

# RURAL RESIDENTS

## Equity & Inclusion Lens Snapshot



# RURAL RESIDENTS

Ottawa has the largest rural area of any city in Canada. Eighty per cent of the city is made up of rural area, with only ten per cent of Ottawa’s population living there. Amalgamation has brought changes in the ways that our communities are organized, goods and services are delivered and the land is used.

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This booklet is one of 11 Snapshots that serve as background information to aid in implementing the Equity and Inclusion Lens. To access them in an electronic version, visit the City of Ottawa Internal Site ([Ozone](#)) or the [Equity and Inclusion Lens webpage](#). Or the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) [Equity and Inclusion webpage](#).



**A City For Everyone  
Une ville pour tous**

# 1. Who We Are

Ottawa has one of the largest rural areas of any city in Canada. Almost eighty per cent of the city is made up of rural area, with just under ten per cent (**9.8 percent**) of Ottawa's population living in the rural area (Annual Development Report 2015, Rural Residential Land Survey 2013, 2014). Some of us live within villages (**41 percent**), while the remainder live in isolated communities or on farms (City of Ottawa Planning staff estimate, 2017).

Some of us are established farmers, others are village residents, and some others live in low-income housing developments. For those of us dedicated to agriculture, our lives are closely linked to the agricultural cycles. Our social life, work, interaction with neighbours, and the time and capacity to engage in community initiatives or city activities are largely determined by these cycles. The east end of the city has traditionally had a significant Francophone presence, whereas the west and south ends have been mostly Anglophone.

The character of the rural areas has changed over the past generation from the predominantly agricultural, closely-knit communities to a more diverse group of residents. The amalgamation of the City of Ottawa in 2001 brought changes in the ways that our communities are organized, services are delivered and the land is used. The diversity of our communities is expanding as urban in-migration increases.

There are fewer of us between the ages of 20-29 compared to the average of Ottawa. (Ottawa Neighbourhood Study, 2011). Those of us who are youth often face a lack of local part-time jobs in rural areas; we have to look for opportunities in the urban areas and many face difficulties finding transportation to and from work, school and social activities. Those of us who are new Canadians experience a lack of culturally specific services, and a long commute to access these services. Those of us who are members of the LGBTQ+ community face cultural and social barriers, deal with isolation, and lack services, much more so than those living in the urban area.

Due to the vastness of rural Ottawa, the services available to us vary depending on where we live. Areas may lack some or all basic services such as child care, recreation activities, social services and programs, medical and mental health facilities, public transportation, grocery stores and pharmacies.

## INTERSECTIONALITY: COMPLEX, OVERLAPPING IDENTITIES

Each of us could identify with more than one group. It is this intersection, or crossover of identities of who we are that affects how we experience the city. This is called intersectionality. People's lives are multi-dimensional and complex. Lived realities are shaped by different factors and social dynamics operating together.

For more info access the [Equity and Inclusion Lens Handbook](#) and [Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide For Municipalities](#).

## 2. Overview of Rural Ottawa

From 2001 to 2016, Ottawa's rural population has grown faster than the city's overall average growth (21.2 per cent vs. 19.5 per cent) (City of Ottawa, 2017).

Residents in each population group living in rural areas:

- » 11 per cent of Aboriginal Peoples
- » 11 per cent of Francophones
- » 2 per cent of Visible Minorities
- » 2 per cent of Recent Immigrants

(Statistics Canada 2011)

In considering transportation and other service needs, it is important to also consider diversity in terms of whether people work on farms, in rural villages, from a home business, in rural industry other than farms, or outside of rural Ottawa.

Rural Ottawa includes the geographic townships of Fitzroy, Huntley, Torbolton, Marlborough, North Gower, Osgoode, Goulbourn, and parts of the former cities of Kanata, Nepean, Cumberland and Gloucester.

Manotick, Richmond and Greely accounted for 44 per cent of the 2016 estimated year-end population in all the rural villages combined (City of Ottawa 2017).

According to the City of Ottawa 2010 Land Use Study, roughly 40 per cent of the rural area's land is agriculture.

Ottawa has greater farming revenue (total gross farm receipts) than Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary combined.

There are close to 3,000 direct agriculture jobs in the Ottawa area including paid agricultural employees (1,439) and farm operators (1,485) (Statistics Canada 2017).

