

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thousands of people throughout North America have abandoned urban and suburban living and moved to exurban areas. Although they relocate to the countryside surrounding the city, "exurbanites" maintain strong ties with the urban or suburban area from where they have come. Some people migrate to the exurbs to take advantage of lower land and house prices outside the city and lower taxes, while others move for quality-of-life reasons.

A survey questionnaire was distributed to residents of thirteen rural subdivisions in Oxford-on-Rideau Township and South Gower Township, Ontario. These two localities are adjacent to the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, one of the largest urban areas in Canada. The purpose of the survey was three-fold: 1) to assess the extent to which the demand for new rural residential development is generated by exurbanites; 2) to determine the motivations of migrants for moving to the study area; and, 3) to measure the ties maintained by exurbanites with the urban and suburban portions of Ottawa-Carleton. One hundred and fifteen people completed the questionnaire and their responses provided the data for the ensuing analysis.

Survey respondents were divided into two groups: "exurbanites" and "other respondents". Exurbanites were those people who moved to the study area from urban and suburban portions of Ottawa-Carleton, while other respondents were those who came all other areas. This categorization allowed a comparison of the motivations of exurbanites for moving to the study area with those of other respondents, and whether exurbanites have stronger ties with urban and suburban Ottawa-Carleton than other respondents.

The results indicate that exurbanites make up a large proportion (40%) of people who moved to rural residential subdivisions in the study area. There were few differences between exurbanites and other respondents in terms of age, household size,

household income, house size, and house value. Both groups were found to consist primarily of married couples with children. Average household incomes were high for both exurbanites and other respondents, with most between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Over one-half of households in both groups had two wage-earners, and few households did not have at least one wage-earner. Most respondents moved into houses with either the same number or more bedrooms than the previous home. One-third of exurbanites were found to be first-time homebuyers. These respondents had lower household incomes on average and lower house values compared to previous homeowners.

Many exurbanites had given serious consideration to remaining in, or moving back to, urban or suburban Ottawa-Carleton. Even more had contemplated buying a house in rural Ottawa-Carleton, particularly in Rideau Township or Osgoode Township. When asked their most important reasons for choosing their current house, exurbanites indicated primarily economic factors, such as the price of the house, large lots at lower prices, and lower taxes. They were less likely than other respondents to indicate issues generally associated with "quality-of-life", such as privacy or rural setting, as being the most important reason.

Exurbanites are generally satisfied with their current homes. They enjoy privacy, large lot sizes, and friendly neighbours. However, the most dissatisfaction expressed by exurbanites is related to their automobile dependence. They resent spending the large amount of time driving between their homes and their work or friends in Ottawa-Carleton. Thirty-seven percent of exurbanites cited their commute time or their distance from Ottawa as what they like the least about living in their current house.

The most notable differences between exurbanites and other respondents were related to travel patterns. Most exurbanites are not employed in the study area, but in urban or suburban Ottawa-Carleton. Over 80% of exurbanite first wage-earners and about 75% of exurbanite second wage-earners have a longer commute between home

and work since moving to the study area. The results show that exurbanites have significantly longer commute lengths. On average, they travel over 40 minutes to get to work, while other respondents have commutes of about 30 minutes. Not only do most exurbanites work in Ottawa-Carleton, they also spend much of their other time there. They are more likely than other respondents to travel to Ottawa-Carleton to shop for clothes, to go to restaurants and theatres, to visit friends, to carry out recreational activities, and to obtain medical and dental services.

The results point to several planning implications. The very close ties exurbanites maintain with Ottawa-Carleton's urban and suburban areas are likely to lead to future transportation problems. As more exurbanites move to Oxford-on-Rideau Township and South Gower Township, rural roads will become congested and will require expensive repairs and modifications. Extensive use of automobiles by exurbanites will exacerbate growing environmental problems related to air pollution. Exurbanites voiced concern with the level of services available in the area. In the future, they may begin to demand more services, such as recreational facilities and garbage pick-up, which will cost *all* local taxpayers.

The problems caused by exurbanization may be alleviated through a number of methods. By lowering development cost charges, particularly in its urban and suburban areas, Ottawa-Carleton may encourage more people to remain within its boundaries. Another option is to regulate land-use on a larger scale than is currently being done. There must be some consistency of land-use policies among all municipalities within the Ottawa commutershed so that they do not contradict one another. It may also be useful for Oxford-on-Rideau and South Gower Townships to attract more employment—then exurbanites could live and work in the same area and have much shorter commutes.

