of Life series. Our firm is steadfast in its goal of finding ways to research, develop, and support methods that will respond to any challenging trends related to housing and homelessness.

We embrace our contributions to sustainable development and to high-quality of life communities for they emphasize the importance of sustainability in building capacity in Canadian communities. The bottom line is that we work, on a daily basis, to make a positive difference in your world today. This will be our legacy.

Peter Nicol  
President, CH2M HILL Canada Limited

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## No Time to be Without a Home



IT'S A TOO-FAMILIAR SCENE IN CANADA'S BIG CITIES: the weather turns steadily colder until temperatures dip well below freezing and the city's shelters quickly fill to capacity. Social service agencies work frantically with municipal officials to find extra spaces for dozens of people who

normally sleep on the streets. Sometimes it can mean collecting homeless people in city buses and adapting empty buildings as emergency shelters.

Winter in Canada is not the time for anyone to be without shelter. It's when homelessness becomes an emergency and adequate shelter a matter of life and death. It's also when many of us understand most clearly why having adequate shelter is a necessity not a luxury. But stark homelessness is not our only housing problem. As this report shows, many people in Canada's large cities struggle to find decent, affordable, housing as they move from living on the street, living in emergency shelters, and living in short-term transitional housing.

The estimated 150,000 to 200,000 homeless people in Canada are the visible tip of a much larger population of financially marginal individuals and households that are at risk of ending up on the street. According to some estimates, some 700,000 households nation-wide are spending more than half of their income on shelter, leaving them at considerable risk of homelessness, with some 600,000 to 650,000 people, many of them children, living in inadequate or sub-standard housing.

Municipalities deal with the immediate human consequences of inadequate housing and homelessness. Increasingly, they must use their strained resources to help individuals and families that cannot find adequate shelter. Municipal governments have programs and strategies to assist people that need housing, but they do not have the resources to solve the housing problem. That requires the cooperation and support of other orders of government. As Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco-Best, mayor of London, Ont., has said, "These problems exist across the country. We need a country-wide strategy with co operation from Ottawa and each of the provincial governments."

To kick-start this process, Mayor DeCicco-Best and Vancouver Mayor Sam Sullivan are co-chairing a task force of FCM's Big City Mayors' Caucus (BCMC) to develop a national housing strategy. Their goal is to engage federal and provincial/territorial governments, as well as community groups and the private-sector, in a coordinated, long-term national housing strategy.

Time is running out. Cities and communities are deeply concerned about the upcoming expiry of all current federal housing programs in March 2009, as well as by the ongoing reductions in federal funding as long-term operating subsidies expire. We need a long-term coherent national housing strategy, one that can achieve a measurable reduction in homelessness and improve housing affordability. And we need it soon.

Gord Steeves  
President, Federation of Canadian Municipalities



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This publication, the fourth theme report published by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) as part of the Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS), focuses on trends related to housing and homelessness in 22 large and medium-sized municipalities and urban regions in Canada. The report's focus is the period 2000-2006, with some reference to trends dating back to 1991.

As with other QOLRS publications, this report is driven by the following objectives:

- identify strategic issues and challenges facing cities across Canada with respect to housing and homelessness;
- illustrate these issues in terms of statistical trends;
- report on the most recently published and credible data; and
- describe actions being taken by Canadian municipalities in response to these challenges.

The information provided in this report builds on the findings of an earlier report prepared by FCM in 2004. *Incomes, Shelter and Necessities* (Theme Report No. 1) was the first in a series of Quality of Life Reports presenting selected indicators from the QOLRS to show changes from 1991 to 2001.<sup>1</sup> The overall findings of the 2004 report suggested a period of deepening poverty for some in the face of overall prosperity for most, exacerbated by rising shelter costs, which consumed household income required for other necessities. The large majority of singles and families in most of the QOLRS communities earned incomes more than sufficient to afford their basic needs. At the same time, the role previously played by the social safety net—including social assistance and social housing—was increasingly played by emergency shelters and food banks, or not all. Several economically marginalized groups—including recent immigrants—experienced a further deterioration in their situations.

The report identified a number of specific and disturbing trends between 1991 and 2001 facing the urban communities participating in the QOLRS project:

- Five of seven indicators used to measure the risk of homelessness show that conditions in the 20 communities deteriorated;
- The proportion of renter households spending more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter in the 20 communities studied increased from 35 per cent to 41 per cent;
- Low-end rents increased 20 per cent more than low-end individual incomes.

*Incomes, Shelter and Necessities* also found that all municipalities are affected by these trends, although in different ways. While there were significant variations in overall levels of poverty, unemployment and income, and housing affordability among the QOLRS communities, no single municipality was immune to these overall trends.

Funding needed to create affordable housing and provide adequate incomes to those most in need has traditionally been provided by federal and provincial/territorial governments. Over the past two decades there has been a dramatic decline in provincial spending in these areas. Expenditures by local government have increased during this time, but municipalities are simply not in a position to replace the role played by the other orders of government.

Ultimately, the report points to the urgency for establishing a comprehensive strategy on housing and homelessness capable of addressing challenges common to municipalities across Canada. A long-term National Housing and Homelessness Strategy is essential to overcome the substantial inequities evident in the housing sector and to ensure that all Canadians have access to adequate and affordable housing. Information on the QOLRS and all previous reports can be found at <http://www.fcm.ca/english/qol/qol.html>

<sup>1</sup> FCM. 2004. Quality of Life Reporting System. Income, Shelter & Necessities. Ottawa; FCM. 2004. Quality of Life Reporting System. Highlights Report 2004. Ottawa

# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

## **Dynamic trends in homeownership contrasted with more modest growth in the rental sector**


The 2004 FCM Report on Incomes, Shelter and Necessities identified an across-the-board shift to homeownership accompanied by inadequate supplies of new, private and non-market rental housing. Data for the period 2000 to 2006 suggest a continuation of these trends in the 22 QOLRS communities. As a result, a significant proportion of the population, led by couples and two-parent families, benefited from increased levels of homeownership. Supported by historically low interest rates, this trend was accompanied by rapid population growth, rising incomes and a shift towards relatively less expensive condominium and town-house development.

While homeownership was on the rise, the rental sector was far less dynamic. In contrast to the 1991-2001 period, vacancy rates were more balanced and rent increases more modest.

## **Demographic pressure and limitations of the housing market placed pressure on municipal governments**

In the context of positive population growth and dynamic homeownership, several trends point to serious challenges facing municipal governments in Canada's larger urban centres. These include the dual challenge facing QOLRS communities of both an aging population and continued growth in the number of young families





Furthermore, rising housing prices outpaced income growth, even for couples and two-parent families, who otherwise enjoyed relative prosperity. Income growth was far slower among lone parent families and singles, who faced serious and growing barriers to affordable homeownership. Rental remains an alternative to homeownership, but construction of new rental housing lagged far behind historical levels. While one-third of all households rent, fewer than nine per cent of all housing units completed in Canada's largest cities between 2001 and 2006 were rental units.

**Finding affordable housing still a challenge for Canada's most vulnerable**

The benefits of a dynamic shift to homeownership and only modest increases in rents were by no means shared equally. Homelessness persists throughout urban Canada. In 2006, even the smallest and most suburban of the 22 communities in the Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS) required emergency shelters. Close to 20,000 permanent shelter beds were in place across the reporting communities, according to data from the Homelessness Partnering Strategy's Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).

While couples and two-parent families fared well, the most vulnerable were further excluded from the housing market as a result of trends evident from 2001 to 2006. Sectors of the population that were further excluded from the private housing market included low-income, lone-parent families and singles, and social assistance recipients. Increases in the minimum wage improved the situation for many working poor, with the minimum wage now approaching or exceeding \$8.00/hour in all Canadian provinces. However, single people and lone-parent families from this sub-population still struggled to keep up with the high cost of rent.

**A Need for Renewal of the Rental Housing Infrastructure**

According to the 2006 Census, 10 per cent of all rental housing requires major repairs,<sup>2</sup> and the average age of buildings that house the lowest quartile rental stock is approaching 50 years. At the same time, the social housing stock is deteriorating rapidly due to a chronic lack of funding to support maintenance and modernization.

Relatively high vacancy rates among the most affordable rental units, at a time of lengthy waiting lists for social housing, indicate the private rental market's inability to reach the most vulnerable households. The result is an urgent need for reinvestment in both the private and social-housing rental stock.

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<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, Census Division, 2006, Tenure and Condition Tables





# PART 1 | TRENDS IN THE HOUSING MARKET: THE MOVE TO HOMEOWNERSHIP

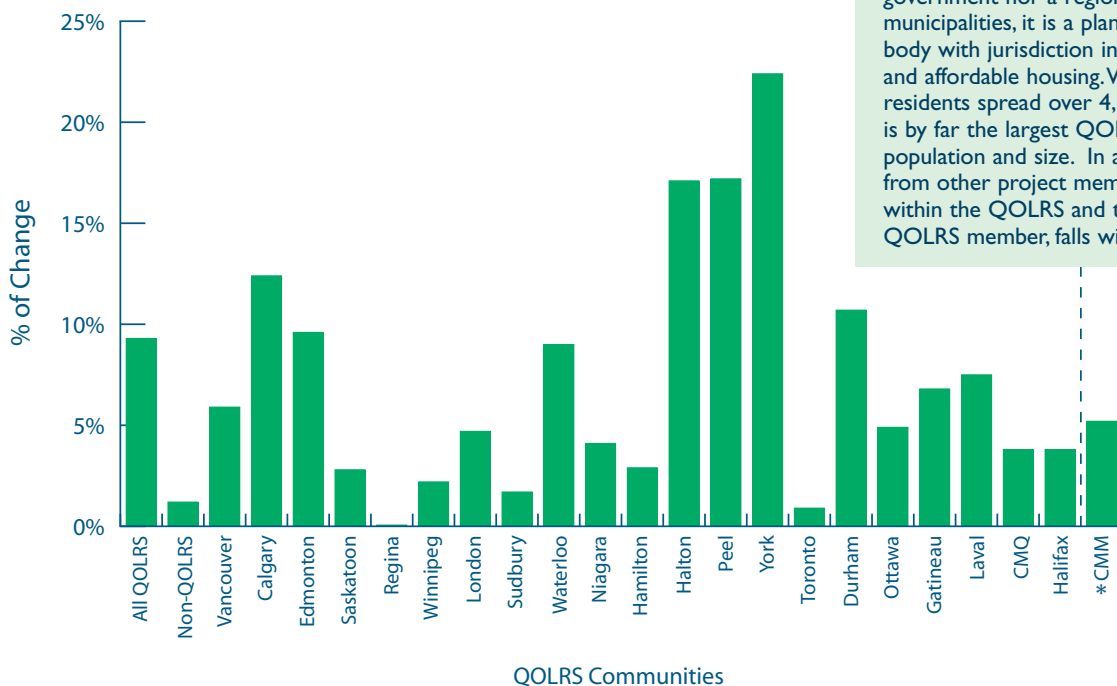
The 2004 FCM report, *Incomes, Shelter and Necessities*, identified an across-the-board shift to homeownership accompanied by inadequate supplies of new, private and non-market rental housing. Data for the period 2000 to 2006 suggest a continuation of these trends in the 22 QOLRS communities. As a result, a significant proportion of the population, led by couples and two-parent families, benefited from increased levels of homeownership. Supported by historically low interest rates, this trend was accompanied by rapid population growth, rising incomes and a shift towards relatively less expensive condominium and townhouse development.

While homeownership was on the rise, the rental sector enjoyed a far less dynamic experience. In contrast to the 1991-2001 period, vacancy rates were more balanced and rent increases more modest.

### Positive, but Uneven, Population Growth<sup>3</sup>

Canada's population growth between 2001 and 2006 was the highest among G8 nations.<sup>4</sup> Chart 1 suggests this growth was driven in large part by the 22 communities represented by the QOLRS. In fact, population growth in Canada's larger urban centres represented by the QOLRS was close to eight times faster than in communities outside the QOLRS. At the same time, population growth within urban

Chart 1 – Population Growth, 2001 - 2006<sup>5</sup>



\* Unlike other QOLRS members, the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) is neither a municipal government nor a regional municipality. Serving 82 municipalities, it is a planning, co-ordinating and funding body with jurisdiction in several fields, including social and affordable housing. With a population of 3.6 million residents spread over 4,360 square kilometres, CMM is by far the largest QOLRS project member in both population and size. In all data tables, CMM is separated from other project members to reflect its unique status within the QOLRS and the fact that Laval, Que., a QOLRS member, falls within CMM boundaries.