As of 2015, there are 14 industrial parks in rural Ottawa (Vacant Industrial Land Survey 2014, 2015).

## 3. Contributions we make

As rural residents, we contribute to our city in many ways. Volunteerism and participation in the community is an integral part of our life. We offer a wide range of tourism and recreational activities that are unique to rural areas. Heritage buildings and museums, provincial parks, campgrounds, mazes in cornfields, horseback-riding ranches, and pumpkin patch rides are some examples. Rural villages hold annual fairs and festivals, attracting people from the Ottawa-Gatineau areas, neighbouring counties, as well as people from across Canada and internationally. Rural areas are also a destination for those who wish to escape the urban environment and enjoy the green space.

Our work contributes to the overall health of Ottawa. Farmers' markets offer a supply of locally grown food, providing a fresh alternative to food transported to Ottawa from afar. There are farmers'

markets operating in rural Ottawa including markets in Carp, Metcalfe, North Gower, Cumberland, Constance Bay Community and Manotick. Additionally, the Savour Ottawa initiative connects Ottawa-area farmers with local farmers' markets, restaurants and grocery stores.

Our rural economy contributes over \$1 billion to Ottawa's overall GDP (City of Ottawa, 2011). Our aggregate industry provides material to construction companies in Ottawa and surrounding areas. It also contributes to the economy of Ottawa by providing jobs and tourism to urban and rural residents. Other industries include retail sales, construction, forestry, manufacturing, and personal businesses.

In many cases, rural communities or townships developed their own recreation facilities and fire stations prior to amalgamation through the contribution of many volunteers.

Currently, the City owns all the recreation buildings and manages some of the recreation facilities, while others continue to be managed by the local community association, through an agreement with the City.

## 4. Barriers and Inequities

### ACCESS TO INFORMATION

As a result of the Rural Summits in 2005 and 2008, the City has made an effort to facilitate the availability of high-speed internet access to rural areas. However, access to information may be a barrier faced by some rural residents. For those who still do not have internet or who do not own a computer, the internet is available at local libraries – but hours of operation and distance may be challenging for some residents. The City has three rural Client Service Centres in Metcalfe, Kinburn and North Gower.

The overlapping of jurisdictions between the City, the National Capital Commission and the Province of Ontario is also a source of stress. It may be difficult for rural residents to get sufficient information to understand the different responsibilities of these three bodies. As a result, when there are changes to their lives and the environment, residents often view the City as the main force behind them. Such misunderstanding can strain the relationship between the rural residents and the City.

### URBAN PERSPECTIVE

Amalgamation in 2001 brought many changes to rural life. Before amalgamation, rural residents had local input on what was needed and actively participated in getting it done. Many rural residents worry that the culture and pride in community is being eroded through city policies that are based on an urban perspective.

Prior to amalgamation, many services in rural communities were run on a volunteer basis, staffed by local people from the area. Following amalgamation, the staffing change from volunteer to city employees accountable to a central city authority, rather than local communities, resulted in higher "user fees" for rural residents to access the same recreational and community facilities.

Rural residents who in the past “did things themselves” for their communities often experience what they view as urban-centric rules, paperwork, approval requirements and costs they did not have before amalgamation. With these requirements, volunteer community event organizers may find it increasingly difficult to organize and deliver traditional rural events.

## DISTANCES

In rural areas, distance plays a big role in people’s lives. Since amalgamation, there have been changes in the destinations for rural Ottawa residents, as in the past, rural villages were service hubs for the surrounding countryside. Today with fewer services and less retail in the villages, residents travel further to areas of urban growth.

In addition, the further away people are from the urban core, the closer their links are to neighbouring townships outside city boundaries. In some cases, people’s postal codes may be linked to the next township, even though they live inside the City of Ottawa. Yet, most public services are offered to them through the City of Ottawa, not the surrounding townships. This can leave rural residents feeling frustrated.

What is usually a personal choice, to live in a rural area, affects lifestyle with the greater distance to shopping, work and commuting. Even with new grocery stores in some communities, many people living in rural Ottawa have to travel a distance to access a grocery store.

