

Community Safety

Do we feel safe in our community? Indeed, it seems we do. Safe is how many people described our community in HCIA's 2008 survey, and feeling safe was frequently mentioned as the reason they chose to live here. Since 2008, perceptions of safety may have shifted due to an unusual spate of serious, high-profile crimes. However, the collected evidence says our communities have become safer over time.

So, what is it that makes a community safe? There is no one factor - safety is the result of a complex interplay of social, cultural and economic influences. And the feeling of community safety is the product of fact and perception, which makes it an excellent overall barometer of community well-being.

Educated in Preventing Crime Last year over 6,000 Dufferin and Caledon students participated in an esteem-building Violence Prevention Program offered by Family Transition Place, which fosters healthier relationships as a proactive approach to building a violence-free community. It has had a powerful impact. One student "stopped thinking about suicide." Another realized he needs to treat his girlfriend with more respect. And a high-school student reported that mid-fight, with a crowbar in his hands, he put down his weapon and walked away, remembering the program's lessons about respect and anger management.

Designing Out Crime

SafeGrowth and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) are proven neighbourhood-based crime prevention models that reduce opportunities for crime by modifying the way public spaces are designed and used, attending to community perceptions of safety, and strengthening community relationships. They work by bringing together community groups, developers, planners and law enforcement to strategize solutions to local public safety concerns. SafeGrowth and CPTED have been used effectively across North America. In Canada, Saskatoon is known internationally for their success in implementing Safegrowth principles.

Source: dev.cpted.net/2010.html



Community safety impacts all aspects of daily life - where we live, socialize, learn, work and participate. How safe we feel gives us a framework for the choices we make and for how we make decisions - at the individual, family, community and societal level. Safety, along with shelter and food, is considered the basic pre-condition for health.

Perceptions of Safety The way people feel about their safety influences their behaviour. When they feel safe, community residents are more likely to be outside interacting with others, making crime less likely to happen.

Feeling Safe: Walking Alone After Dark

- 81.5% of Ontarians reported feeling safe walking alone after dark in 2009, an increase of 5% from 2004*
- 73.2% of parents in Dufferin felt that it was safe to walk at night in their neighbourhood in 2006**

*Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Victimization, Cycle 18 & 23, November 2010 **Wellington, Dufferin Guelph 2006 Kindergarten Parent Survey

Violent Crime Decreasing

Actual Violent Crime	Dufferin*	Caledon**
2008	432	209
2009	396	158
2010	414	204

*average of Orangeville & Shelburne Police and Dufferin OPP
**Caledon OPP

Violent Crime Violent crime includes any form of physical assault, sexual assault or theft/attempted theft involving violence, or a threat of violence. The good news is that overall across Canada – and specifically within Dufferin and Caledon – rates of violent crime have been declining since the early 1990s.

>> Caledon was named the safest community in Canada – for the third year in a row – in a 2010 Maclean's Magazine study.<<

Property Crime The rates of property crime – including theft, motor vehicle theft and fraud – have also been consistently declining across the Headwaters region. Between 2008 - 2010, the reported property crime rate decreased by 13% in Dufferin (from 1780 to 1533 reports) and 8% in Caledon (from 1209 to 1107). In Ontario, property crime decreased by 3% between 2008 - 2009¹.

Beyond Crime Safety in our communities includes other important factors, such as injury prevention and emergency preparedness – both of which require active citizen participation.

Emergency Personal Preparedness Caledon and Dufferin have each developed Community Emergency Response Plans to manage situations that escalate beyond the scope of normal operations for fire, police, ambulance and public works services. An important focus of these plans is encouraging residents to be personally prepared by putting aside seven days of non-perishable food and water, as well as other provisions. Emergency preparedness guides are available on the County of Dufferin and Region of Peel websites (dufferincounty.on.ca; peelregion.ca).

Emergency Shelters

Dufferin: 14 shelters, with capacity for a total of 2,500 people in the event of an evacuation.

Caledon: 5 shelters, with capacity ranging from 50 to 300 people in each.

% Emergency Room Visits Due to Falls 2008

Age	Dufferin*	Caledon**
0-4	41.4%	9.9%
65+	51.5%	15.8

*WDG Health Unit; **National Ambulatory Care Reporting System Data 2007-08, Intellihealth Ontario, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Falls and Injuries Falls and injuries account for a significant percent of emergency room visits among young children and seniors in Dufferin.

Finally, citizen engagement builds stronger connections among the people who live in our region. This contributes to a sense that we are all "in this together" and therefore need to look out for each other.

¹ Orangeville Police Service, Shelburne Police Service, Dufferin OPP, Caledon OPP and Statistics Canada.

How can we foster a culture of "looking out for each other" so our community can become even safer?