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...And Then Some!

How Sault Ste. Marie Measures up in Quality of Life Studies



September 2008



Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things

CQI strives to improve the quality of life in Sault Ste. Marie while maintaining a commitment to sustainable development.

We live in a society where the accumulation of wealth is still considered to be a commendable goal. This, despite the fact that there is a growing amount of research and anecdotal information that proves this kind of lifestyle is not sustainable. Surprisingly, few of us have whole-heartedly accepted the challenge to change, and adopt a more balanced way of living.



The idea of sustainability is well known, but it has not reached people's hearts and souls. We believe we can achieve a high quality of life by combining sustainable development with a fulfilling work/life balance.

What We Do

CQI has taken a leading role in Sault Ste. Marie to improve community well being. Our vision is that "Sault Ste. Marie is internationally recognized as an attractive, vibrant and diversified community that fosters pride, and is passionately committed to building an extraordinary quality of life, and sustaining its natural beauty".

Working with community partners, CQI conducts local research in seven areas:

- culture/ recreation
- economy
- education
- environment
- governance
- health
- social wellbeing

These seven components do not function independently of one another; they are interlinked, each being equally important to the vibrancy of our community.

Community Quality Improvement gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation in the production of this report.



Naturally Gifted...And Then Some!

How Sault Ste. Marie Measures Up in Provincial/National Studies

Residents of Sault Ste. Marie have long believed that living in a small city in northern Ontario offers distinct advantages over living in a major metropolitan area. In fact, many would not choose to live anywhere else, regardless of higher earning potential or warmer climate. The 'Soo' as it is often called, is surrounded by some of the most beautiful and pristine wilderness in the country and there is an almost intangible sense of value that comes from living so close to such landscapes. Many people also cite the strong sense of community and slower pace of life in the city, as major reasons for living here.

With the recent popularity of "quality of life" studies across the country, it is now possible to prove quantitatively what residents have long believed in their hearts: that the Soo is a great place to live and work.



Tourism Sault Ste. Marie

This report highlights a variety of indicators drawn from regional and national studies, which identify the specific areas where the community excels. These are third party sources; they have not been produced by local organizations. As such, they offer an objective, non-partisan perspective on quality of life in Sault Ste. Marie.

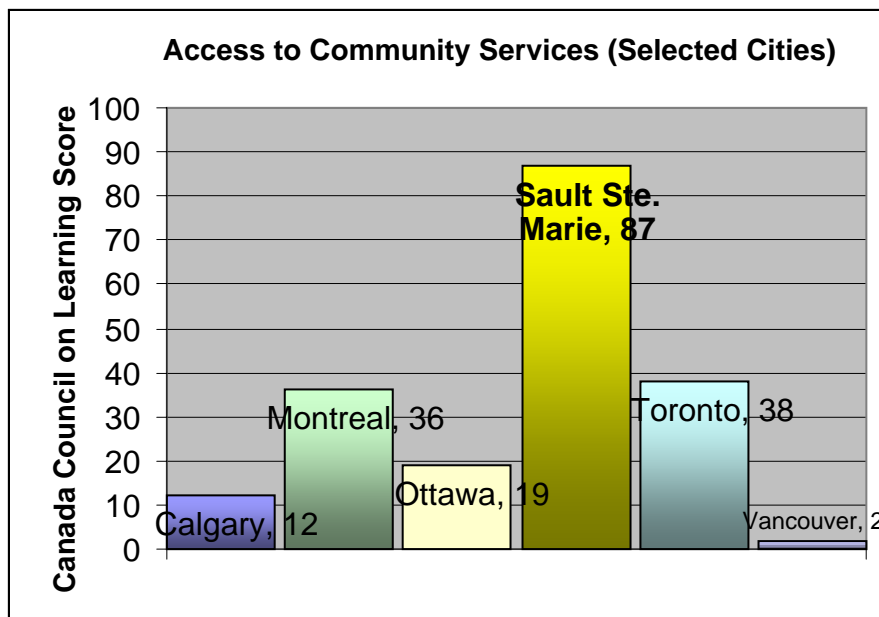
This community has a proud history of being one of the oldest settlements in Ontario. Now we know why people have been coming here all these years!

Access to Community Services a Key to Livability

Sault Ste. Marie offers its citizens exceptional access to libraries, religious organizations and community associations, according to the Canadian Council on Learning.

In their 2008 release of the Composite Learning Index, Sault Ste. Marie was given a score of 87 per cent for this indicator. Simply stated, out of 4700 communities studied, only 13 per cent offered greater access to these critical services than Sault Ste. Marie.