Youth often lack part-time jobs in their local areas and need to look for opportunities in urban areas. Many parents work in the urban core and due to the commute and may arrive home too late to drive their children to opportunities offered in the urban core.

## TRANSPORTATION

Most people rely primarily on cars for transportation, and many people commute into Ottawa by car. Where public transit is available in rural areas, routes and stops are limited, and service is less frequent. Para Transpo costs more for people living in rural areas. OC Transpo offers a free “rural shoppers bus” for rural villages that do not have regular OC Transpo service. This allows individuals the ability to travel into the suburban areas to shop and attend appointments.

In addition, the City of Ottawa, Transportation Services, funds non-profit organizations to provide rural transportation services through their community support programs. These include the Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre (WOCRC), Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre (EORC) and Rural Ottawa South Support Services (ROSSS).

City Council approved the taxicab and limousine regulation and service review that went into effect September 2016. This review has increased the service map of taxicabs to include all of rural Ottawa. In addition, a new ride-sharing category, Private Transportation Companies (PTC), has been created. For those that can afford the fees, this new category will provide another transportation option to rural residents.

## ACCESS TO SERVICES

As the population is typically less dense in rural areas, there are usually less services available for the amount of area covered, and many local services operate on reduced schedules. Rural villages in the past were the service hubs for the surrounding countryside. This has changed with many rural village services now being provided more economically in urban Ottawa. As a result, people often need to travel long distances to access services.

Distance and transportation become the biggest barriers for accessing supports for special needs or culturally appropriate services. These can include age-appropriate care for seniors, youth-friendly spaces and programs or settlement services for immigrants. People with disabilities may not have supports to participate in the community initiatives in their village. In order for families with low incomes to access food banks, most must travel more than 15km. Thrift stores or affordable recreation services may also be a distance away.

Although there has been societal change for the LGBTQ+ community; parents, or youth discovering their sexual orientation and gender identity, experience isolation, a lack of LGBTQ+ friendly services and support networks, even more so than those living in urban areas. In the midst of changing gender relations, research shows that across Canadian society, women still assume more responsibility in caregiving for the family. The result is that women, along with men who are increasingly assuming this role, face greater challenges in accessing services when living in rural communities. They may lack family support services such as childcare, or shelters for women escaping abusive relationships.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

While some larger villages have municipal services, many rural residents do not have access to City water and sewage systems. Residents are financially responsible for maintaining their own wells and septic systems. Some rural residents do not have access to drinkable tap water and must purchase water from private providers or supermarkets.

As new housing and commercial developments are built, the flow of water changes and affects the natural ecosystem. Drainage is an important infrastructure priority in rural Ottawa, as poorly designed systems can cause flooding of residences or fields, or damage to protected wetland environments. Roadside ditches and municipal drains are key components of drainage.

Road maintenance and snow clearing are concerns often raised by rural residents. Winter road maintenance is challenging because of the microclimates that exist over the vast area of the City. For example, there may be snow in the north and west, while there is freezing rain in the south and east. There are roads that are not paved and edge line painting is not done consistently, making driving less safe in severe weather conditions. Many of the roads are in need of repairs due to the frequent use by heavy equipment trucks.

## CHANGING CHARACTER OF RURAL AREAS

The City's amalgamation, an increasing urbanization process and growing diversity among the residents bring different expectations, challenges and opportunities to Ottawa's rural areas. The practices of new rural residents can conflict with those of established rural residents. For example, farmers are

allowed to discharge firearms to destroy wildlife when necessary; however, people with more urban or quiet lifestyles may not agree with how wildlife is treated. The use of bio solids and farming throughout the night during harvest season, are other examples where conflicts may occur.

## LAND USE

There are diverse and competing views on the use of the land and the pace of development in rural areas. Many rural residents worry about continuing development of subdivisions built close to and within the rural areas. There is a fear that the rural way of life will disappear. Regulations are in place that prevent prime agricultural land from being developed, however protected wetlands, for example, can be damaged by development on a separate plot of land by affecting drainage.

There are provincial policies that must be followed when making decisions on land use in rural Ottawa, which make the matter more complex. For example, the Provincial Policy Statement and Minimum Distance Separation affect developments and land severances on or near agricultural land, and the Green Energy Act promotes new energy installations such as wind turbines and solar farms.

