

Small Jewish Communities of Canada: An Evolving Picture

A Report to the Ronald S. Roadburg Foundation

SUBMITTED BY: PERRY ROMBERG | APRIL 2024



RONALD S
ROADBURG
FOUNDATION





Welcome to the Small Jewish Communities Study

From our inception the Ronald S. Roadburg Foundation has been committed to building and strengthening community and an important area of focus has been the needs of smaller Jewish communities across Canada. After a period of reduced funding from its constituent Federation to Jewish Federations

of Canada – UIA, the national organization of the Canadian Jewish Federations, our board is concerned that there is insufficient attention on and resources directed to smaller communities. As our foundation started to invest in strengthening leadership pipelines and addressing security needs in smaller communities, we felt that a clearer picture of these communities would help not only with our planning, but also foster a national discussion about the needs of Jews living outside our major population centres.

For many years the presumption has been that Jews are increasingly moving to larger cities, and smaller communities are hollowing out, and that was true for many years. But today's

reality is driven by rising housing costs in major metropolitan areas, changing lifestyle choices fed by COVID and the growth of remote work options, as well as increased emigration from Israel. Small communities are growing. It is still true that the vast majority of Jews live in the five largest “Federated” communities. But it is also true that virtually every other Jewish community in Canada — those with Federations and those without, is growing and some are growing fast. With that growth we are seeing nascent Jewish communal infrastructure evolve and take root.

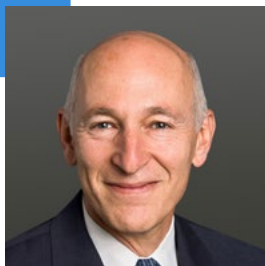
Our Foundation contracted with Perry Romberg, the long-time and recently retired director of services to small communities for Jewish Federations Canada — UIA, to undertake the study that follows. Perry worked to analyze the last several Canadian Jewish population studies — data derived from the Canadian national census. He also conducted dozens of interviews with professional and volunteer leaders of communities stretching from the Atlantic Provinces to Vancouver Island.

On one level it is perhaps not so dramatic that there is a shift of 1.2% of the national population from larger population centres to smaller ones. But if you are living in a place like Whitehorse,

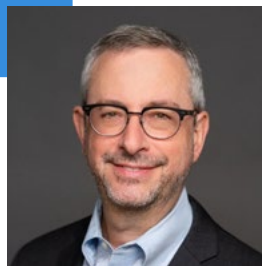
NWT, or Barrie, ON, you may have seen the Jewish population in your area has doubled or more, and this creates new opportunities for connecting with other Jews and creating frameworks for communal Jewish life.

At a time when all our Jewish communities are dealing with an explosive growth in antisemitism and rising security concerns, Jewish Canada needs to strengthen community resilience and mobilize our community’s advocacy resources. This agenda needs attention in small communities along with our larger ones. On the advocacy front we know that active leadership in small communities can have an outsized influence because they can more easily access political leaders in their communities. Most MPs in Canada don’t come from Canada’s 3 largest metropolitan area, where over 80% of Canada’s Jews live.

We hope that readers will find this study of the breadth of small community Jewish life interesting. More importantly we hope that leadership of the Canadian Jewish Federations and Jewish foundations will recognize we have both an opportunity and a responsibility to explore the potential and possibilities these communities offer.



Bernard Pinsky
Chair



Mark Gurvis
CEO

Between 2011 and 2021 the Jewish population of Canada grew by 18,670 people, or 4.8%.



Chanukah Party hosted by Kulam Ba'Valley in Langley, BC

Contents

Introduction	5	Hamilton	23
General Demographics	6	London	24
Summary of Findings Regarding Small Communities:	7	Windsor	25
The Landscape of Small Jewish Communities	8	The Atlantic Jewish Council (AJC) — Halifax	26
An Overview of Small Non-Federated Communities		Common Needs — Small Federated communities	27
By Province	10	Detailed Survey Findings —	
Atlantic Provinces: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick,		Non-Federated Communities	28
Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador: 10		Community Assets	28
Quebec	12	Immigration	29
Ontario	13	Retirees	29
Manitoba	15	Social Media-Based Groups	30
Saskatchewan	16	Recruitment and Retention	
Alberta	17	of Leadership	30
British Columbia	18	Public Education/Advocacy	
Yukon/Northwest Territory/Nunavut	20	and Combatting Antisemitism	30
The Small Federations	20	Chabad	31
Victoria/Vancouver Island	21	Conclusion	32
Edmonton	22	Appendix A	34

Introduction

The Ronald S. Roadburg Foundation is a British Columbia-based private charitable foundation rooted in a strong sense of community and responsibility. One of its areas of impact is strengthening and securing Jewish and other at-risk communities. The Foundation commissioned this report to better understand the changing landscape of the Jews living in small communities across Canada.