Access to community services helps develop respect and concern for others, fostering social and inter-personal skills, and an appreciation of the diversity of Canadians.



Source: Canadian Council on Learning "2008 Composite Learning Index"

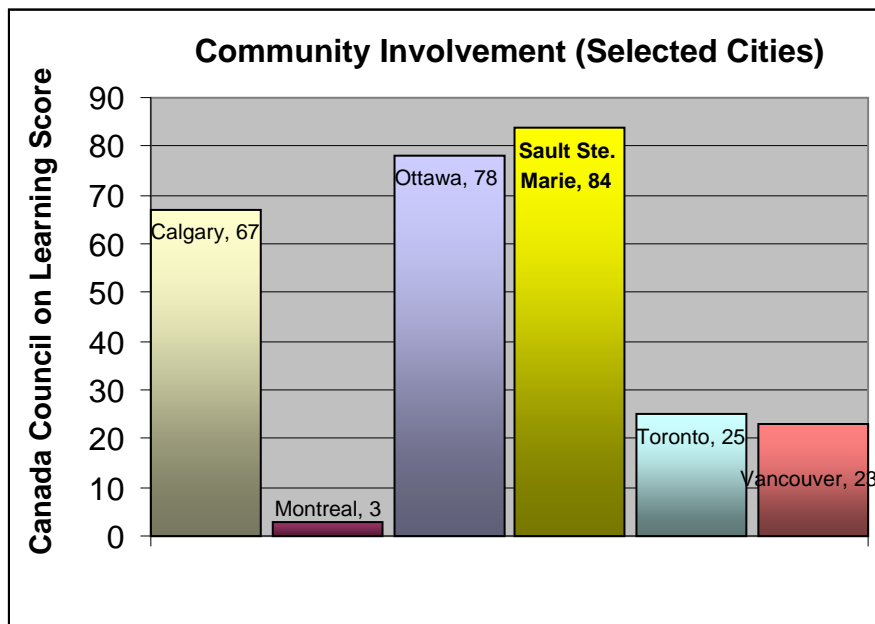


City of Sault Ste. Marie

Community Involvement Improves Quality of Life; Sault Scores High Marks

A vital ingredient in a healthy community is a collective concern among its citizens for those who have the least. The degree to which we help and show respect for others, is a good measure of how well people live together in harmony.

The Canadian Council on Learning studied volunteer activities and participation levels in local clubs and associations in 4700 communities across Canada. According to the “Composite Learning Index”, Sault Ste. Marie achieved a score of 84% in their “Community Involvement” category. Comparisons to other major metropolitan areas across the country are illustrated below.



Source: Canadian Council on Learning “2008 Composite Learning Index”

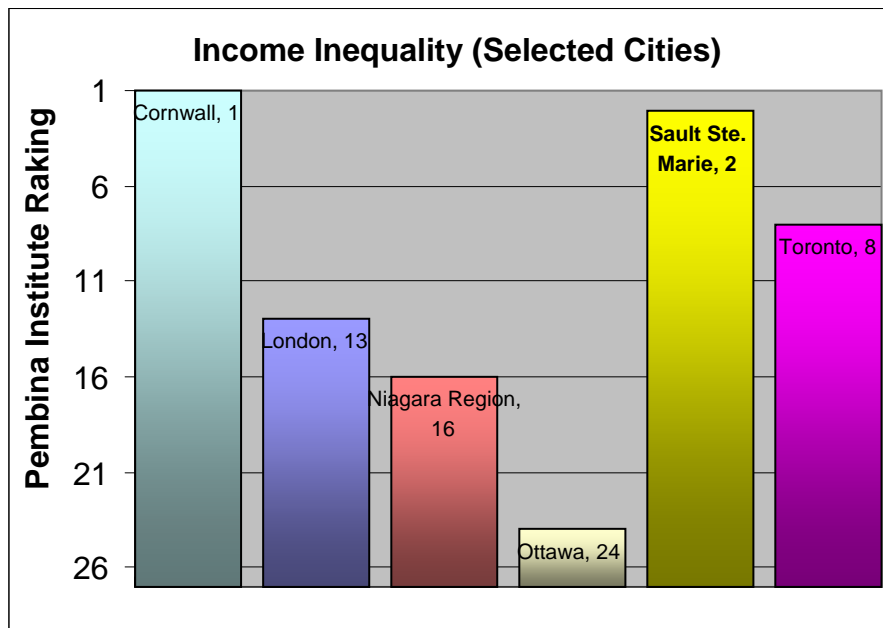


City of Sault Ste. Marie

Cooperation and Trust Among Citizens Highlights Community Cohesiveness

The Pembina Institute used the measure of “income inequality” to determine how well citizens in a community cooperate and function together. Income inequality is a comparison of the number of people earning high wages versus the number of people earning low wages. When there is a balance between these two ends of the spectrum, a community tends to be more cooperative and less dysfunctional. Studies have shown that in communities with greater balance, people tend to trust each other more, there is greater community involvement, and other issues such as homicide rates are lower.