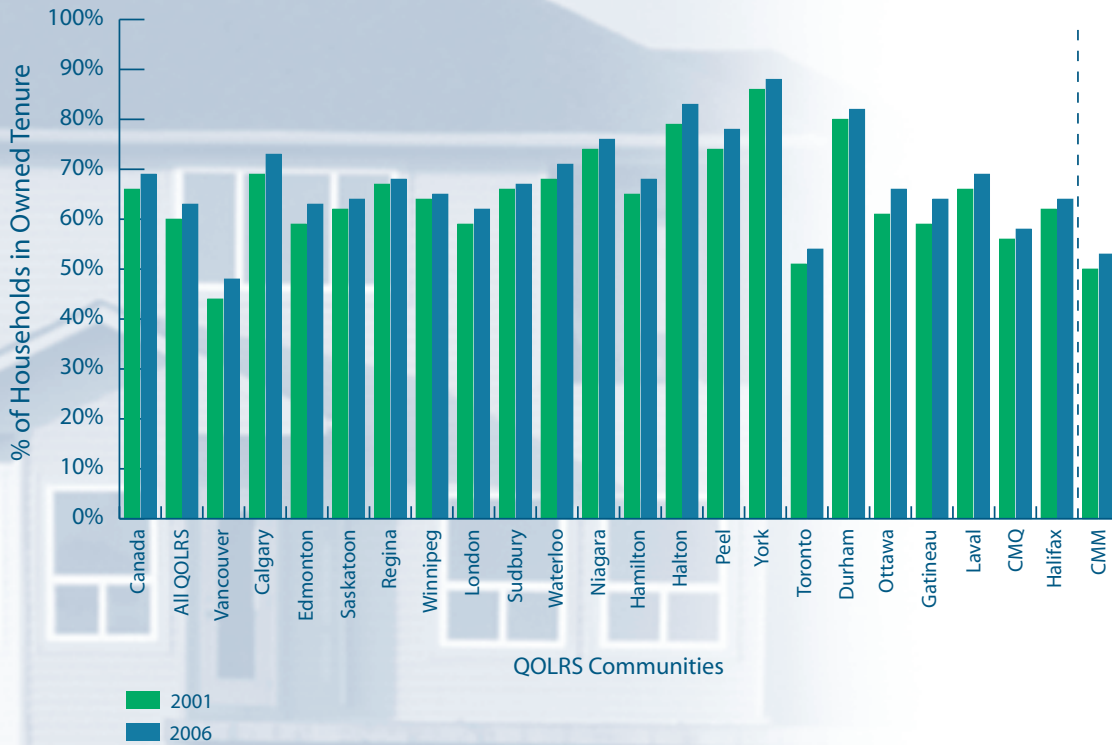
Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001, 2006

<sup>3</sup> Refer to Data Sources section of this document for an explanation of data sources, issues, and limitations.

<sup>4</sup> Portrait of the Canadian Population in 2006, 2006 Census, Population and Dwelling Counts, 2006 Census, Catalogue no. 97-550-XIE

<sup>5</sup> Several QOLRS communities, notably Toronto, are disrupting the population numbers from the 2006 Census due to undercounting. This is described in more detail in the Data Sources section of this report.

Chart 2 – Housing Tenure in QOLRS Communities, 2001 & 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001, 2006

Canada was not distributed evenly. While the population of Calgary and communities surrounding the City of Toronto expanded by 10 to 25 per cent during this period, other QOLRS communities experienced population at or below the non-QOLRS average.

**Trends in Homeownership**

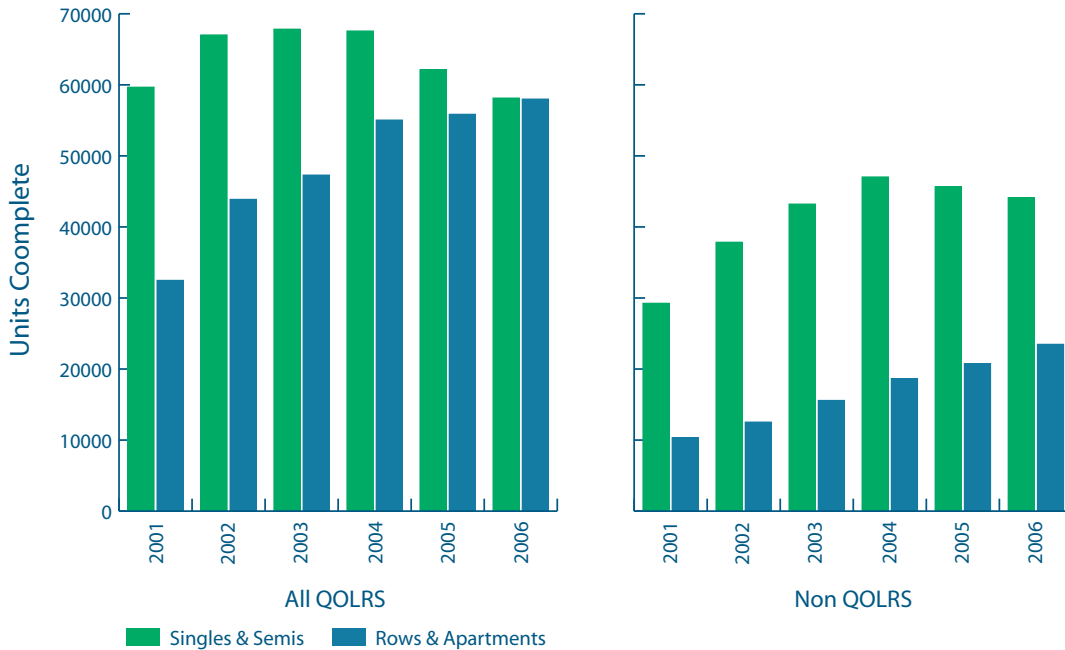
The 2004 FCM report, *Incomes, Shelter and Necessities*, highlighted an increase in homeownership across all QOLRS communities. This trend continued unabated between 2001 and 2006, even in more expensive housing markets such as Vancouver and Toronto. Sustained period of low mortgage interest rates, the success of CMHC mortgage-assistance programs, and the new push toward urban condo-

minium and townhouse living all contributed to rising levels of homeownership, with a corresponding decrease in the proportion of renter households. At the same time, households in QOLRS communities continued to rely on rental housing to a greater degree than in the rest of Canada, although this gap was shrinking as a result of changes since 2001.

**The Rise of the Condominium**

Chart 3 illustrates the difference between an emerging built form in urban Canada, as compared to the rest of Canada. A general trend toward higher-density townhouse and condominium living is evident in both the QOLRS and non-QOLRS communities. However, the rate of change is far more significant

Chart 3 – New Housing Completions, by Type, 2001-2006



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Starts and Completions Survey, 2001-2006

in the QOLRS communities. In 2001, higher density residential development made up roughly one-third of new homes in QOLRS communities. By 2006, this type of housing made up roughly one-half of new homes. In contrast, only one-third of housing completions in non-QOLRS communities were for higher-density housing types in 2006.

The growth of these higher-density forms of housing is one contributing factor to the transition towards homeownership. The purchase price of new “condos” and “towns” are typically lower than that of “singles.” As a result, these forms of homeownership have attracted a new generation of households moving from rental housing.

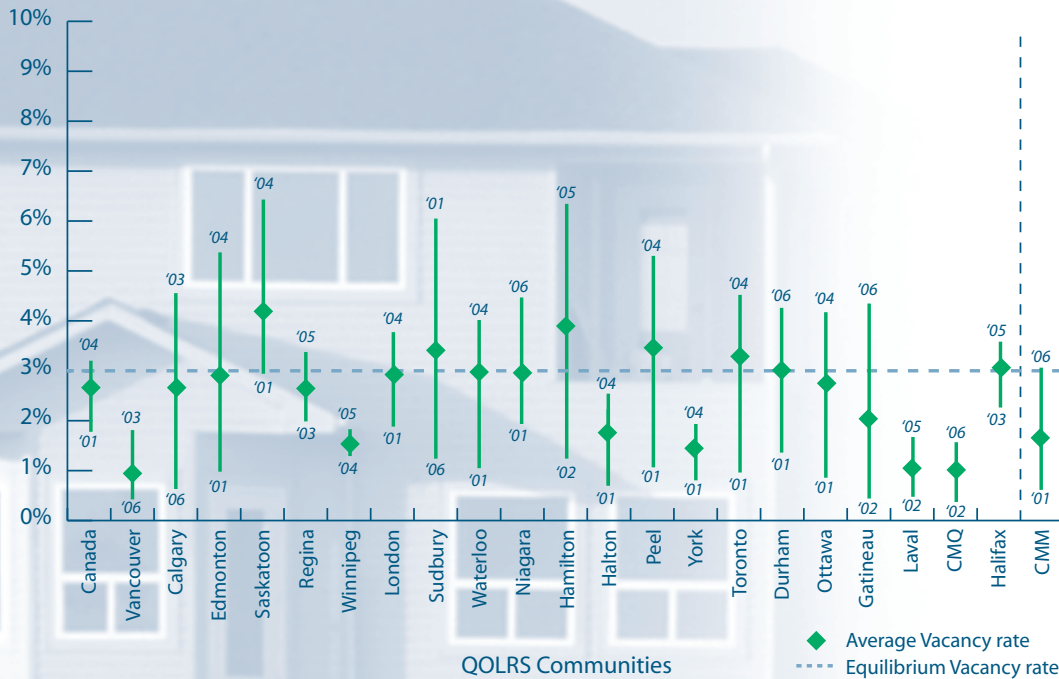
### Unpredictable Vacancy Rates

Rental vacancy rates from 2001 to 2006 were around three per cent for the QOLRS communities, suggesting a level of equilibrium in the rental market and more modest pressure on rents.<sup>6</sup> While rental vacancy rates were tightening up in the QOLRS communities between 1991 and 2001, the period 2001 to 2006 generally involved a rise in vacancy rates. Even among those communities experiencing very low vacancy rates, a movement towards higher vacancy rates was evident.

<sup>6</sup> A vacancy rate of three per cent is regularly cited as a form of equilibrium, implying that neither upward nor downward pressures on rents is being felt.



Chart 4 – Average Reported Rental Vacancy Rate, with Maximum and Minimum Vacancy Rates Shown, for the period 2001–2006

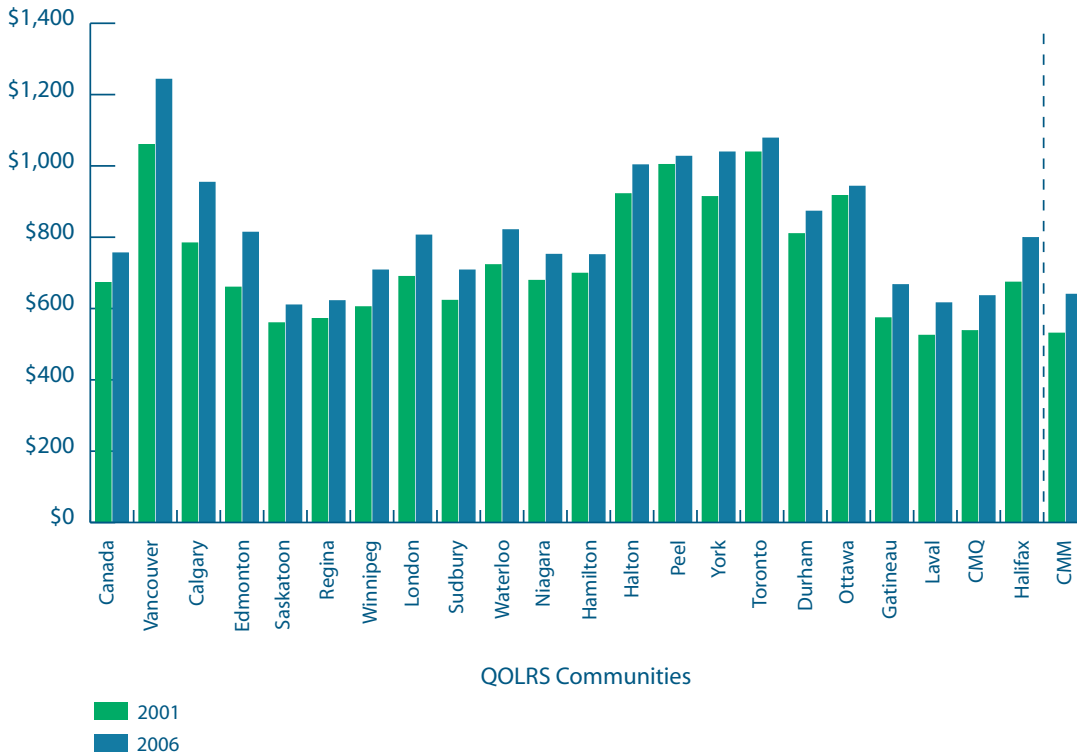


Source: Adapted from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Rental Market Survey, 2001-2006

However, as illustrated in Chart 4, these averages masked substantial variation over time and across the QOLRS communities. Rental markets behaved very differently across the QOLRS communities. Whereas some communities experienced substantial fluctuations in vacancy rates over the six-year period, others saw very little change. While vacancy rates were above three per cent in communities such as Saskatoon, Sudbury, Hamilton, Peel and Toronto, the average over the same period was close to or below one per cent in Vancouver, York, Laval and CMQ. Vacancy rates at this low level place upward pressure on rents and reflect greater competition among renters for fewer units.