The study was based on data contained in the Canadian Census 2021, The Jewish Population of Canada report. Data was also gathered through personal interviews with the leaders of forty-nine small communities, six small Federations, and through the author's experience working over twenty years as the Jewish Federations of Canada-United Israel Appeal's (JFC) manager of programs and services to small communities.

This study focuses on the breadth of "small communities" across Canada. Although numerous, the communities are not homogeneous. The 51 communities and 6 smallest Federated communities in Canada surveyed have Jewish populations ranging from over 5,000 to under 100. Two of the small Federations are based in individual cities (Halifax and Victoria) but serve a wide geographic area with numerous and scattered additional communities. Not only are there differences in Jewish population size, but also in levels of community organization and development.

The Canadian Jewish community ranks fourth in size worldwide with a Jewish population of 404,015 in 2021. Israel ranks first, followed by the United States and France.



Beth Jacob Synagogue, Sault Saint Marie, ON

14.4% (58,750) of Canadian Jewry live in small communities, an increase of 1.1% between 2011 and 2021.

General Demographics

The numbers used in this report are derived from the Canadian Census 2021, specifically from the “long form” census conducted every ten years when citizens are asked to identify themselves by either or both “religion” and “ethnicity”. The Jewish Standard Definition for Jewish identity combines both these variables and demographers believe this method provides a more precise accounting of a Jewish population. The JFC traditionally hires a demographer to analyze the national census data as it specifically pertains to the Canadian Jewish community. This study is called the 2021 Census — the Jewish Population of Canada and the 2001 and 2011 editions were also used as resource materials for this report.

Highlights of the 2021 Census — The Jewish Population of Canada:¹

- The Jewish population of Canada numbered 404,015 persons in 2021.
- Jews comprised 1.1% of the total Canadian population of 36,328,475 individuals.
- Between 2011 and 2021 the Jewish community of this country grew by 18,670 people, or 4.8%.
- Regarding the age distribution of Canada’s Jewish community:
 - » The number of those between 0–14 years of age has increased in the last decade.
 - » The 25–44 age group has increased markedly in the last decade. These are the children of the Baby Boomers.

- » The 45–64 age group has decreased dramatically in the last decade.
- » The number of Jewish seniors (65+ years) has increased markedly in the last decade. Almost a quarter (23.2%) of the Jewish population of Canada are senior adults.
- More than half (56.8%) of Jews in Canada reside in the province of Ontario, and about a quarter (23.3%) in the province of Quebec.
- Smaller percentages of the total Jewish population reside in British Columbia (10%), Alberta (4.1%) and Manitoba (3.7%).
- The rest of the provinces have less than 1% each of the total number of Jews in Canada.
- All of the 10 Provinces and 1 Territory studied showed increases in their Jewish populations. However, 9 showed significant Jewish population gains of 6% or more between 2011 and 2021, while two, Ontario and Quebec, showed increases of under 3%.



¹ Highlights of the 2021 Census — The Jewish Population of Canada, Part 1, Basic Demographics iii-iv.



Kingston, ON

Summary of Findings Regarding Small Communities:

1. 14.5% of Canadian Jewry (58,750) live in small communities outside Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Calgary.
2. Of that 14.5% of Jews living outside the 6 major Jewish communities, 9.1% (36,580) live in small towns with no central and staffed Federation; 1.7% (7,125) live in two communities (Halifax and Victoria) that are the seat of regional communal structures and 3.7% (15,045) live in small cities with a central and staffed Federation.
3. In 2011, 13.4% (51,710) of the total Canadian Jewish population lived in small communities.² In 2021 that number increased to 14.5% (58,750) representing a shift of 1.1% of Canadian Jews from larger communities to smaller ones.
4. In the last decade small Jewish communities grew at a significantly greater rate than the two largest communities of Toronto (0.5%), and Montreal (0.7%). Many small communities grew at a similar or greater rate than the larger communities of Vancouver (8.9%), Ottawa (6.3%), Winnipeg (5.1%) and Calgary (13.1%).³
5. Economic factors such as affordable housing, remote work, expanding job opportunities in small cities and towns, and less stressful lifestyle have motivated families to leave the big cities (in-country migration).