When reviewing development applications, city staff are required to consider these policies along with the City's Official Plan. Development applications in rural Ottawa are reviewed by staff with knowledge of rural areas.

Following the Rural Summit of 2005, the City established a Rural Affairs Office to act as a liaison between City of Ottawa staff, rural residents, rural community groups and agricultural organizations.

The role of the Rural Affairs Office

- » To monitor and support issues affecting rural Ottawa ensuring that current and emerging rural issues are a prime focus of City staff and Council.
- » To facilitate a productive relationship between the City and its rural citizens by assessing the impact of the City's rural policies, by-laws and programs and negotiating change.
- » To establish links with provincial and federal governments and to keep City officials informed of developments in legislative and policy efforts.
- » Advocates for the rural perspective in accordance with City Council's direction.

The Rural Affairs Office also supports the implementation of solutions identified at the [Rural Summit](#) (in 2005 and 2008), and the work of the [Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee](#).

## CITY GOVERNANCE

Rural Councillors have wards that sprawl across very large areas, with a small number of staff to engage at the ward level. Due to this, there are fewer rural Councillors on Council. To help balance rural perspectives with those of the rest of the City, a Rural Affairs Committee of Council considers issues before they rise at Council, and their perspective is considered when Council votes.



## 5. We Envision: A rural-friendly City

- » City decisions are made with the rural perspective in mind.
- » The City recognizes that the urban model does not always apply to rural settings.
- » The City takes into consideration the different realities, lifestyles and availability of rural residents when planning consultations, feedback sessions or activities.
- » The City seeks input from the community in the early stages of any proposed action that affects rural residents.
- » More service hubs are operating in rural villages.
- » More alternative and affordable transportation options and safe, accessible bicycle lanes.
- » Urban residents enjoy the many attractions and benefits from the contributions of the rural areas.

### WHAT CAN ALLIES DO?

- ✓ **Listen** to the voices of rural residents and learn from them.
- ✓ **Develop** awareness about the diversity of rural residents and their contributions.
- ✓ **Consider** how rural residents' lifestyles, issues and service needs differ from those residents in other parts of the City.
- ✓ **Learn** about ways in which Ottawa's rural areas are changing.
- ✓ **Avoid** viewing the urban and suburban experience as the norm of our city.
- ✓ **Partner** with rural community associations and groups working in the rural areas.
- ✓ **Visit** villages and towns and attend rural fairs and festivals.
- ✓ **Buy** local products from farms or farmers' markets and encourage others to do so.
- ✓ **Enjoy** a "staycation" in Ottawa's rural area.
- ✓ **And, if I live in rural areas, I know that my knowledge and experience can enrich the city.**

## 6. Council Mandates and Legislation

- » [Municipal Act](#) (Provincial)
- » [Provincial Policy Statement](#) (Provincial)
- » [Green Energy Act](#) (Provincial)
- » [Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program](#) (Provincial)
- » [Drainage Act / Tile Drainage Act](#) (Provincial)
- » [Nutrient Management Act](#) (Provincial)
- » [Rural Summit 2005](#)
- » [Rural Summit 2008](#)
- » [Rural Broadband](#)
- » Rural Tourism / Buy Local Food
- » [Rural Clean Water program](#)
- » [Rural Association Partnership Program](#)
- » [Rural Community Building Grant Program](#)
- » Rural Health Program
- » [City of Ottawa Official Plan](#)
- » [Rural Settlement Strategy](#)

## 7. What's Happening in Ottawa

Since amalgamation, the City's service delivery model has been evolving, and has created innovative hybrid models in collaboration with community associations and local resources. The City's organizational structure has also changed to recognize the needs of rural residents better. The diversity of residents, lack of facilities, and the difference in lifestyles are taken into consideration when designing services and their delivery. (See Contributions we make).

- » [Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee](#) - responsible for ensuring that the unique interests and requirements of the City's rural areas are taken into account in the decisions made by the City of Ottawa. The Committee makes recommendations to Council on issues and programs pertaining to the agricultural and associated industries, the rural economy, rural residential communities, land development and landscaping, transportation, water and wastewater services, and environmental protection.
- » [City of Ottawa Rural Affairs Office](#) – following the Rural Summit of 2005, the City established a Rural Affairs Office to act as a liaison between City of Ottawa staff, rural residents, rural community groups and agricultural organizations. The office strives to resolve issues presented by stakeholders at both the Rural Summit I in 2005 and Rural Summit II in 2008. The office offers assistance to all City departments with community outreach and consultation in the rural area, and can offer insight into local issues and viewpoints.