More recent data published for 2007 suggests a trend towards rapidly declining vacancy rates in Saskatchewan's two largest cities, echoing recent changes in Vancouver and Calgary, where vacancy rates have been on a downward trend. Regina's apartment vacancy rate fell dramatically from 3.3 per cent in 2006 to 1.7 per cent in October 2007. As a result, average rents for a two-bedroom apartment jumped from \$619 to \$661 during the same corresponding period. Similarly, vacancy rates in Saskatoon dropped from 3.2 per cent to 0.6 per cent during the same period, with an even more substantial increase in average rents. Household incomes and social programs are not capable of keeping pace with these dramatic changes in the rental market.

Chart 5 – Average Rent, Two-Bedroom Apartment, QOLRS Communities, 2001 & 2006 (nominal\$)



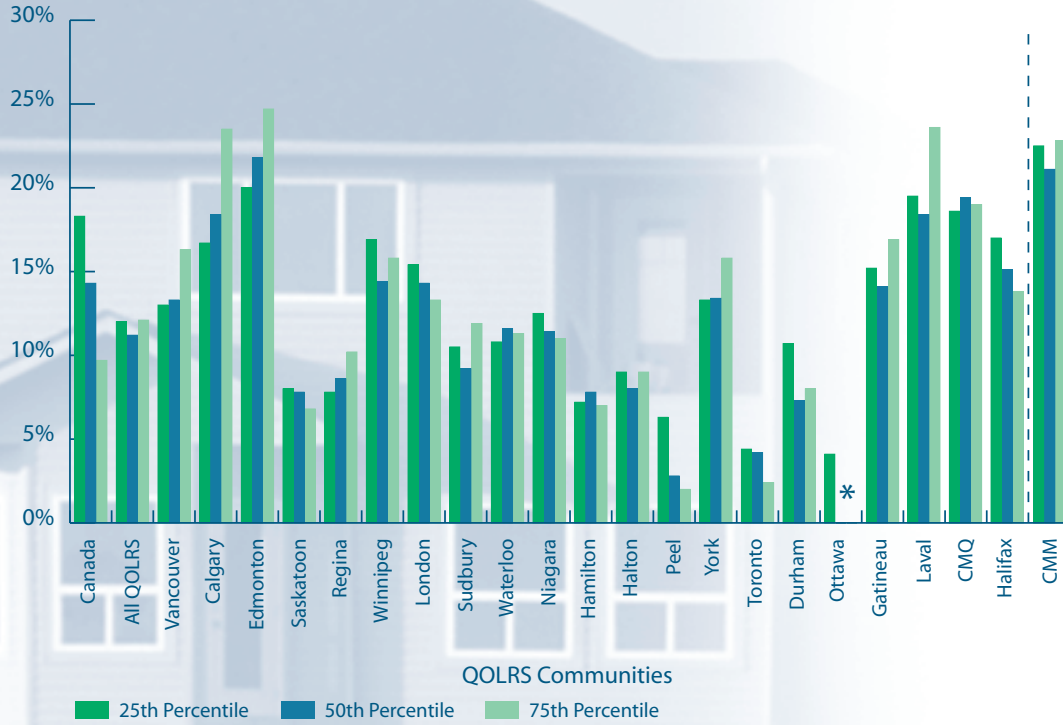
Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Rental Market Survey, 2001-2006

### Modest Change in Monthly Rents

In contrast to the period 1991-2001, and consistent with rising vacancy rates, rents in the QOLRS communities experienced a slower rate of increase between 2001 and 2006 (Chart 5). As described in Chart 6, rents for the lowest quartile of apartments—the cheapest 25 per cent of the rental market—increased by 12 per cent between 2001 and 2006, without adjusting for inflation. This was lower than the national average of 18.3 per cent for the same segment of the rental market, although slightly higher than the increases experienced in the middle range of rents in the QOLRS communities. Nevertheless, as described later in this report, even these modest increases in rents outpaced income growth among the more vulnerable populations.

As with vacancy rates, the change in rents was not equal across the QOLRS communities. Communities in Quebec and Alberta experienced rent increases well above the national average, while those in Ontario and Saskatchewan generally experienced below average increases. Despite the substantial percentage increases, average rents in Quebec municipalities remained among the lowest in the QOLRS.

Chart 6 – Change in Monthly Rent by Quartile in QOLRS Communities, 2001-2006 (nominal\$)



Source: Adapted from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Rental Market Survey, 2001-2006

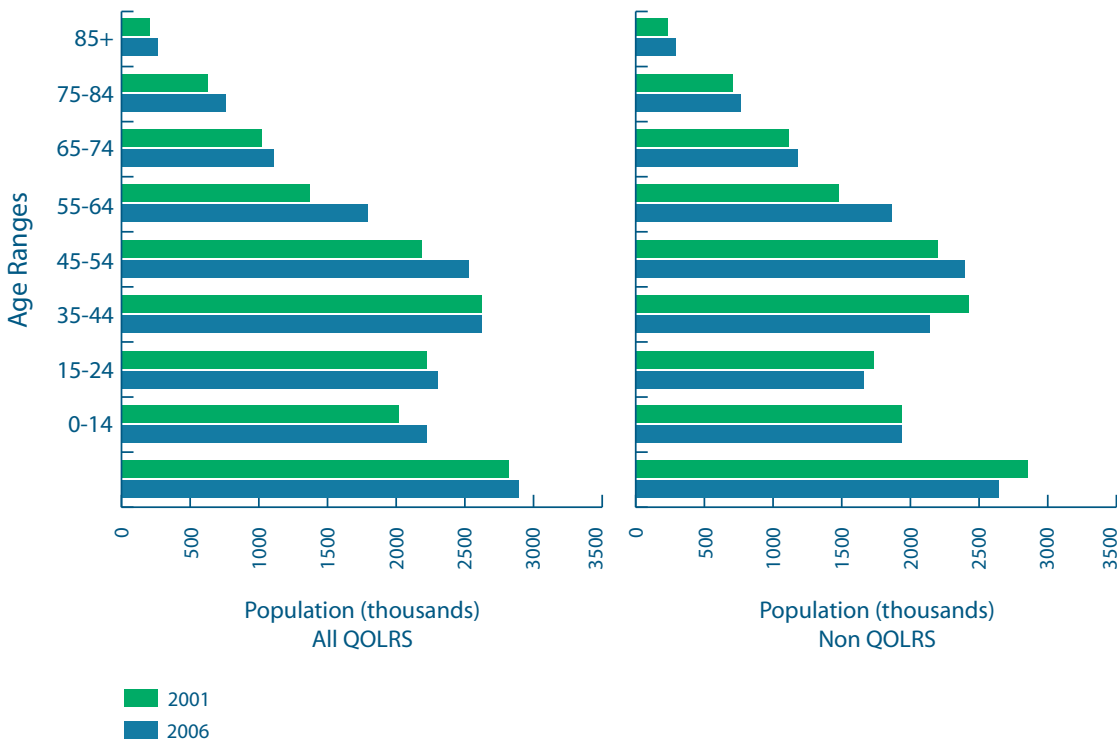
\* Two of three bars do not appear because there was 0% change in monthly rent for the City of Ottawa at the 50th and 75th percentiles. Source data is available in the technical annex at <http://www.fcm.ca/english/qol/annexes.html>



# PART 2 | CHALLENGES FACING THE HOUSING MARKET

In the context of strong population growth and dynamic homeownership, several trends point to serious challenges facing municipal governments in Canada's larger urban centres. These include the dual challenge facing QOLRS communities of both an aging population and continued growth in the number of young families. Rising housing prices outpaced income growth, even for couples and two-parent families. Income growth was far slower among lone-parent families and singles, who faced serious and growing barriers to affordable homeownership. While renting remains an alternative to homeownership, construction of new rental housing lagged far behind historical levels.

Chart 7 – Age Pyramid, Total Population, 2001 and 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001, 2006

## BOX 1—HOUSING AN AGING POPULATION

The population of Canadian cities is aging quickly, and the housing trajectories of this older population have significant costs associated with them. Some cities are already showing a significant and growing need for seniors' social housing. Seniors are on social housing waiting lists and are at risk of becoming homeless.

In addition to providing affordable housing, the provision of appropriate services for seniors is a related key issue facing Canadian municipalities. For example, in the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM), social housing occupants are becoming more vulnerable and the elderly require more care. For example, 12,500 of these households include people 60 years and older, 40 per cent of whom are at least 75 years old.<sup>7</sup>

The following are examples of responses to an aging population requiring increasing assistance with their housing:

- The Province of Alberta provides one-time capital grants, not in excess of 70 per cent of the capital costs, to support a mixture of units at market rent and below market rent for seniors and people with special needs.<sup>8</sup>
- Independent Living BC (ILBC) serves seniors and people with disabilities who require some support but do not need 24-hour institutional care. It is expected that more than 4,000 units will be developed across the province.<sup>9</sup> The B.C. Provincial Housing Program also provides subsidized housing for frail seniors. More than 760 units will combine housing with support services for seniors and more than 1,100 will provide emergency and long-term housing for people at risk of homelessness.<sup>10</sup>
- Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has Senior Citizen Assistance Program grants of up to \$5,000 for seniors to renovate their homes for health-and-safety related repairs for low-income seniors<sup>11</sup> and a Seniors Independence home adaptations grant of \$2,500.<sup>12</sup>

### Young Families and an Aging Population

Both the QOLRS and non-QOLRS communities experienced growth in the 44-plus age brackets due to the aging baby boomer population. However, a substantial difference between QOLRS communities and the rest of Canada lies in the under-44 age groups. Unlike the rest of Canada, QOLRS communities are experiencing gains not only in the number of seniors, but also in age groups below 34. This trend will continue to create challenges for municipalities striving to accommodate the needs of both young and older households (See Box 1).

### Growth in Income, but Not for Everyone

After adjusting for inflation, average after-tax income for all family types in the QOLRS communities increased marginally between 2001 and 2006. The largest increases were enjoyed by couple families, followed by lone-parent families and singles, in that order.<sup>13</sup> However, this increase was markedly lower than the rest of Canada and was not evenly distributed across the 22 communities, with several Ontario municipalities experiencing a net contraction in incomes.