² Ibid -pages iv-v.

³ Robert Brym, Canadian Jewish Population 2021-New Estimates, page 4, Table 6.3.

6. A significant increase in immigration to Canada due to an expansion of the government immigration policy has seen an average of 1,500 Jews moving to Canada annually over the last decade.⁴
7. Over 50% of Jewish immigrants coming to Canada are now from Israel. Most small communities report their newcomers are Israelis.⁵
8. Jewish sprawl is a phenomenon occurring outside many of the Federated communities, particularly Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, providing a challenge to the Federation system on finding a balance between local community needs and fundraising, and supporting “nearby” offshoot communities.
9. As small communities grow their volunteer and professional resources are strained and this limits their efforts in integrating newcomers.
10. The significant rise in antisemitism has increased the need for community advocacy and public education. However, small communities have limited resources to take on this role, and this was particularly voiced by the small Federations surveyed.
11. There are considerable capital assets owned by the 51 communities and 6 Federations surveyed in this report. The assets include 41 synagogues, 42 cemeteries, 7 Jewish Community Centres, 5 day schools, and 3 seniors’ residences. Most communities have solid long-term plans for these assets. However, some of the very small communities and Federations need transitional planning for their institutions.

The Landscape of Small Jewish Communities

Today, Jews populate every corner of this country. There are growing Jewish communities in St. John’s, Newfoundland, and in the smaller towns of Vancouver Island. There is a small Jewish presence in the Northwest Territories, and even in the territory of Nunavut.

Small Jewish communities are growing across the country. The decline experienced during the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000’s was reversed in the last two decades. For example,

in the last decade Newfoundland and Labrador experienced the largest relative increase of any provincial Jewish population in the country, with a gain of 131.8%. The current number of Jews (510) represents an historical peak for this province.⁶ In Ontario communities such as Barrie grew 70.4% and Guelph 33.7% over the last decade.⁷ In BC the Victoria Jewish population experienced significant growth in the last decade, rising by 66.7%. Its current Jewish population is 4,385.⁸

4 Robert Brym, *Canadian Jewish Population 2021-New Estimates*, page 4, Table 6.3.

5 Jewish Federation of Canada-UIA - Stephen Lewar Immigration Services Grant, May 2023.

6 Census 2021 - The Jewish Population of Canada pages 31-33.

7 Ibid - page 61-62, Table 18C.

8 Ibid - page v

More Jews are settling in areas outside of the traditional large Jewish cities and neighborhoods and moving into the sprawling surrounding suburbs and bedroom communities, or in smaller towns and rural areas across the provinces. These Jewish communities are small but growing, and are seeking Jewish connections both within and beyond their local community.

Over the last decade the Jewish population in small cities and towns across Canada has grown by 14.6%, more than triple the national growth rate of the Jewish population of 4.8%. Of the 404,015 Jews living in Canada, 36,580 live in “smaller” non-Federated communities, 7,125 live in two communities that have a regional structure, with another 15,045 living in four small Federated communities (Edmonton, Windsor, London, Hamilton, and Halifax). This

totals 58,860 Jews living in small communities or 14.6% of Canadian Jewry. This growth trend is in contrast with the two major communities of Toronto and Montreal, both of which grew by less than 1%.

Cities like Ottawa–Gatineau (7.9%), Hamilton (5.1%), London (6.1%), Winnipeg (5.1%), Calgary (13.2%) and Vancouver (8.9%) all had growth increases. Growth in these communities is a function of both immigration to the country and internal migration from larger cities to smaller Canadian cities and towns. Six small cities in Canada showed a decrease in their Jewish population. They are Sault Ste. Marie (-67%), Sarnia (-38%), Regina (-24%), Cape Breton (-22%), Windsor (-13.9%), and Oshawa (-1%). A summary listing the communities surveyed in this report with select demographics can be found in Appendix A.



Over the last decade the Jewish population in small cities and towns across Canada has grown by **14.6%**, more than triple the national growth rate of the Jewish population of 4.8%.

Jewish families in small communities often organize through informal social networks to create opportunities to gather and provide Jewish connection.



Beth El Synagogue, St. John's, NL

An Overview of Small Non-Federated Communities By Province

ATLANTIC PROVINCES: NOVA SCOTIA, NEW BRUNSWICK, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, AND NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR:

The 2021 Census data revealed 6,005 Jews living in Atlantic Canada, an increase of 47.5% from the 2011 report, and representing 1.5% of the total current Canadian Jewish population.⁹

Halifax, with its 2,740 Jews, is the largest Jewish community in this region.¹⁰ It is also the seat of the Atlantic Jewish Council, the central Jewish umbrella organization for the region. A detailed description of the community is listed below under the Federations heading.