In the Pembina Institute study, a high ranking means the community functions well and people tend to work cooperatively. Sault Ste. Marie scored second out of 27 communities studied.



Source: The Pembina Institute, “The Ontario Urban Sustainability Report 2007” Income Inequality indicator

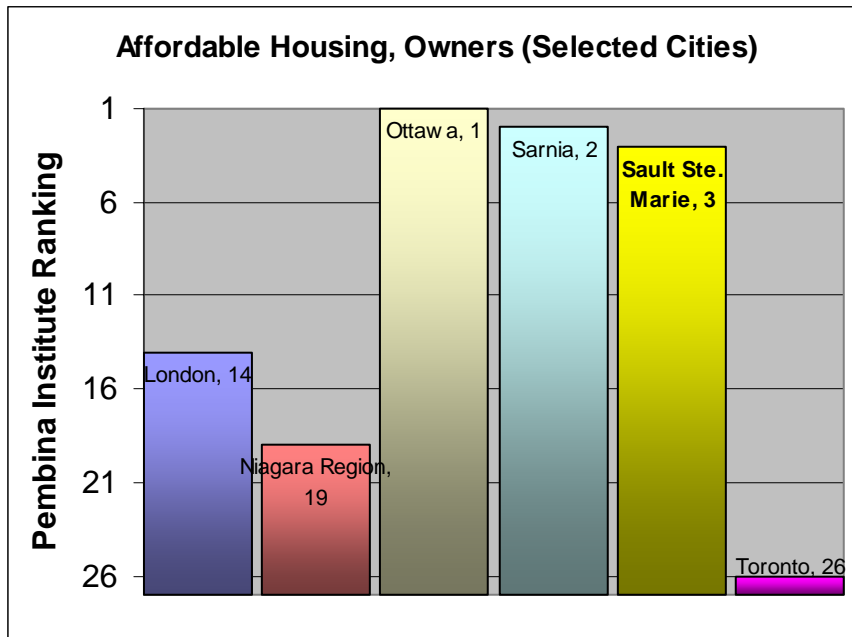


Jill Pateman

Sault Ste. Marie Ranks Among Top Three in Ontario for Housing Affordability

In Sault Ste. Marie, home ownership is a reality for young graduates and those on fixed incomes alike. Professionals moving to the community can afford much more home than they could in virtually any other city in Ontario. There is no need for one hundred year mortgages, and more money can be directed toward investments, vacations, and education for their children.

The Pembina Institute ranked Sault Ste. Marie third best out of all cities in Ontario with populations larger than 30,000 for the availability of affordable housing.



Source: The Pembina Institute; "The Ontario Urban Sustainability Report 2007" Affordable Housing, Owners indicator

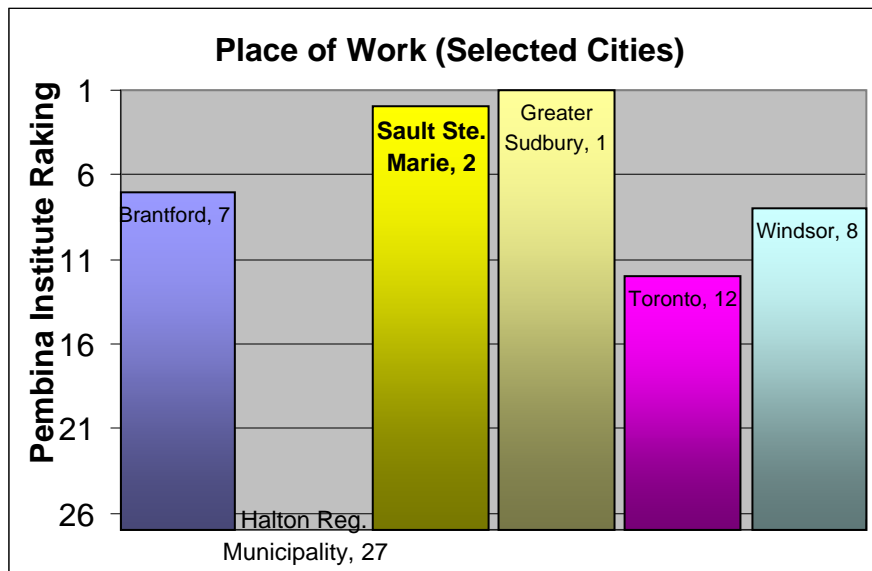


Jill Pateman

Sault Among the Best in Province for Short Commutes

One of the primary complaints offered by Ontario residents today is the length of time spent commuting to and from work. Not only is it frustrating, it also degrades the environment and reduces opportunities for relaxation and recreation.

