

## Voting with their Feet

### Actual Quality of Life Rankings in Canada

Lists of “The Best Places to Live in Canada” are a popular way to sell magazines. Publications like Maclean’s and MoneySense rely on complicated formulas to rank communities for “livability.” But there is a very simple and effective way to determine which communities are the most desirable.

*The best metric shows where  
Canadians actually move in  
the real world.*

Canadians **vote with their feet**. They relocate for many different reasons: finding a job, going to school, living closer to family, to be close to favourite recreational activities, to enjoy a better climate, for more affordable housing and many more. Added together, these real-life decisions tell us the true “quality of life” rankings in Canada without relying on arbitrary metrics.

This report uses 2016 Census data to update an [earlier study](#) on Quality of Life rankings by the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET). These rankings are based on people who lived in one of Canada’s 152 urban centres as of the 2016 Census, compared to where they lived in the 2011 Census.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Does not include international migrants or people who were born or died between 2011 and 2016.

## Building a diverse and sustainable economy.

### Actual Quality of Life Rankings, 2011 to 2016

Alberta's two largest metro areas are the clear winners in the 2016 Canadian quality of life rankings as they jointly attracted a net inflow of more than 60,000 residents from the rest of Canada.

The top 10 is dominated by Alberta, British Columbia and southern Ontario. Kelowna is tops in BC and 3<sup>rd</sup> nationally with a net inflow of more than 10,000 residents.

*Nanaimo, which is one of seven urban areas within the Island Coastal region, is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> nationally.*

All seven of the Island Coastal urban centres had a positive net inflow of residents from the rest of Canada and five of them were in the national top 40.

Looking at the bottom of the rankings, the three largest metro areas in Canada take up the last three spots. The Toronto metro area exported an average of more than 20,000 residents per year to the rest of the country! Montreal, Vancouver and Winnipeg were also major exporters to the rest of Canada.

Wood Buffalo, AB (which includes Fort McMurray) also had a significant outflow with the collapse in the oil price starting in 2015, although the major fires that ravaged the Fort McMurray area started just before the Census date in May 2016 and may have influenced the results.<sup>2</sup>

Urban Area (Ranked out of 152)	Net Intra-Canada Migration, 2011 to 2016
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#### Top Ten

1. Edmonton, AB	34,975
2. Calgary, AB	28,530
3. Kelowna, BC	10,540
4. Oshawa, ON	9,635
5. St. Catharines - Niagara, ON	8,655
6. Victoria, BC	7,315
7. Chilliwack, BC	6,150
8. Hamilton, ON	4,910
9. Barrie, ON	4,485
<b>10. Nanaimo, BC</b>	<b>3,800</b>

#### Bottom Ten

143. Saint John, NB	-2,660
144. London, ON	-2,715
145. Kingston, ON	-3,440
146. Kitchener - Cambridge - Waterloo, ON	-5,290
147. Halifax, NS	-6,275
148. Wood Buffalo, AB	-6,510
149. Winnipeg, MB	-14,985
150. Vancouver, BC	-23,790
151. Montréal, QC	-62,625
152. Toronto, ON	-106,160

#### ICET Communities

<b>10. Nanaimo, BC</b>	<b>3,800</b>
19. Parksville, BC	2,455
20. Courtenay, BC	2,440
25. Campbell River, BC	2,130
40. Duncan, BC	1,080
62. Powell River, BC	360
73. Port Alberni, BC	165

<sup>2</sup> This data does not include international immigration, which tends to stream towards major urban centres such as Toronto and Vancouver.

## Prime Working Years (Age 25 to 54)

Vancouver Island has a reputation as Canada’s pre-eminent retirement destination. Is it possible that all of the urban centres in the region have a net inflow of migrants from the rest of Canada because they are simply attracting retirees?

**In short, the answer is no.** The prime working years from age 25 to 54 is when people are most likely to be involved in the labour force. Relocation decisions at this age are more likely to consider employment or business opportunities, affordable housing, and amenities for families and children.

*Nanaimo, Campbell River and Courtenay ranked in the top 15 for prime working age migrants in Canada.*

All seven Island Coastal urban centres had a positive inflow of prime working-age residents from 2011 to 2016 (note the group is based on their age in 2016).