The other communities surveyed and mentioned in the census are:

- Fredericton NB
- Moncton, NB
- Saint John, NB
- St. John's, NL
- Cape Breton, NS
- Charlottetown, PEI

⁹ Ibid - table 16A, page 40

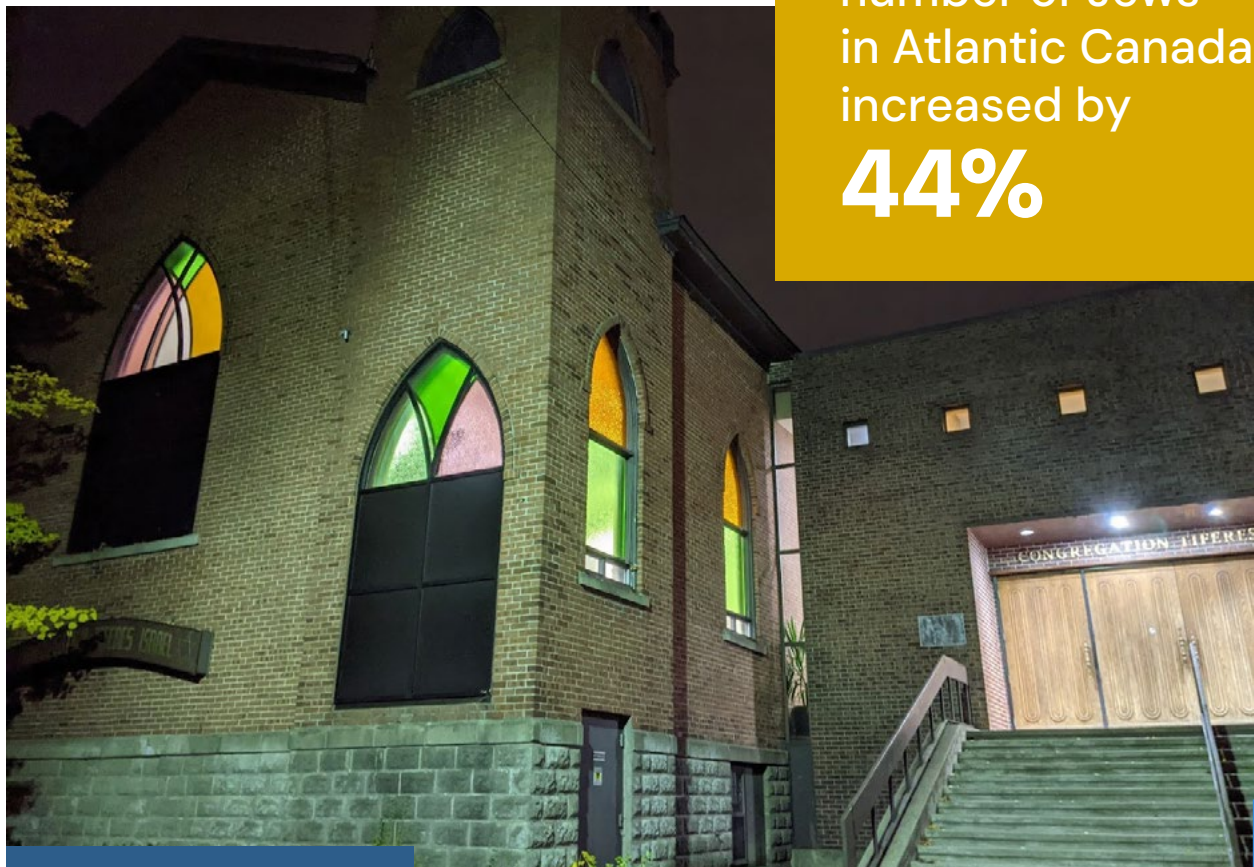
¹⁰ Ibid - table 16C, page 44

The number of Jews in these communities ranges from 140–450 as of the 2021 Census. Although the nominal figures are small all four Atlantic provinces experienced significant percentage growth over the last decade. The largest growth (134%) occurred in Newfoundland and Labrador, followed by 89% in New Brunswick, 107% in PEI and 26.2% in Nova Scotia.¹¹ While these numbers pale in comparison to the large cities, the

proportionate growth is marked. These communities were sunsetting a decade earlier but are now attracting new and younger families. While many are immigrants from Israel and South America, some are Canadian-born or long-time city dwellers moving to small communities. Except for PEI, each of these communities has a synagogue and a Jewish cemetery, and Chabad has a presence in Halifax and St. Johns.