<sup>7</sup> Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal, (2005), *L'Accès à un logement de qualité pour chaque ménage de la Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal. Orientations de la Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal en matière de logement social et abordable*, p. 39

<sup>8</sup> Province of Alberta, Municipal Affairs and Housing (2007), *Housing-Request for Proposals for Alberta Affordable Housing Task Force*. [http://municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/hs\\_affordable\\_housing\\_request\\_for\\_proposals.cfm](http://municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/hs_affordable_housing_request_for_proposals.cfm)

<sup>9</sup> BC Housing (2007). *BC Housing Activists and About us Pages*. <http://www.bchousing.org/aboutus/activities>

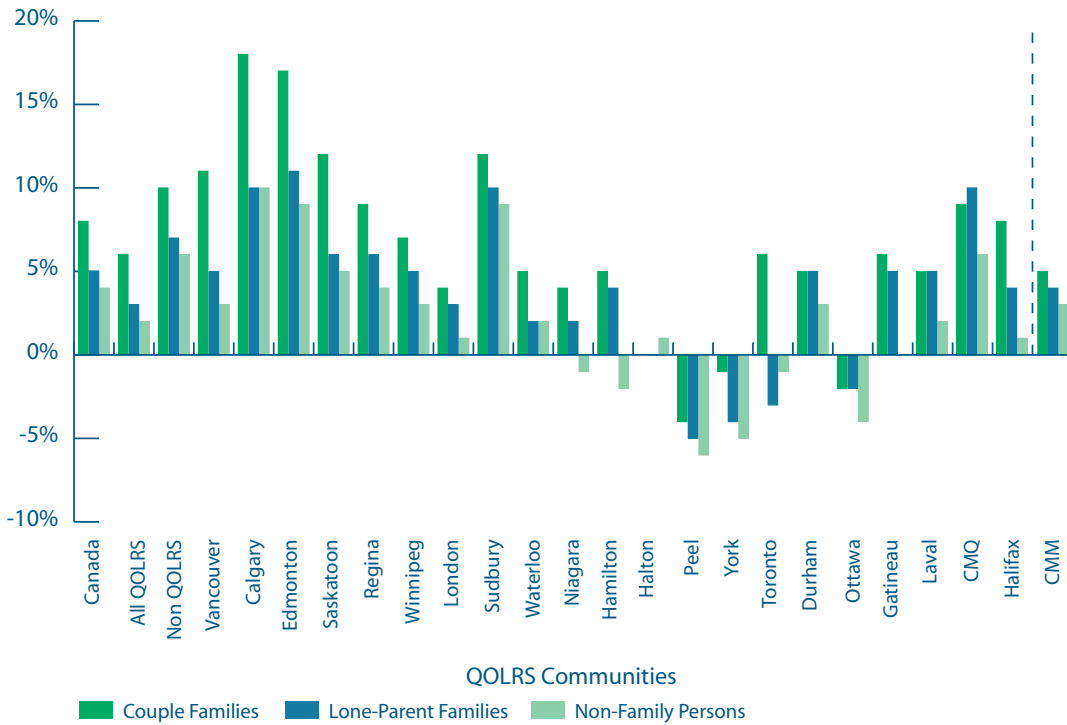
<sup>10</sup> BC Housing (2007). *BC Housing Activists and About us Pages*. <http://www.bchousing.org/aboutus/activities>

<sup>11</sup> Halifax Regional Municipality (2005), *Affordable Housing Handbook: Affordable Housing Programs in the Halifax*, p.12

<sup>12</sup> Halifax Regional Municipality (2005), *Affordable Housing Handbook: Affordable Housing Programs in the Halifax*, p.13

<sup>13</sup> According to Taxfiler data provided by Statistics Canada's Small Area and Administrative Data Division, 52 per cent of all families in the QOLRS communities were made up of Couple Families, Non-Family Persons (singles) accounted for 38 per cent, and Lone-Parent Families accounted for the remaining 10 per cent.

Chart 8 – Change in Average Income in QOLRS Communities, by family type, 2000-2005 (2002\$)



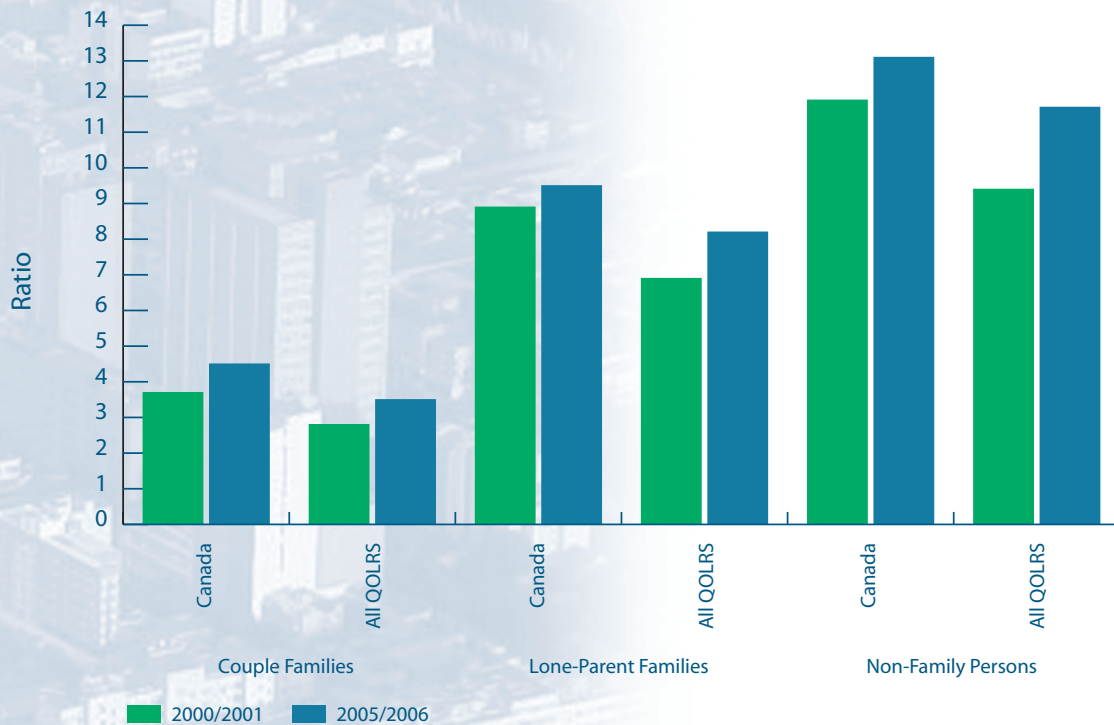
Source: Statistics Canada, Small Area and Administrative Data Division, 2000 - 2005

As shown in Chart 9, these increases were far lower than the rising cost of homeownership.

Despite relatively modest gains in income growth, couple family incomes within the QOLRS communities remained higher than those in the rest of Canada. In contrast, by 2005, average incomes for both lone-parent families and singles were lower in the QOLRS communities than their counterparts in the rest of Canada.



Chart 9 – Ratio of New Home Price to After-Tax Income, 2001 and 2006 (2002\$)



Source: Adapted from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Rental Market Survey, 2001-2006; Statistics Canada, Small Area and Administrative Data Division, 2000 & 2005

**Rising Ratio of New Home Prices to Income**

While there is no formal benchmark, studies have pointed to a “healthy” housing price-to-income ratio of four to one. Chart 9 shows that this ratio is increasing across all of Canada, but at a lower level in QOLRS communities, due to relatively large incomes in urban Canada. Also evident is the substantial variation in affordability across three family types: couple families; lone-parent families and

non-family persons (singles). Couple families in the QOLRS communities remained in a relatively strong position, even with the increased cost of housing. In contrast, lone-parent families and singles faced relatively severe affordability issues, with ratios of greater than 8:1 and 11:1 respectively.

Box 2 provides several examples of initiatives being undertaken by municipal governments to support

## BOX 2—MUNICIPAL INITIATIVES IN SUPPORT OF AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP

Municipalities across Canada have devised incentives to create and maintain affordable homeownership. The following is a select list of initiatives in place in QOLRS communities:

- **Land and Zoning Related Strategies:** Density bonusing allows developers to increase the densities of residential buildings in exchange for affordable housing or other amenities that benefit the community.<sup>14</sup>
- **Land trust strategy:** The Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) has developed a Land Trust, which is a Revolving Equity Fund, capitalized by corporations, foundations, and government. The Fund can make loans to develop affordable housing via secondary mortgages, which spreads the risk and improves the chances of incentives in housing development. This model is taken from Vancouver's VanCity Credit Union, which currently has \$4 million on deposit (one per cent of their portfolio) generating \$160,000 for community development.<sup>15</sup>
- **Bylaws and Inclusionary Affordable Housing Policies:** The new Toronto Official Plan requires new residential developments over five hectares requiring rezoning to include a minimum of 20 per cent affordable housing. Ottawa has policies targeting all development projects to include 25 per cent affordable units.
- **Low Income Household Purchasing Programs:** The City of Saskatoon assists lower income tenants who require minimal assistance to buy a home (e.g., matching grants for down payment).
- **Housing First Policy:** The City of Edmonton has established a policy where city-owned properties surplus to municipal purposes will be considered for affordable housing prior to considering any other use.

more affordable homeownership among its residents. respond quickly to future demand for rental housing.

### Rental Housing Completions

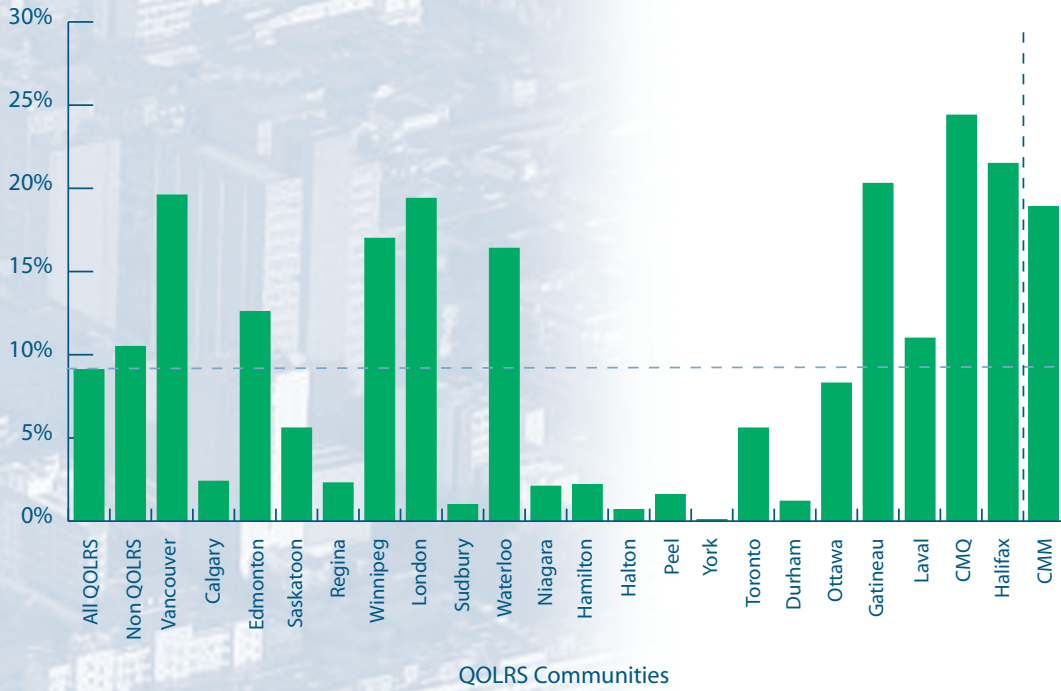
When it comes to the construction of new rental housing, there are two types of communities in urban Canada: those that build rental housing and those that do not. From 2001 to 2006, an average of 9.1 per cent of all housing completions in the QOLRS communities was intended for the rental market. This average was either far-exceeded, as in Vancouver, Winnipeg, the CMM and the Communauté métropolitaine de Québec (CMQ), or close to zero, as in Sudbury, Halton, Peel and York. This trend was also evident between 1991 and 2001. In contrast, close to 30 per cent of new residential construction was devoted to rental housing in 1991. The sustained absence of new rental housing construction may hamper the ability of a city's housing market to

<sup>14</sup> Regional Municipality of Waterloo (2005), Waterloo Region in the 21st Century: A Community Action Plan for Housing, p.122

<sup>15</sup> Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) 2006, Current Initiatives Page.

<http://www.shipweb.org/portal/SHIPBusiness/CurrentInitiatives/tabid/74/Default.aspx>

Chart 10 – Rental Housing Completions<sup>16</sup> as a Share of All Housing Completions, Six-year average, 2001-2006



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Starts and Completions Survey, 2001-2006

<sup>16</sup> As this is CMHC Rental Market Survey data it should be noted that the units counted are only units which were intended for rental market and that were in developments of three or more units.



# PART 3 | VULNERABLE POPULATIONS & HOMELESSNESS

FCM's 2004 report, *Income, Shelter and Necessities*, concluded that the social safety net was inadequate for a broadening portion of the population. The steady deterioration in the value of social assistance benefits (after adjusting for inflation) combined with an absence of new subsidized housing, further narrowed the choices for lower income families and singles. These populations faced severe housing affordability challenges and lengthy waiting lists for social housing. While fewer families and singles received social assistance and other government transfers, other indicators pointed to a growing number of working poor.