Urban Area (Ranked out of 152)	Net Intra-Canada Migration, 2011 to 2016
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### Top Ten, Age 25-54

1. Calgary, AB	23,795
2. Edmonton, AB	19,150
3. Oshawa, ON	7,000
4. Hamilton, ON	4,485
5. Kelowna, BC	2,860
6. Barrie, ON	2,550
7. Chilliwack, BC	2,220
8. Brantford, ON	2,180
9. St. Catharines - Niagara, ON	1,555
10. Abbotsford - Mission, BC	1,530

### Bottom Ten, Age 25-54

143. Kingston, ON	-4,555
144. Ottawa - Gatineau, ON/QC	-5,075
145. Kitchener - Cambridge - Waterloo, ON	-5,610
146. London, ON	-5,870
147. Québec, QC	-5,980
148. Halifax, NS	-6,885
149. Winnipeg, MB	-10,025
150. Vancouver, BC	-11,650
151. Montréal, QC	-37,950
152. Toronto, ON	-45,605

### ICET Communities, Age 25-54

11. Nanaimo, BC	1,400
14. Campbell River, BC	1,240
15. Courtenay, BC	1,230
34. Parksville, BC	460
38. Duncan, BC	345
42. Powell River, BC	300
57. Port Alberni, BC	150

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### Age 55+ Rankings

Rankings for the 55+ age range are less reliant on employment opportunities and more reflective of amenities, housing, weather, and other factors important to retirees.

Both the Parksville and Nanaimo areas rank in the national top 10 for this age group while the Courtenay and Duncan areas are also in the top 20. Once again, all seven Island Coastal communities have a positive net inflow at this age range.

*The province of BC has 7 of the top 10 spots on the list.*

Edmonton and Calgary, which ranked at the top for overall migration and for prime working years, are both in the national bottom ten for the 55+ demographic.

Urban Area (Ranked out of 152)	Net Intra-Canada Migration, 2011 to 2016
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#### Top Ten, Age 55+

1. St. Catharines - Niagara, ON	5,575
2. Kelowna, BC	4,955
3. Chilliwack, BC	3,485
4. Victoria, BC	3,320
<b>5. Parksville, BC</b>	<b>2,170</b>
6. London, ON	2,075
7. Penticton, BC	1,985
8. Vernon, BC	1,760
9. Wasaga Beach, ON	1,745
<b>10. Nanaimo, BC</b>	<b>1,710</b>

#### Bottom Ten Communities, Age 55+

143. Prince George, BC	-1,045
144. Halifax, NS	-1,210
145. Edmonton, AB	-1,490
146. Wood Buffalo, AB	-3,050
147. Winnipeg, MB	-3,350
148. Ottawa - Gatineau, ON/QC	-3,465
149. Calgary, AB	-5,945
150. Vancouver, BC	-10,105
151. Montréal, QC	-20,475
152. Toronto, ON	-41,175

#### ICET Communities, Age 55+

<b>5. Parksville, BC</b>	<b>2,170</b>
<b>10. Nanaimo, BC</b>	<b>1,710</b>
14. Courtenay, BC	1,305
20. Duncan, BC	1,125
35. Campbell River, BC	705
62. Port Alberni, BC	250
66. Powell River, BC	205

## Adjusting for Community Size

An alternative way to look at net intra-Canada migration is by *percentage of the population*, which puts smaller communities on equal footing with larger metro areas.

*As a share of population, the Parksville-Qualicum area ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in Canada as the most desirable place to move.*

Campbell River also cracks the top 10, followed by Courtenay at #15, Nanaimo at #23, Duncan at #34 and Powell River at #40.

### Urban Area (Ranked out of 152) Net Intra-Canada Migrants, 2011 to 2016, as Share of 2016 Population

#### Top Ten Communities by % of Population

1. Wasaga Beach, ON	12.87%
<b>2. Parksville, BC</b>	<b>8.49%</b>
3. Sylvan Lake, AB	8.30%
4. Collingwood, ON	8.01%
5. Penticton, BC	7.62%
6. Chilliwack, BC	6.06%
7. Okotoks, AB	5.97%
<b>8. Campbell River, BC</b>	<b>5.63%</b>
9. Cowansville, QC	5.57%
10. Port Hope, ON	5.49%

#### Bottom Ten Communities by % of Population

143. Baie-Comeau, QC	-3.77%
144. Williams Lake, BC	-4.32%
145. Yellowknife, NT	-4.45%
146. Fort St. John, BC	-5.12%
147. Dawson Creek, BC	-5.17%
148. Estevan, SK	-5.91%
149. Brooks, AB	-5.94%
150. High River, AB	-6.00%
151. Thompson, MB	-6.58%
152. Wood Buffalo, AB	-8.88%

#### ICET Communities by % of Population

<b>2. Parksville, BC</b>	<b>8.49%</b>
<b>8. Campbell River, BC</b>	<b>5.63%</b>
15. Courtenay, BC	4.51%
23. Nanaimo, BC	3.62%
34. Duncan, BC	2.43%
40. Powell River, BC	2.15%
67. Port Alberni, BC	0.66%

## International In-Migration

The largest metropolitan centres in Canada grew faster than smaller urban centres from 2011 to 2016, driven largely by higher levels of international immigration.