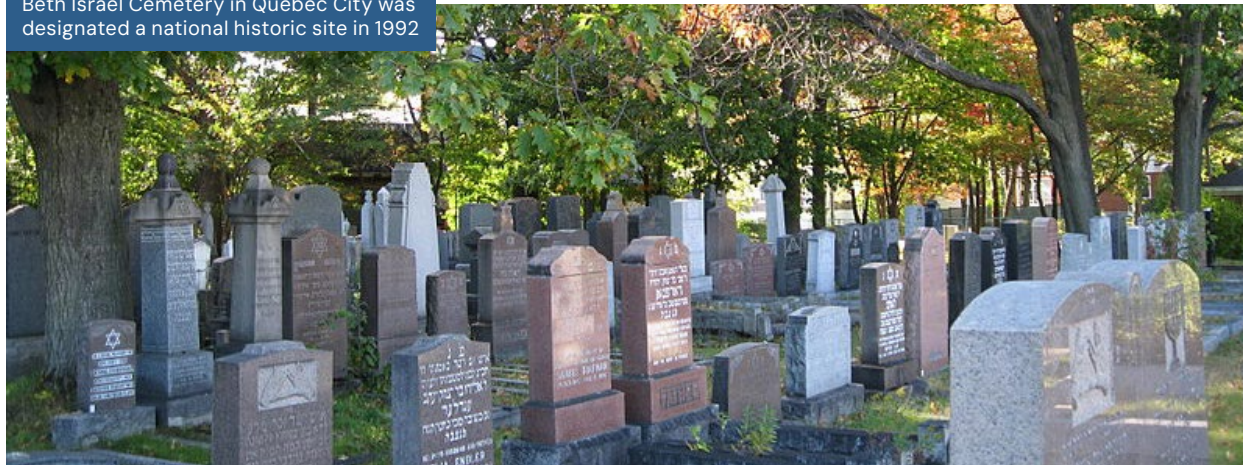
11 Ibid - table 17A, page 50

Since 2011, The
number of Jews
in Atlantic Canada
increased by
44%



Tiferes Israel Synagogue, Moncton, NB

Beth Israel Cemetery in Quebec City was designated a national historic site in 1992



QUEBEC

Outside of Montreal, Gatineau/Hull has the largest Jewish population; 900 according to the 2021 Census.¹² It is the third fastest growing Jewish community in Canada.¹³ Its proximity to Ottawa allows for connectivity to the Jewish Federation and other community resources there. The community has its own Facebook group titled Outaouais Jewish Community, which functions as an informal chavurah-style organization.

The next largest Jewish community is Quebec City with 535 people.¹⁴ It has a synagogue, the Israel Ohev Shalom Congregation, its own cemetery, and a Chabad house. The rest of Quebec Jewry lives outside these communities with 1,270 people spread in small pockets all over the province. The “Rest

of Quebec” has seen increases in its Jewish population since 1981. In the last two decades, the number of Jews living in the “Rest of Quebec” increased by 105.9%, more than doubling its total. This suggests that Jews are increasingly choosing to reside in the towns or rural areas of the province where Jews have not traditionally settled.¹⁵ Chabad is the most active Jewish organization reaching out to these and other small pockets of Jews in Quebec.

The total Jewish population for the Province of Quebec has grown by 1% (from 93,625 to 94,120) since 2011, arresting previous patterns of declining population in Canada’s second largest Jewish community.¹⁶