Chart 11 – Change in After-Tax Income, by Decile, by Family Type, 2000-2005 (2002\$)



Source: Statistics Canada, Small Area and Administrative Data Division, 2000 & 2005

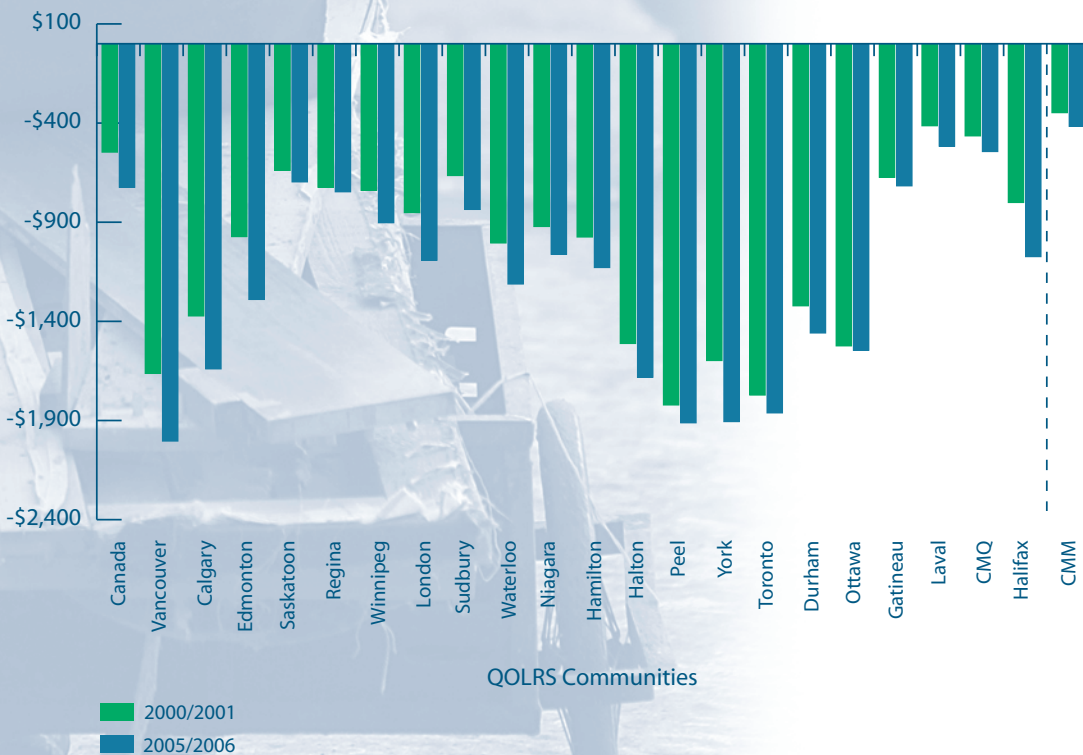
The period 2001 to 2006 saw a continuation of this trend. As a result, the benefits of a dynamic shift to homeownership and only modest increases in rents were by no means shared equally, with some evidence of a continued increase in the levels of shelter use and street homelessness. While couples and two-parent families fared relatively well, the most vulnerable were further excluded from the housing market as a result of trends evident from 2001 to 2006. Unsatisfied housing demand was strongly tied to inadequate incomes. Those sectors of the population that were further excluded from the private housing market included low-income, lone-parent families and singles, and people receiving social assistance. While increases to the minimum wage improved the situation for many working poor, singles and families from this sub-population still struggled to keep up

with the high cost of rent.

### Change in Income Distribution

Income distribution data considers the differences in income growth between low- and high-income earners, dividing families into 10 equal groups, referred to as deciles. Income growth among couple families was the most robust, with the result that the inflation-adjusted income gap between the richest and poorest couple families was narrowed between 2000 and 2005. Lone-parent families in the QOLRS communities did not fare as well, with a widening gap between the richest and the poorest families and an actual decrease in incomes for the lowest income earners in the first three deciles. Non-family persons also saw a widening gap between the lowest and

Chart 12 – Gap Between Reported Monthly Income from Social Assistance and Income Needed to Afford a Two-bedroom Apartment in the Lowest Rent Quartile, for Single Parent Families receiving Social Assistance 2001 and 2006 (nominal\$)



Source: National Council of Welfare, Welfare Incomes, Fact Sheet #3; Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Rental Market Survey, 2001-2006

highest earners.

### **The Rent Affordability Gap and Social Assistance**

Just over one in five single parents living in the QOLRS communities relied on social assistance in 2005, with total welfare income for a single parent with one child ranging between \$1,000 and \$1,200 per month. At the same time, average monthly rents for the cheapest (bottom 25 per cent) two-bedroom apartments in the QOLRS communities were no lower than \$510 and exceeded \$900 in several cities. Consequently, in no QOLRS community were lone-parent families dependent on social assistance able to afford even the least expensive type of rental housing (See Box 3 for a definition of affordability). In the more expensive rental markets, single parents would have required close to \$2,000 in additional monthly income to be able to afford living in even the least expensive range of two-bedroom apartments. Furthermore, this gap widened between 2001 and 2006 due to rents rising considerably faster than the level of social assistance benefits. This trend was felt most severely in large urban centres in Greater Vancouver, Calgary and the Greater Toronto Area due to the high cost of rent in these cities (See Chart 5).

As a result, families relying on social assistance are faced with difficult housing choices, including the possibility of living in unaffordable, inadequate, illegal, or overcrowded housing conditions. There is some evidence of overcrowding in the largest of the QOLRS communities, with more than 30 households per 1,000 living in homes where there is more than one person per room in Toronto, Peel and Vancouver. No trend data are available for this indicator, which is drawn from the 2006 Census.

### **The Rent Affordability Gap**

## **BOX 3—CORE HOUSING NEED**

The concept of core housing need comprises three dimensions:

- **Affordability**, measured as the ability of households to spend less than 30 per cent of before-tax income on shelter;
- **Adequacy**, measured as dwellings reported by their occupants to not require any major physical repairs; and
- **Suitability**, measured as the level of overcrowding with dwellings having enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households, according to National Occupancy Standards.

Households that occupy a dwelling falling below any of these three standards, and that would have to spend 30 per cent or more of their before-tax income to pay for the median rent of local market housing that meets all three standards, are said to be in core housing need.

### **and the Working Poor**

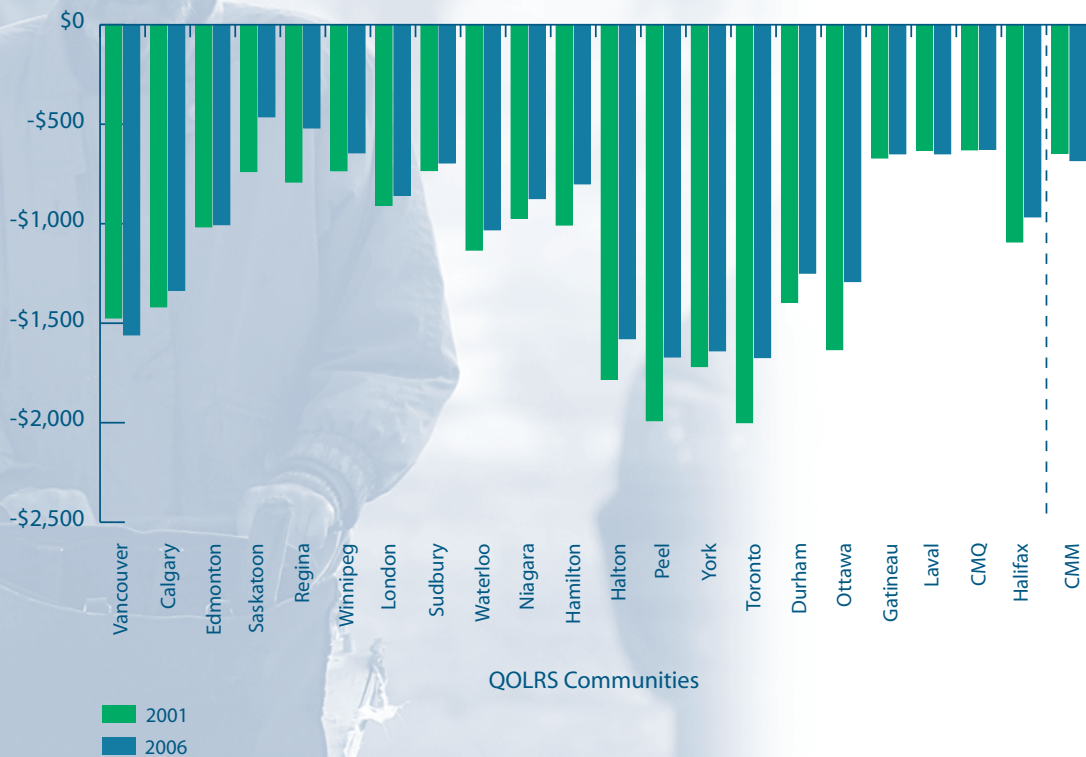
The working poor, represented in Chart 13 by single-earner households relying on full-time minimum wage employment, continue to face a significant gap in their ability to afford the private rental market in urban Canada. While increases in minimum wage across all Canadian provinces since 2001 lessened this gap, in no case could a single person earning a minimum wage be able to find an affordable private rental unit in any of the 22 QOLRS communities. Depending on where they lived, a single minimum wage earner required anywhere from \$463 to \$1,673 in additional monthly wages in order to spend less than 30 per cent of their income on an average one-bedroom apartment.

### **Homelessness: The Problem Persists**

<sup>17</sup> The seven indicators were Gross Rent Spending; 50 per cent or more of Household Income on Shelter Costs; Social Housing Waiting Lists; Rental Housing Starts; Incidence of Low Income in Economic Families; Vacancy rates; Lone-Parent Families; and Unemployment Rates.



Chart 13 – Gap Between Minimum Wage Monthly Salary and Salary Needed to Afford an Average One-bedroom Apartment, 2001 and 2006 (2002\$)



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Rental Market Survey, 2001-2006  
 Source: Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Database on Minimum Wages

FCM’s 2004 report, *Income, Shelter, and Necessities*, pointed to increasing homelessness. Five of seven indicators used to measure the risk of homelessness showed significant signs of deterioration in factors contributing to a greater risk of homelessness.<sup>17</sup> The presence of emergency shelters in even the smallest and most suburban of the QOLRS communities was a further indicator of the outcome of deepening economic marginalization for certain vulnerable groups.

At the same time, accurately measuring homelessness

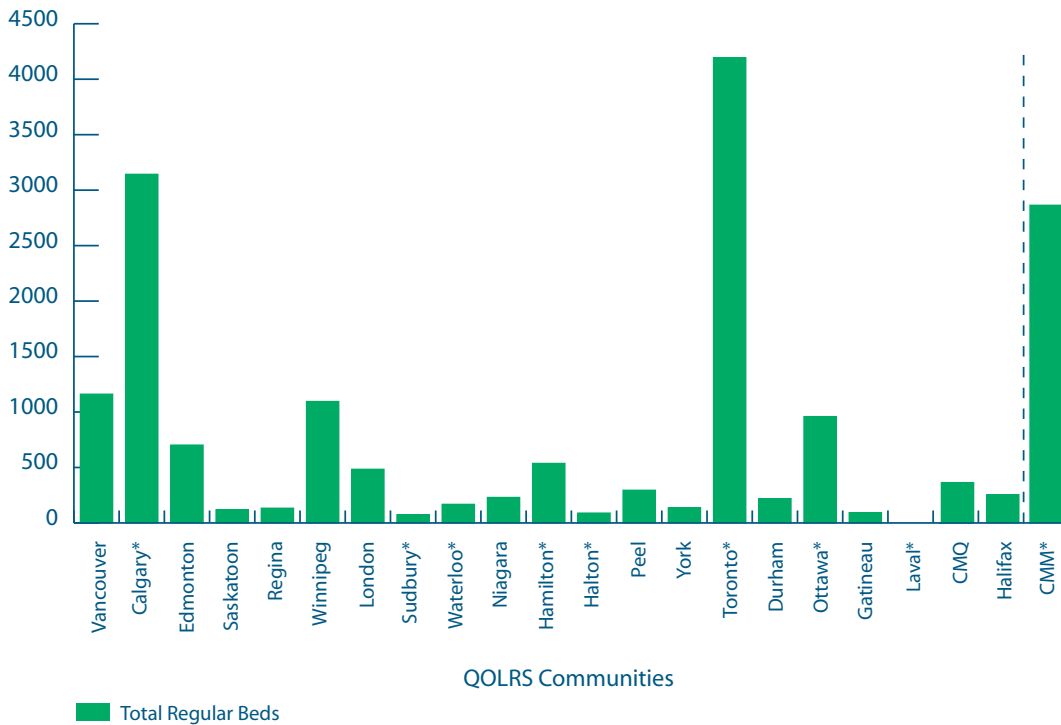
remains a daunting challenge (See Box 4). According to current statistics provided by Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS),<sup>18</sup> it is evident that homelessness persists throughout urban Canada. In 2006, even the small and suburban communities in the QOLRS made use of emergency shelters for people experiencing homelessness. HIFIS data indicate close to 20,000 shelter beds in place across the 22 QOLRS communities, accounting for over 80 per cent of all shelter beds in Canada. Within the QOLRS communities, the City of

<sup>18</sup> The Homelessness Partnering Secretariat’s Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) initiative has a stated goal of identifying all shelter facilities in Canada and creating a uniform reporting system to better meet the needs of national service providers and policy makers. HIFIS numbers include both emergency and transitional shelters, and include shelters provided by private non-profit organizations.