Sault Ste. Marie scored second best among 27 cities studied by the Pembina Institute, when measuring the per cent of the labour force working within their own city limits. Not only does this indicator suggest shorter commutes, it also reflects a community's ability to provide sufficient employment base for its residents, by locating major employers within the city limits.



Source: The Pembina Institute, "The Ontario Urban Sustainability Report 2007" Place of Work indicator

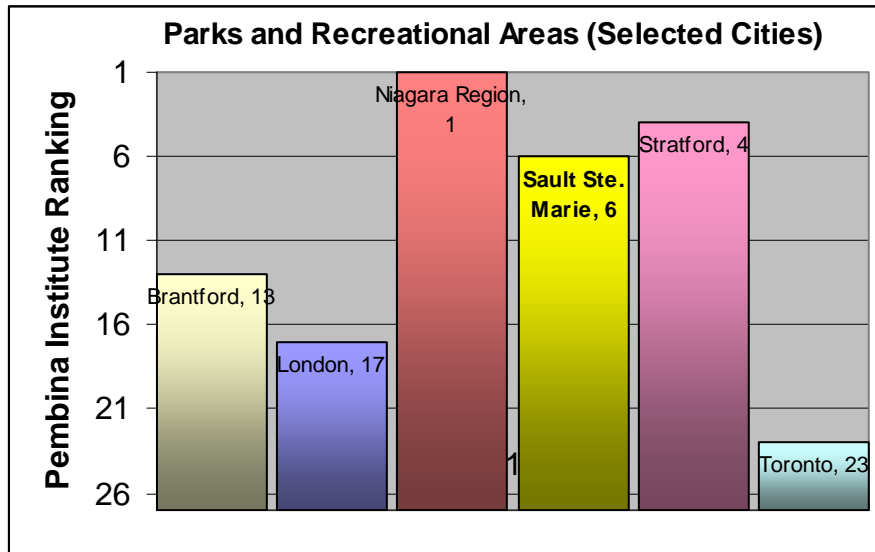


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Sault Ste. Marie Ranked One of the Greenest Communities in Ontario

Parks and recreation areas are critical components of a community's quality of life. Access to green space offers residents areas to relax, relieve stress and connect with other citizens. Green spaces also help absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, effectively acting as filters for the air we breathe.

The Pembina Institute looked at how much park and recreational area existed in various communities per 10,000 people. In their study, Sault Ste. Marie ranked 6th out of 27.



Source: The Pembina Institute, "The Ontario Urban Sustainability Report 2007" Parks and Recreational Areas indicator



Jill Pateman



National Quality Institute Awards Sault Ste. Marie with Nation's First Community Building Award

Every community experiences successes and faces challenges; the City of Sault Ste. Marie is no different. Located on the doorstep of the untamed northern Boreal Forest and nestled between the two greatest of the Great Lakes, there is a resonance with the natural world that clearly distinguishes the area. As is illustrated by the indicators in this report, the Sault is also a thriving community of caring people who enjoy a quality of life that simply can't be found in the ever-growing metropolitan regions. But there are some obstacles to overcome too. In particular it has proven difficult to attract people to what is a relatively remote northern community, considering the common misconception that larger communities offer more opportunities. As this report highlights, this simply isn't the case in Sault Ste. Marie.

Perhaps the best measure of a community's value is the degree to which the people work together to continuously improve the quality of life they experience today, and the efforts they take to safeguard it for future generations.

In 2007, Sault Ste. Marie was recognized by the National Quality Institute for our success in creating a structured, dynamic approach to measuring performance and improving quality of life. The Canada Awards for Excellence in Community Building is the Institute's newest recognition program, designed to inspire and challenge communities to work together in the pursuit of excellence. Ours is the only city in Canada to receive this prestigious recognition.



CQI Executive Director, Board Members and Sault Ste. Marie Mayor, John Rowswell receive the Silver Community Building Award at National Quality Institute gala.



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