¹² Ibid - page 53

¹³ Ibid - table 17A, page 50

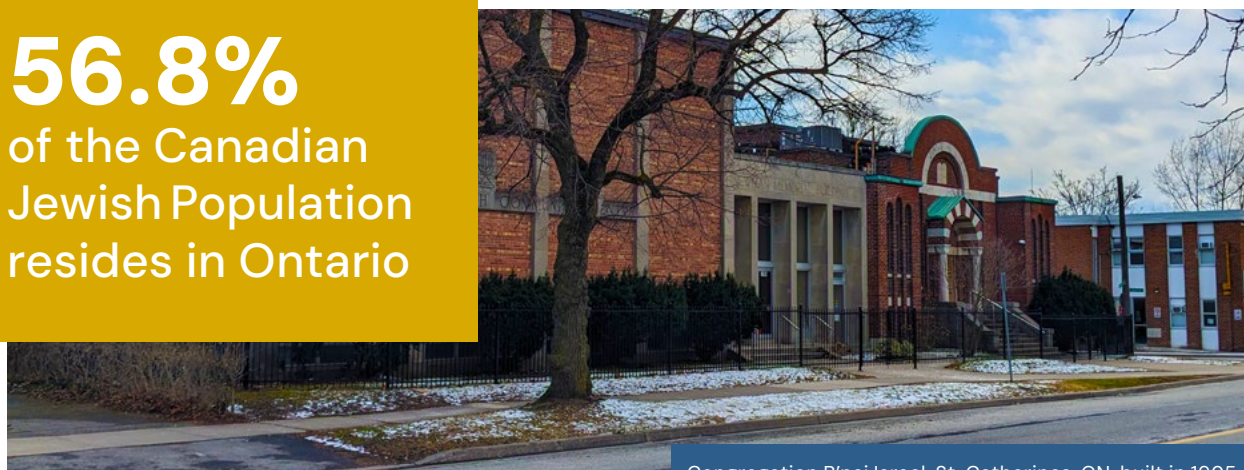
¹⁴ Ibid - page 53

¹⁵ Ibid - page 53

¹⁶ Ibid - page 57

The population in Quebec outside of the Montreal region has more than **doubled** in the last 2 decades

56.8%
of the Canadian
Jewish Population
resides in Ontario



Congregation B'nai Israel, St. Catharines, ON, built in 1905

ONTARIO

With a Jewish population of 229,495, more than half (56.8%) of the Canadian Jewish population resides in Ontario.¹⁷ The largest Jewish community is in Toronto.¹⁸ Since the 2011 Census the community only grew by 0.5% (895 individuals), whereas the small communities running east/west along the 401 highway and north/south along the 400 have been growing at a much faster pace.¹⁹ The Jewish population in these small communities (Kingston, Belleville/Prince Edward County, Barrie/Simcoe County (north of Toronto), Guelph, Kitchener/Waterloo, and St. Catharines have grown dramatically. Barrie/Simcoe County, which has grown 70% since 2011, used to be considered a bedroom community of Toronto.²⁰ Over the last decade local community services and businesses operated by Jews (medical, dental,

and even kosher shopping) have established themselves, resulting in the Jewish community becoming less reliant on Toronto. However, establishment of central coordinating organizations like Federations or Jewish Family Service agencies have not emerged.

University campuses in Kingston, Guelph, and Kitchener–Waterloo have grown over the years, attracting many Jewish academics and professionals for faculty or administrative roles, or the corollary industries that grow around universities. Similarly, university and regional medical services in northern Ontario (Sudbury, Thunder Bay, North Bay) have brought small but proportionately significant growth to these exceedingly small Jewish communities.

¹⁷ Ibid - table 18b, page 60

¹⁸ Ibid - page 61

¹⁹ Ibid - page 62

²⁰ Ibid - page 63

The St. Catharines–Niagara region grew by 26.2% over the decade, with many retirees moving there.²¹ Retirees often retain strong ties to their previous communities and stay on the periphery of the local Jewish institutions in their new communities.