Chart 14 – Permanent Beds in Homeless Shelters in QOLRS Communities, Most Recent Year, 2006



Source: Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Homeless Individuals and Families Information System; Direct from Members of the QOLRS (indicated by asterisk)

Toronto, Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal shelter beds in QOLRS communities.

Homeless Category	Adults and unaccompanied youth		Accompanied children		Total homeless	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Sheltered homeless	995	47%	52	70%	1,047	48%
Shelters/safe houses	915	92%	24	46%	939	90%
Transition houses	80	8%	28	54%	108	10%
Street homeless	1,105	53%	22	30%	1,127	52%
<b>Total homeless</b>	<b>2,100</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,174</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: CMHC, Greater Vancouver, Calgary and Winnipeg alone accounted for over 70 per cent of homeless

Shelter usage presents only one dimension of home-

## BOX 4—MEASURING HOMELESSNESS

The Quality of Life Reporting System relies on a definition of homelessness that includes singles and families experiencing any of the following conditions:

- Rooflessness: staying overnight in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., a vacant building, a public or commercial facility, a city park, a car or on the street);
- Living in an Emergency Shelter: singles and families relying on the emergency shelter system on a short-term or recurrent basis;
- Invisible homelessness: temporarily and/or involuntarily living with friends or relatives (“couch-surfing”) or exchanging favours in return for housing; and,
- Houselessness: includes people who reside in long-term institutions because there is no suitable accommodation in the community and youth living in care.

Due to numerous methodological and practical challenges, there continue to be few statistics available which reliably monitor changes in the incidence of homelessness. At the same time, a combination of street counts and estimates from several QOLRS communities consistently suggest that the level of homelessness is not decreasing.<sup>19</sup>

- According to the 2007 Greater Vancouver Vital Signs Report, there was a significant increase in the number of street homeless in Greater Vancouver between 2002 and 2005, going from 333 people in 2002 to 1,127 in 2005.
- The City of Calgary conducted a one-day count of homeless persons in 2006, including usage of Emergency Shelter and Transitional facilities, and street counts. The 3,436 individuals counted represented an increase of 34 per cent from 2004.
- Edmonton’s one-day count in 2006 was the latest of seven to be conducted by the city. The report found that although significant progress has been made towards addressing homelessness needs, homelessness continues to be a growing issue in

Edmonton. The one-day observed homeless count, which is an indication of the scale of homelessness, increased from 836 in 1999 to 1,915 in 2002 to 2,618 in 2006. Growth was most evident among singles, which accounted for 90 per cent of all homeless people in 2006.

- Waterloo’s Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy provides these estimates: in 1999, the first calculation of the annual prevalence of homelessness estimated that between 1,500 and 2,000 people experienced homelessness over the course of a year in Waterloo. The 2006 Inventory of Services estimated 4,832 individuals aged 16 and over used emergency shelters.
- According to the Hamilton Social Planning & Research Council, the number of people using an emergency shelter at least once a year has almost doubled over the last 20 years in Hamilton. This data is also reflected in “on a given night” shelter counts conducted by the Social Planning and Research Council showing 160 people staying in emergency shelters on a given night in November 1995, and over 400 in November 2006.
- Toronto completed its first street needs assessment in 2006. A total of 5,052 individuals were identified. The majority (72.2 per cent) were staying at a shelter. The number of individuals staying in shelters was highest in 2001: 31,175 people (men, women and children). Beginning in 2002 and continuing to 2006, the number of families and the number of children decreased.
- Finally, in the Halifax Regional Municipality, a total of 266 homeless persons were surveyed in 2004. This represents a 13 per cent increase in the number of individuals identified as homeless from the 2003 survey. While the number of homeless individuals in the Halifax Regional Municipality cannot be said to have increased by 13 per cent, the study did conclude that the situation has not been improved and may have deteriorated.

lessness. Table 1 draws on data provided by the City of Vancouver to provide a clearer illustration of the full extent of homelessness, which includes a combi-

nation of people living on the street (roofless), those living in emergency shelters, and those living in

<sup>19</sup> A report for the Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership (2007) adds to this body of evidence. The report indicates that “street counts of homeless people have increased, sometimes at triple-digit rates. Calgary’s homeless population grew 740 per cent between 1994 and 2006, for example. Given the rapid growth found in municipal homeless counts, some non-governmental sources estimate Canada’s true homeless population, not just those living in emergency shelters, ranges between 200,000 and 300,000. Canada’s ‘new homeless’ population is diverse: nearly one-in-seven users of emergency shelters across Canada are children – and almost one-third of Canada’s homeless population are youths, aged 15 to 24 years.”



## BOX 5—PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS THROUGH AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

In addition to personal issues, such as addiction or mental health, there are several structural factors that contribute to placing an individual or family at risk of becoming homeless. For example, a household that pays 50 per cent or more of its gross income on housing is considered at risk of homelessness. Other economic factors include those on fixed incomes, such as social assistance, disability support programs; employment insurance or senior's pensions.

Many municipalities in Canada are adopting an approach that addresses the systemic elements of homelessness and its prevention. Sometimes referred to as a Continuum Model or Housing First Approach, municipal strategies are being designed to coordinate and integrate programs, services and housing among and between sectors, officials, departments and levels of government.

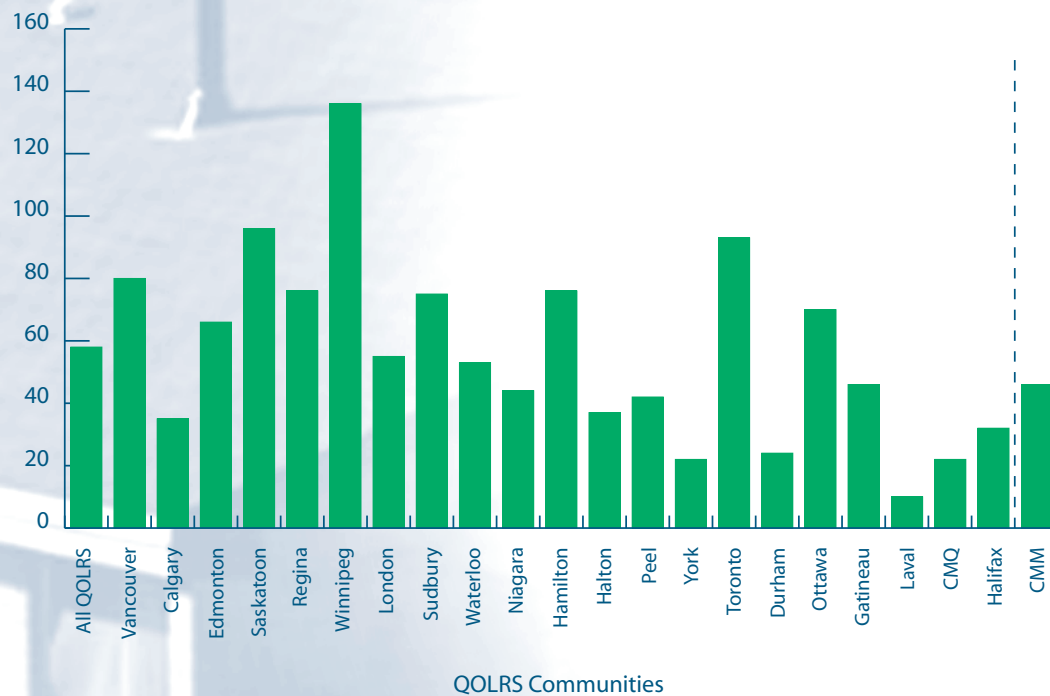
These integrated approaches include homelessness prevention, emergency shelters, transitional housing, supports to housing, subsidized housing, all the way to market rental and home ownership. More comprehensive approaches include income, employment and other health services to enable an individual or family to transition to permanent independent living.

Taking a comprehensive and integrated approach provides municipalities with a methodology to analyze their housing supply, the market and the needs of the population in a more holistic fashion. As a result, such an approach can be used to predict imbalances in the housing supply by understanding the needs of sub-populations and immediately assessing that along the continuum there will be shortages or bottlenecks and supply needs to be adjusted accordingly. The integrated approach also enables officials to look at and challenge larger policies and systemic issues.

short-term transitional housing.

# PART 4 | RENTAL HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Chart 15 – Social Housing Units per 1000 Households in QOLRS Communities, Most Recent Year



Source: Direct from Members of the QOLRS





## BOX 6—SOCIAL HOUSING AND “NOT IN MY BACKYARD” BEHAVIOUR

Canadians are often reluctant to have social housing in their neighbourhoods, citing poor design, absentee landlords, traffic, property values and crime. This reaction also stems from the perception that social and affordable housing properties are not well maintained. These factors can slow and even prevent the construction of affordable housing.

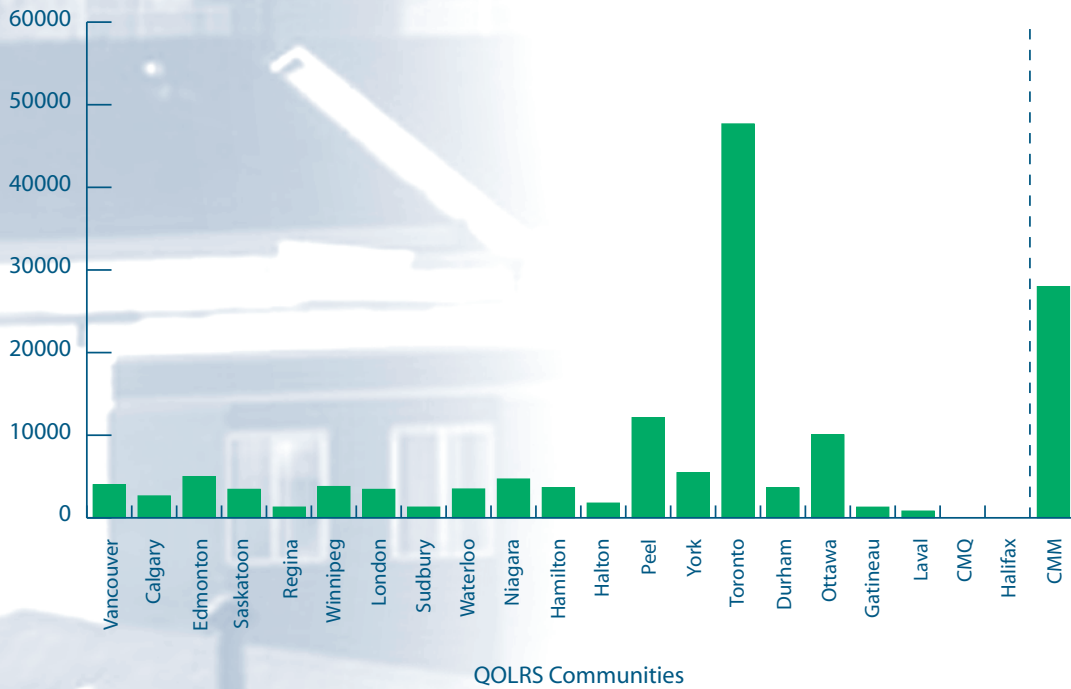
“NIMBYism” may be mitigated if social and affordable housing providers demonstrate that they will better manage, maintain and renovate existing housing stock. Further, the creation of mixed-income neighbourhoods needs to become a clear goal.<sup>20</sup>

Some communities have explicit NIMBY-prevention strategies in place. These can take the form of public information meetings that must be held before a public hearing may be called; or a public consultation model designed to inform the community and resolve issues early in the development process. In cases of special-needs housing, fact sheets are submitted with rezoning applications to ensure that matters such as the location, size, density, open space, landscaping, lighting, and resident characteristics are adequately addressed and are appropriate for the neighbourhood. Appeasing neighbours is one strategy that has been used to counter NIMBY attitudes. For instance, a study of the impact of social housing on property values was undertaken, which found no negative effect, with some evidence of a positive influence.