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- » [City of Ottawa Rural Connections portal](#) – provides links to news and information affecting rural Ottawa, and sends out a monthly newsletter on rural issues to over 1800 subscribers. The Rural Affairs Office maintains the portal.
- » City of Ottawa Recreation, Cultural & Facility Services – develops new program opportunities based on feedback from rural residents. Rural-specific information is available at [Rural Recreation](#), provided in collaboration with the Rural Affairs Office.
- » City of Ottawa Development Review Rural Branch – works on land-use planning that is specific and appropriate to the rural area.
- » [City of Ottawa Internet coverage](#) – As a result of the Rural Summits of 2005 and 2008, the City has devoted financial and technical resources to facilitate access to broadband Internet access for all rural communities. This has allowed people to stay in the rural areas, start new or strengthen existing businesses, and work from home.
- » [City of Ottawa Public Health free well water testing](#) – Residents are able to pick up sample bottles and drop them off at 19 locations throughout Ottawa on Tuesdays. Currently, 17 of these locations reside in rural villages.
- » [City of Ottawa By-laws](#) – recent by-laws reflect the different needs of urban and rural residents (e.g., noise, tree cutting, and use of firearms).
- » [The West Carleton Country Kitchen program](#) – provides an opportunity for people in the rural community to cook locally grown, nutritious and tasty food in a supportive, fun environment.
- » [Ottawa's Rural Events and attractions site](#) – developed by the City of Ottawa's Rural Affairs Office to highlight and promote activities in the rural areas.
- » [Ottawa's Countryside](#) – an initiative of the Ottawa Rural Tourism Council, which is a grassroots organization whose goal is to market and promote one of Ottawa's fastest-growing industries – the rural tourism industry.
- » [Rural Ontario Institute](#) – The Rural Ontario Institute develops leaders, initiates dialogue, supports collaboration and promotes action on issues and opportunities facing rural Ontario.
- » The [Osgoode Ward Business Association \(OWBA\)](#) and the [Greely Business Association \(GBA\)](#) support economic and community development within the City's Osgoode ward. [Vars and Area Women's Business Network \(VAWBN\)](#) represents a wide variety of businesses that network and support each other.
- » Rideau Chamber of Commerce is a member organization for businesses in the former Rideau Township area, fostering and supporting private enterprise.
- » Business improvement areas (BIA) result from when local business and property owners join together to improve, promote, and undertake projects that will result in a stronger and more competitive commercial main street or business district. In rural Ottawa, they include [Manotick BIA](#), [Carp Village BIA](#) and [Carp Road Corridor BIA](#).
- » [Ottawa Stewardship Council](#), member of Ontario Stewardship: Community stewardship councils are committed to maintaining Ontario's natural resources.
- » [Savour Ottawa](#) - works to develop and promote Ottawa and area as a premier, year-round culinary destination, with robust offerings of local foods and experiences for both locals and visitors to the area.

Various community service organizations work to help vulnerable individuals. The following organizations work with residents in the rural area and collaborate on the Rural Issues Committee to coordinate efforts: Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre, [Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre](#), [Nepean, Rideau and Osgoode Community Resource Centre](#), [Rural Family Connections](#), [Rural Ottawa South Support Services](#), [Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre](#) and [Osgoode Youth Association](#).

## 8. Relevant Practices in Other Cities

[Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities](#) presents a flexible approach to equity and inclusion and is adaptable to the diverse structures, contexts, and experiences of municipalities from across Canada. Flip through the different sections of this guide or visit [City for All Women Initiative \(CAWI\)](#) to find examples from municipalities across Canada.

## 9. Sources

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## 10. Acknowledgments

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The original Equity and Inclusion Lens Guide and Snapshots were developed from 2008-2010 by an Equity and Inclusion Reference Group and working groups focusing on each of the 11 equity seeking groups profiled in the Snapshots.

City staff and community leaders contributed their knowledge and insights in the creation of this Snapshot.

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