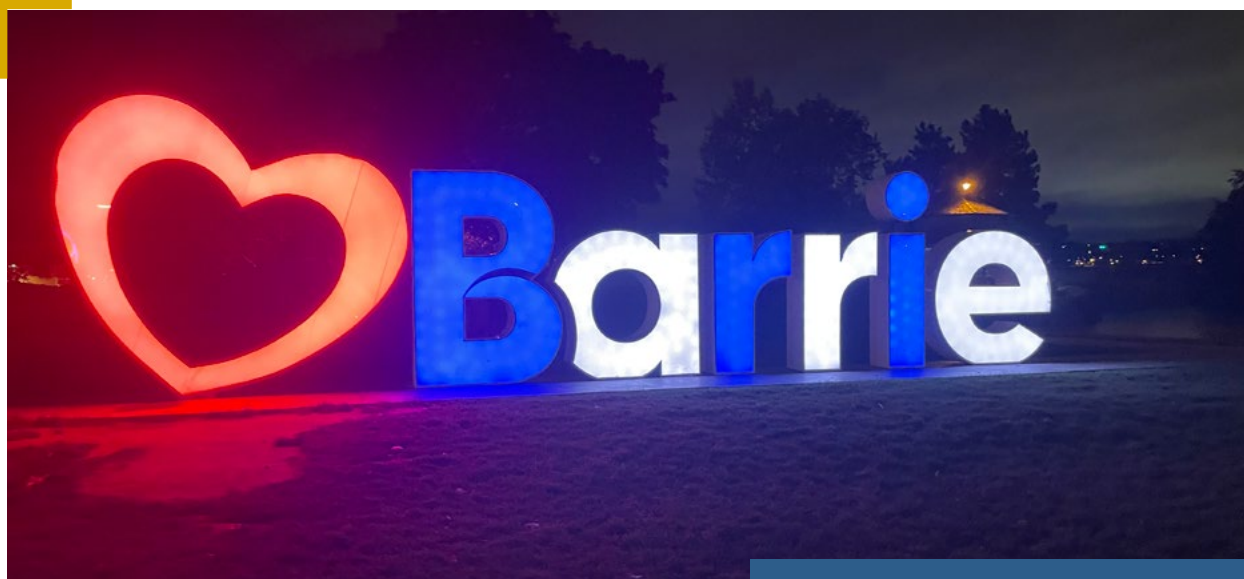
The smallest communities (100–500 Jews, each with a synagogue and a cemetery), include Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Owen Sound, North Bay, Peterborough, Belleville, Niagara Falls, and Sarnia.²² There are pockets of Jews (one hundred or less) in several other southern Ontario small towns (Picton, Burlington, and Ajax/Pickering) with no “concrete” communal structures. Some have informal chavurah–style connections through social media. This is a growing norm, especially among new Israeli immigrants.

Small communities across Canada grew by 10% over the last decade. An interesting trend occurring around Toronto and other large cities is “Jewish sprawl” – Jewish families moving to small towns outside the metropolitan city boundaries. For example, Newmarket, ON, is the fastest–growing Jewish community of the last decade with 2,095 Jews – a growth of 114.9%.²³ Newmarket is 55 kilometers north of Toronto with a general population of 88,000. Historically it had a minimal number of Jewish families. Today there is a synagogue operating in a rented storefront, and a community council. Although close to the Toronto communal infrastructure, the Newmarket community still feels separate and isolated, and is looking for ways to interact with other communities its size and build its own organization.

21 Ibid – table 18c, page 62, 64

22 Ibid – page vi

23 Ibid – page 69



Blue and white support for Israel in Barrie, ON



Manitobans practicing the Shofar

95%
of Jews in
Manitoba
reside in
Winnipeg

MANITOBA

Winnipeg, with a Jewish population of 13,940, has 95% of Manitoba's Jewish population of 14,805. The 2021 Census reveals that outside Winnipeg, there are 110 Jews in Brandon, and 645 spread out in various other

communities.²⁴ No formal or informal small community organizations were found outside of Winnipeg.

²⁴ Ibid - table 19a, page 70

SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatchewan has a Jewish population of 2,005 with 81% of the community living in two communities and the rest scattered among very small towns. The two primary Jewish communities are Saskatoon, which grew by 25% since 2011 to 945 Jews, and Regina, which decreased to 685 Jews, a 24% decrease. Another 375 Jews are dispersed throughout

the province.²⁵ Both communities have well-organized communal structures — Beth Jacob Synagogue in Regina, and the Agudas Israel Synagogue in Saskatoon, as well as a Chabad House in each community. Both synagogues also function as community centers offering programs and services to all community members.

25 Ibid - table 19c, page 74



Top: Chanukah celebration at Beth Jacob Synagogue in Regina, SK. Below left: Congregation Agudas Achim in Saskatoon, SK; Below right: Jewish cemetery in Hirsch, SK





The Jewish congregation in Lethbridge started in 1911

ALBERTA

Alberta has a total of 16,710 Jews, 87% of whom live in the Calgary and Edmonton communities. Calgary (9,290) houses the largest Jewish community at 54% of Alberta Jews, while Edmonton is home to 5,690 Jews (33%). The Calgary community has experienced a 13.1% growth since 2011.²⁶ Due to the war in Ukraine, Calgary saw a number of Jewish refugees arriving on temporary visitor visas. The Edmonton Jewish community grew by 4.6%.²⁷

Lethbridge is the largest of the small communities in Alberta with 270 Jews. Red Deer is next with 180.²⁸ Other than a Jewish cemetery in Lethbridge, no other formal Jewish community organizations were identified outside of Calgary and Edmonton. The Beth Israel Synagogue in Lethbridge is no longer operating.