It is important to note that “NIMBYism” is not limited to social housing. Any form of subsidized, low-income, or affordable housing project receiving government capital assistance may be subject to NIMBY criticism. This is due, in part, to the formal notification requirements and community consultation processes required to access government capital funds.

<sup>20</sup> City of London, (2005), An affordable Housing Strategy for the City of London and Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal, (2005), *L'Accès à un logement de qualité pour chaque ménage de la Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal. Orientations de la Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal en matière de logement social et abordable.* ([http://www.cmm.qc.ca/fileadmin/user\\_upload/documents/CMM\\_orientations\\_logement\\_social\\_abordable.pdf](http://www.cmm.qc.ca/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/CMM_orientations_logement_social_abordable.pdf))

Chart 16 – Households on Social Housing Wait Lists in QOLRS Communities, Most Recent Year



Source: Direct from Members of the QOLRS

## BOX 7—SOCIAL HOUSING AVAILABILITY AND WAIT LISTS

Social housing registries capture data on applicants for social housing. The number of households on the registry is an indicator of the ability of the social housing stock to meet the demand. Available data suggest that tens of thousands of households are waiting for social housing. The number of households waiting for social housing in the CMM more than doubled in five years, rising from 9,500 in 2000 to 20,000 in 2005. In the B.C. Lower Mainland, almost 10,000 households<sup>21</sup> were on the BC Housing wait list for social housing as of June 30, 2003, approximately the same figure as in 2000.<sup>22</sup>

However, obtaining accurate counts of social housing units and wait lists by QOLRS community is difficult, as there is no one organization or government overseeing social housing. Social housing registries exist in all QOLRS communities, but not all are centralized, and there is no way of knowing that all people in need have registered with the appropriate organizations. Wait list numbers may also be affected by changes to rules governing who may or may not be included on a wait list. Finally, households facing varying degrees of need are often prioritized differently, complicating the ability to measure average wait times that apply to all households on the wait list.

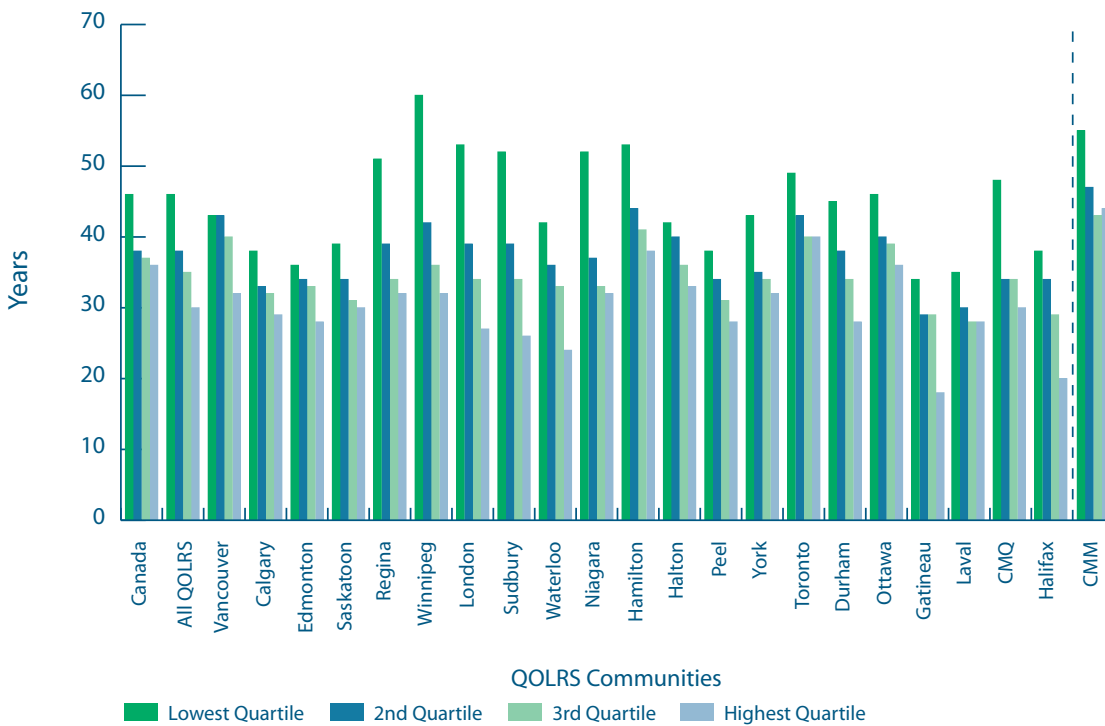
<sup>21</sup> Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal, (2005), *L'Accès à un logement de qualité pour chaque ménage de la Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal. Orientations de la Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal en matière de logement social et abordable*, p. 10

<sup>22</sup> Social Planning and Research Council of BC. (2003). *3 Ways to Home: Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver*. Updated November 2003, p. 48



The most affordable housing stock—the rental sector—is in need of significant reinvestment. For example, the most affordable portion of the private rental stock (the lowest quartile) is, on average, more than 45 years old. As a result, this substantial stock of affordable housing is facing demolition and conversion and has relatively high vacancy rates. At the same time, social housing—the only housing option for many of the lowest-income households—faces large cost pressures and physical deterioration,

Chart 17 – Average Age of Rental Stock by Rent Quartile in QQLRS Communities, 2006



Source: Adapted from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Rental Market Survey, 2001-2006

## BOX 8—AGE AND CONDITION OF SOCIAL HOUSING STOCK

As described in a forthcoming housing strategy and background analysis being prepared for FCM, the existing social housing stock may be at risk due to historic under-funding of capital reserves, an aging stock, high concentrations of very low income tenants and expiring subsidies. However, in many cases, it will be cost-effective to upgrade these existing assets rather than rely on new non-profit assisted housing.

Generalizing about the condition of social housing in Canadian cities is difficult due to the diverse age, structure types, unit size, location and client profile of the occupants.<sup>23</sup> Reflecting the waves of construction led by federal government support, the majority of the stock in Canada is 20 to 50 years old. Taking into consideration the age of the stock, the construction standards and materials of the time, and the small budgets associated with maintenance and refurbishing, it is obvious that the stock is run down and in need of repair.

Additionally, the period when the majority of social housing stock was built was a time when energy efficiency and accessibility were not considered in construction, resulting in unmet conservation targets, tenant discomfort and utility costs moving projects into deficit (SHSC 2006).<sup>24</sup> This is a position echoed by the CMM in a 2005 report.<sup>25</sup> In Ontario, building condition assessments identify a looming problem with aging housing stock in the magnitude of more than a billion dollars, with capital reserves insufficient to meet this challenge and operating budgets under pressure due to deferred maintenance and upgrades.<sup>26</sup> Current legislation in Ontario prevents board members from being compensated, making it difficult to attract the necessary skills required to run a board with these high levels of responsibility.<sup>27</sup>

with enormous fiscal implications for municipal governments.

### Limited Investment in Social Housing

Social housing is a vital part of the affordable rental housing landscape in QOLRS member communities. The barriers that prevent low-income earners and social assistance recipients from participating in the private rental market create an urgent need for social housing. At the same time, the size of the social housing stock in relation to the overall housing stock is generally small but varies considerably across the QOLRS communities. The level of federal and provincial government investment in social housing fell dramatically in 1993 and was only recently revived. Box 6 describes some of the challenges associated with building new social housing.

### Social Housing Wait Lists

The demand for social housing consistently outstrips

<sup>23</sup> Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC) (2000), Ontario Housing Corporation: Assessment of Capital Funding Models within the Context of Social Housing Devolution, p. 7

<sup>24</sup> Social Housing Services Corporation. 2006. A Brief Summary of Social Housing Issues in Ontario.

<sup>25</sup> Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal, (2005), *L'Accès à un logement de qualité pour chaque ménage de la Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal. Orientations de la Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal en matière de logement social et abordable*, p.41

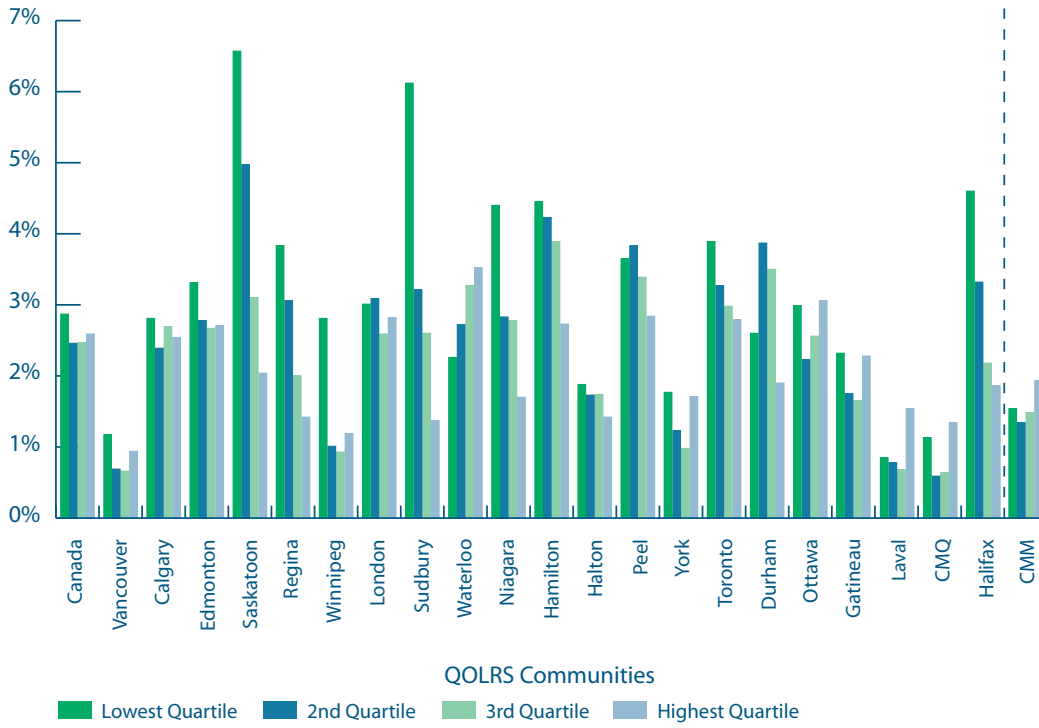
<sup>26</sup> Social Housing Service Corporation (SHSC) (2006). A Brief Summary of Social Housing Issues in Ontario

<sup>27</sup> Social Housing Service Corporation (SHSC) (2006). A Brief Summary of Social Housing Issues in Ontario





Chart 18 – Vacancy Rate in QOLRS Communities, by Rent Quartile, Six-year Average, 2001-2006



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Rental Market Survey, 2001-2006

## BOX 9—INCENTIVES TO REINVEST IN THE RENTAL SECTOR

Municipalities understand the importance of a diverse rental stock as an affordable housing option for people who do not wish to, or are unable to, purchase a home. A number of municipal strategies have been developed and are being implemented to support both the construction of new affordable rental housing in Canada, as well as investment in improving the condition of the existing rental stock.

- Canadian municipalities make use of the federally-funded Residential Rehabilitation and Assistance Programs (RRAP), available for homeowners or landlords who own apartments and rooming housing. This program assists with repairing substandard dwellings such as rooming houses and the conversion of existing properties into affordable rental housing units and extends the life of housing units. Conversion RRAPs have, for example, converted warehouses into low-income rental units.
- Halifax Regional Municipality has a Rental Housing Preservation Program focused on non-profit housing providers to create affordable rental housing through the acquisition or renovation of existing buildings or housing at risk of being removed from the pool of affordable housing. Capital funding assistance is aimed at reducing costs and making the housing affordable for people with low and moderate incomes. Capital funding of \$25,000 per unit is provided upfront, with an additional \$25,000 per unit in supplemental funding added over 10 years.<sup>28</sup>

- Toronto's Streets to Homes program makes extensive use of private-sector units in the lowest rent quartile. Tenants are not allowed to move into buildings where there are outstanding work orders, and each unit is inspected by city staff before the tenant moves in.
- The Region of Waterloo Affordable Housing Strategy has a goal of helping to create 1,500 new affordable housing units by the end of 2008. In addition to other financial contributions by the Region and other orders of government, the Region unilaterally created and funds 140 rent-supplement units, in order to increase the number of units available to the lowest income households in the community.
- In London, a "convert to rent" program has increased the number of affordable rental units and a Capital Revolving Fund for Affordable Housing helps create new rental housing with financing assistance available in a combination of re-payable and forgivable loans.
- The City of Edmonton has a Fee Rebate Program that reimburses municipal fees back to developers on projects that qualify under affordable housing, to help in reducing affordable housing units to residents.
- York Region has adopted a policy to give conditional grants equal to development charges for newly created non-profit rental housing and has extended this same benefit to housing built by Habitat for Humanity. The Region has also built or has under development 262 units of affordable rental housing.