The data on this page is total international in-migrants, which includes immigrants as well as temporary residents and returning Canadians who were living abroad in 2011. Metro Toronto attracted nearly 80,000 international in-migrants per year, on average, and the total of nearly 400,000 people over 2011-2016 would rank as the 14<sup>th</sup> largest urban centre in Canada. The rest of the top 10 is dominated by the largest metro regions in the country.

Within the Island Coastal region, the Nanaimo, Courtenay and Duncan areas are in the top half of all urban areas in Canada, but most of the region attracts a modest number of international migrants.

Please note these figures are not "net." They show only the number of in-migrants and not the number of out-migrants, because the out-migrants living around the world are not covered by the Census.

Urban Area (Ranked out of 152)	International In-Migration, 2011 to 2016
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### Top Ten

1. Toronto, ON	390,615
2. Montréal, QC	195,005
3. Vancouver, BC	186,000
4. Calgary, AB	91,165
5. Edmonton, AB	75,425
6. Winnipeg, MB	53,230
7. Ottawa - Gatineau, ON/QC	49,935
8. Hamilton, ON	19,965
9. Kitchener - Cambridge -Waterloo, ON	19,585
10. Saskatoon, SK	18,245

### Bottom Ten Communities for International In-Migrants

143. Bay Roberts, NL	65
144. Hawkesbury, ON	65
145. Ingersoll, ON	50
146. Elliot Lake, ON	45
147. Grand Falls-Windsor, ON	40
148. Dolbeau-Mistassini, QC	40
149. Cowansville, QC	40
150. Baie-Comeau, QC	35
151. Alma, QC	35
152. Lachute, QC	20

### ICET Communities, International In-Migrants

31. Nanaimo, BC	2,880
54. Courtenay, BC	990
69. Duncan, BC	710
85. Parksville, BC	440
89. Campbell River, BC	415
123. Powell River, BC	155
132. Port Alberni, BC	135

## Building a diverse and sustainable economy.

### How the Analysis is Done

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There are 152 urban regions in Canada, including Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) such as Toronto and Vancouver, as well as smaller areas called Census Agglomerations (CAs) with an urban core of at least 10,000 people.

Both CMAs and CAs can include multiple municipalities, rural areas and indigenous communities that are linked together and function as a single labour market. The region served by Island Coastal Economic Trust has seven of these smaller urban centres that are named after their central municipality – Duncan, Nanaimo, Parksville, Port Alberni, Courtenay, Campbell River and Powell River.

Statistics Canada reports data<sup>3</sup> for the number of people who were moved into and out of each urban area in Canada between the 2011 and 2016 Census. This does not include people who were born or died between 2011 and 2016 or who moved into or out of Canada.

This data set shows very clearly which urban communities are attracting residents from other parts of the country, and which are losing.

### Island Coastal Geographic Definition

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The seven Census Agglomerations (CAs) in the ICET region are shown below with their exact geographic components. Similar migration data is not available for smaller communities in the region.

#### Campbell River CA

- Campbell River
- Strathcona Regional District Area D
- Campbell River 11, Homalco 9 and Quinsam 12 Reserves

#### Courtenay CA

- Courtenay and Comox
- Comox Valley Regional District Areas A and B
- Comox 1 Reserve

#### Duncan CA

- Duncan and North Cowichan
- Cowichan Valley Regional District Electoral Areas D and E
- Cowichan, Halalt 2, Squaw-hay-one 11, Theik 2, Tsussie 6 and Tzart-Lam 5 Reserves

#### Nanaimo CA

- Nanaimo and Lantzville
- Regional District of Nanaimo Electoral Areas A and C
- Nanaimo River, Nanaimo Town 1 and Nanoose Reserves

#### Parksville CA

- Parksville and Qualicum Beach
- Regional District of Nanaimo Electoral Area G

#### Port Alberni CA

- Port Alberni
- Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District Electoral Areas B, D, E and F
- Ahahswinis 1, Alberni 2, Klehkoot 2 and Tsahaheh Reserves

#### Powell River CA

- Powell River and Sechelt Indian Government District (Part)
- Powell River Regional District Electoral Areas B and C

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<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada Table 98-400-X2016315