<sup>28</sup> Halifax Regional Municipality (2005), *Affordable Housing Handbook: Affordable Housing Programs in the Halifax Area*, p.11

# FCM QOLRS INDICATORS

Figure 1 FCM QOLRS Indicators

Demographic & Background Information (DBI)	Affordable, Appropriate Housing (AAH)	Civic Engagement (CE)	Community and Social Infrastructure (CSI)	Education (ED)	Employment (EM)	Local Economy (LE)	Natural Environment (NE)	Personal & Community Health (PCH)	Personal Financial Security (PFS)	Personal Safety (PS)
DBI1 Population Growth	AAH1 30%+ Income on Shelter	CE1 Voter Turnout	CSI1 Social Housing Waiting Lists	ED1 Education Levels	EM1 Unemployment/ Employment Rates	LE1 Business Bankruptcies	NE1 Air Quality	PCH1 Low Birth Weight Babies	PFS1 Community Affordability	PS1 Young Offenders
DBI2 Household & Family Composition	AAH2 50%+ Income on Shelter	CE2 Women in Municipal Government	CSI2 Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing	ED2 Literacy Levels	EM2 Quality of Employment	LE2 Consumer Bankruptcies	NE2 Urban Transportation	PCH2 Teen Births	PFS2 Families Receiving EI/ Social Assistance	PS2 Violent Crimes
DBI3 Average Income	AAH3 Core Housing Need	CE3 Newspaper Circulation	CSI3 Social Assistance Allowance	ED3 Adult Learning	EM3 Long-Term Unemployment	LE3 Hourly Wages	NE3 Population Density	PCH3 Premature Mortality	PFS3 Economic Dependency Ratio	PS3 Property Crimes
DBI4 Renters & Owners	AAH4 Substandard Units	CE4 Volunteering	CSI4 Subsidized Child Care Spaces	ED4 Education Expenditures	EM4 Labour Force Replacement	LE4 Change in Family Income	NE4 Water Consumption	PCH4 Work Hours Lost	PFS4 Lone-Parent Families	PS4 Injuries and Poisonings
DBI5 Population Mobility	AAH5 Changing Face of Homelessness	CE5 Charitable Donations	CSI5 Public Transit Costs	ED5 Classroom Size		LE5 Building Permits	NE5 Wastewater Treatment	PCH5 Suicides	PFS5 Incidence of Low Income Families	
DBI6 Foreign Born	AAH6 Vacancy Rates		CSI6 Social Service Professionals	ED6 Student / Teacher Ratio			NE6 Solid Waste	PCH6 Infant Mortality	PFS6 Children Living in Poverty	
DBI7 New Immigrant Groups	AAH7 Rental Housing Starts		CSI7 Private Health Care Expenditures	ED7 Post-Secondary Tuition			NE7 Ecological Footprint		PFS7 Income Gap	
DBI8 Language Spoken at Home	AAH8 Monthly Rent			ED8 Spending on Private Education			NE8 Recreational Water Quality			
DBI9 Visible Minorities										
DBI10 Aboriginal Population										

Report 4 Affordable Housing & Homelessness

**Table 2—QOLRS Members<sup>29</sup>**

<b>Community<sup>30</sup></b>	<b>Short Name</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Population (2006)</b>
City of Vancouver	Vancouver	British Columbia	578,045
City of Calgary	Calgary	Alberta	988,195
City of Edmonton	Edmonton	Alberta	730,370
City of Saskatoon	Saskatoon	Saskatchewan	202,340
City of Regina	Regina	Saskatchewan	179,245
City of Winnipeg	Winnipeg	Manitoba	633,455
City of London	London	Ontario	352,395
City of Greater Sudbury	Sudbury	Ontario	157,910
Regional Municipality of Waterloo	Waterloo	Ontario	478,120
Regional Municipality of Niagara	Niagara	Ontario	427,420
City of Hamilton	Hamilton	Ontario	504,560
Halton Region	Halton	Ontario	439,255
Region of Peel	Peel	Ontario	1,159,405
York Region	York	Ontario	892,715
City of Toronto	Toronto	Ontario	2,503,280
Region of Durham	Durham	Ontario	561,260
City of Ottawa	Ottawa	Ontario	812,130
Ville de Gatineau	Gatineau	Quebec	242,125
Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal	CMM	Quebec	3,532,575
Ville de Laval	Laval	Quebec	368,710
Communauté métropolitaine de Québec	CMQ	Quebec	711,735
Halifax Regional Municipality	HRM	Nova Scotia	372,860

<sup>29</sup> Statistics Canada, Census Division, 2006

<sup>30</sup> While the 22 participants in the QOLRS are referred to throughout the report as “communities” their legal status differs. QOLRS members include a mix of municipalities, regional municipalities, and metropolitan organizations. A guide to the QOLRS geography providing a more detailed description of these terms and associated issues is available at [www.fcm.ca](http://www.fcm.ca).



# DATA SOURCES

The QOLRS consists of 22 member communities in seven provinces (the full list of members can be found in Table 2). New additions to the QOLRS since the previous report include the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal, Ville de Laval, Ville de Gatineau and Durham Region. Data acquired for the QOLRS correspond to the actual boundaries of the 22 member communities. In general, these include regional municipalities and lower-tier or single-tier municipalities, and are represented by census divisions and census subdivisions, respectively. The exceptions are the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) and the Communauté métropolitaine de Québec (CMQ), which comprise dozens of municipalities. These urban regions are represented by either Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) data, or by the sum of all census subdivisions representing their member municipalities. A full description of the QOLRS geography is available on the FCM Quality of Life Reporting System website.

## **QOLRS Members**

The majority of QOLRS indicators relied on data from national agencies such as Statistics Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and Human Resources and Social Development Canada. However, in several instances, data are not available from these agencies. For example, charts related to social housing and homelessness benefited from data provided by QOLRS members themselves. QOLRS members also provided vital contextual knowledge.

## **Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)**

The CMHC was tapped for information regarding the cost of housing and the availability of housing across QOLRS member communities. The CMHC products accessed, and a sample of the types of indicators obtained from each for this project is listed in Table 3.

CMHC's Rental Market Survey provides information on rents and vacancy rates for privately initiated rental apartment structures of three or more units, rented row units, publicly initiated rental and co-op housing, and rental units in condominium buildings in which over 50 per cent of the units are rented. CMHC's Starts and Completions Survey is carried out monthly in urban areas with populations in excess of 50,000 as defined by the most recent Census. All data obtained from CMHC was customized to meet exactly the geographic boundaries of QOLRS member communities.

## **Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Immigration Statistics division provides extensive data on the volume of immigration, demographics of immigrants and destinations of immigrants for all of Canada. All data from CIC was obtained at the census sub division level and therefore matches exactly the geographic boundaries of QOLRS member communities.

## **Human Resources and Social Development Canada Minimum Wage Database**

The HRSDC minimum wage database was referenced for all provincial minimum wages. This data base contains historical data for all changes to provincial minimum wages since 1965, and future projections to 2014.

**Table 3—CMHC Data**

Rental Market Survey	Rent Quartiles Average Rents Vacancy Rates, by Type Age of Rental Stock
Starts and Completions Survey	Housing Completions, by Type Price at Completion of Housing

**Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)**

In June of 2007 HIFIS released shelter capacity statistics for all provinces and major cities. These statistics were compiled from the HIFIS list of shelters; this list in some cases does not match the lists maintained by member communities. The HIFIS statistics are used as a baseline for shelter capacity in QOLRS communities but where available this report uses member community data to supplement the HIFIS statistics. Data collected by HIFIS sometimes does not match perfectly the geographic profiles of QOLRS communities, the most notable example being that Laval numbers are included in the overall Montreal numbers in HIFIS and not reported separately.

**Statistics Canada**

Important indicators affecting the housing continuum are collected and calculated in the Census of Population. Where available, these have been used. Additionally, this report makes an effort to move beyond the Census as a tool for acquiring municipal scale data for QOLRS Communities, specifically with regard to the housing continuum.

Due to the small area of some QOLRS communities some Statistics Canada products could not be used, as they only report on Census Metropolitan Areas, and do not have data reliability at smaller geographies.


Although Statistics Canada takes great efforts to count every person, some people are missed in each Census. (e.g., people may be traveling, or some dwellings are hard to find). Some municipalities have identified the possibility that the Census may have undercounted more of the population than usual. This undercount would affect census data related to population and households. At the time of this publication, some municipalities are investigating this issue.

**The Census of Population**

Three releases of the 2006 Census of Population were completed in time for use in this report covering the following topics: Population and Dwelling Counts, Age and Sex, Families and Households, and Housing and Shelter Costs. These topics from the first three Census releases have provided this report with recent—geographically appropriate—data on the Canadian population. The Census is notable as it provides access to national comparators for the QOLRS community data. All QOLRS geographies were available for Census Division data.

**Small Area and Administrative Data**

From income tax forms completed by Canadian filers Statistics Canada produces a wealth of annual economic and demographic data. These data are compiled at geographies as low as postal walks and



therefore the report was able to obtain data matching the geographic profiles of QOLRS communities.

### **Migration Estimates**

Migration to QOLRS communities is a component of population growth and a component of housing demand. This data was acquired for this report through the Migration Estimates product; this product models the flow of population by monitoring, tracking, and comparing two consecutive years of tax files. The most recent year for this data is 2000-2005; flows of population are tracked by census division of origin/destination over a five-year period.



## FCM's Quality of Life Reporting System

This is one in a series of reports on quality of life in Canadian communities prepared by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) using information derived from a variety of national and municipal data sources.

The statistics used in these reports are components of a larger reporting system containing hundreds of variables that measure changes in social, economic and environmental factors. Taken together, these data form the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS). QOLRS indicator tables and reports are available at [www.fcm.ca](http://www.fcm.ca).

The analysis of trends affecting quality of life in Canadian cities relies on a framework defined by FCM, based on the understanding that quality of life is enhanced and reinforced in municipalities that do the following:

- Develop and maintain a vibrant local economy;
- Protect and enhance the natural and built environment;
- Offer opportunities for the attainment of personal goals, hopes and aspirations;
- Promote a fair and equitable sharing of common resources;
- Enable residents to meet their basic needs; and
- Support rich social interactions and the inclusion of all residents in community life.

Quality of life in any given municipality is influenced by interrelated issues concerning the state of affordable, appropriate housing, civic engagement, community and social infrastructure, education, employment, the local economy, the natural environment, personal and community health, personal financial security and personal safety.

The 22 communities participating in the QOLRS account for over 50 per cent of Canada's population. These communities comprise some of Canada's largest urban centres and many of the suburban municipalities surrounding them, as well as small and medium-sized municipalities in seven provinces. By providing a method to monitor quality of life locally, the QOLRS ensures that municipal government is a strong partner in formulating public policy in Canada. Developed by FCM and municipal staff, each report is also intended to serve as a planning tool for municipalities. Each report considers quality-of-life issues from a municipal perspective and uses data segregated by actual municipal boundaries, not Census Metropolitan Areas, as is often the case in other studies.

The reporting system is equally important as a tool for community organizations, research institutes, and other orders of government, allowing them to:

- identify and promote awareness of issues affecting quality of life in Canadian municipalities;
- better target policies and resources aimed at improving quality of life;
- support collaborative efforts to improve quality of life; and
- inform and influence decision-makers across Canada.

Subsequent reports in the QOLRS series will examine in more detail issues such as income and housing affordability among specific demographic populations; immigration; community safety and security; and the urban environment. Some of these future reports will benefit from additional 2006 Census data being released in May 2008, as well as the results of a future survey of QOLRS member policies and programs.

### **Federation of Canadian Municipalities**

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has been the national voice of municipal governments since 1901. The organization is dedicated to improving the quality of life in all communities by promoting strong, effective and accountable municipal government. FCM membership of more than 1,600 municipal governments includes Canada's largest cities and regional municipalities, small towns, rural municipalities, and the 18 provincial and territorial municipal associations.