26 Ibid - table 19c, page 74

27 Ibid - table 19c, page 74

28 Ibid - table 19b, page 72

BRITISH COLUMBIA

British Columbia has the third largest Jewish provincial population in Canada with 40,530 Jews representing 10% of the national Jewish population.²⁹ The mainland community has 33,715 Jews, with 28,035 (81%) living in the Metro Vancouver area, and 5,680 living mostly in small communities near Vancouver. Kelowna has the second largest community on the mainland (1,170 Jews) and third in the Province.³⁰ Mainland Jewish populations outside Metro Vancouver include the Okanagan region, which includes the communities of Kelowna, Vernon, Osoyoos, and Penticton (1,450+ Jews); the Sunshine Coast (430); Abbotsford (390); Chilliwack (345); Whistler/Squamish (340); Kamloops (315), Nelson (300); and Prince George (180).³¹

While BC mainland Jewish communities grew by 12% since 2011, the communities on Vancouver Island grew by 61% (from 4,250 to 6,845). The fastest growing community on Vancouver Island is Victoria, which has seen a growth of 67% since 2011.³² A detailed description of that community's growth is reported below under the Small Federations Section.

BC has a higher percentage of its Jewish population living outside its major metropolitan areas. 31% of BC Jews live outside of Vancouver.³³ By contrast:

- in Nova Scotia 14% live outside of Halifax;³⁴
- in NB, PEI and NFL/Lab the Jewish populations are small and scattered among several cities;³⁵
- in Quebec only 4% live outside of Montreal;³⁶
- in Ontario, 19% of Jews live outside of Toronto and most of them are in the Ottawa area;³⁷
- in Manitoba only 6% live outside of Winnipeg;³⁸
- in Saskatchewan 19% live outside of Saskatoon and Regina;³⁹ and
- in Alberta 10% live outside of Calgary and Alberta.⁴⁰

29 Ibid - page 79

30 Ibid - page 79

31 Ibid - table 20a, page 80

32 Ibid - table 20a, page 80

33 Ibid - table 20c, page 84

34 Ibid - table 20a, page 80

35 Ibid - table 16a, page 40

36 Ibid - table 16a, page 40

37 Ibid - table 18a, page 58

38 Ibid - table 18a, page 58

39 Ibid - table 19a, page 70

40 Ibid - table 19a, page 70



Okanagan Jewish Community Centre, Kelowna, BC



Mountain Chai at the Nelson Pride parade in BC

The total Jewish population of British Columbia has been increasing steadily over the last several decades. However, in the last decade, the Jewish population of the province has been growing at a more vigorous pace (18.3%) than that of Metro Vancouver (8.9%); suggesting that Jews newly settling in the province are increasingly choosing other destinations aside from Greater Vancouver and that Jews within the Vancouver metro area are moving to other parts of the province.⁴¹

In response to this dispersion of Jewish population the Vancouver Federation has recently expanded its program resources dedicated to outreach and engagement activities in the growing areas in the farther reaches of the Metro Vancouver area, as well as communities a bit further out such as Whistler/Squamish and Delta/Langley.

Kelowna, the second largest mainland Jewish community has a community center/synagogue, a regional cemetery, and a Chabad House, and serves as the hub for Jews in the Okanagan region. Kamloops has also seen substantial percentage growth at 15% (315 Jews) and has an informal "chavurah" community structure. Prince George's Jewish population (180) experienced a slight decrease of 2.7%.⁴² The community of Nelson is at 300 Jews, but no comparative statistics from the 2011 Census are available. Mountain Chai, an email group that acts as a Jewish community message board in the Slocan Valley, offers a D'var Torah every week, arrangements to attend Shabbat meals, information about speakers coming to the area, books of interest and other Jewish discussions. It is still operating and is the main community connector.

41 Ibid - table 19a, page 70

42 Ibid - page 87

YUKON/NORTHWEST TERRITORY/NUNAVUT

There has never been much Jewish population in the areas of Canada now defined as Territories, and virtually no Jewish communal infrastructure. There were Jews among the first fur traders who established their trading posts in these areas during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁴³

Today there is a Jewish presence of 340 spread among these Territories. There are 190 Jews in the Yukon, 85 in the Northwest

Territories, and 65 in Nunavut.⁴⁴ The Jewish Cultural Society of the Yukon is a community chavurah style group based in Whitehorse. It has its own website, an exhibit on the Jews who participated in the Klondike Gold Rush, a weekly newsletter, holds community programs, and manages the local Jewish cemetery. Although these numbers are quite small, it is nonetheless important to note that Jews populate just about every region of Canada.

43 Ibid - page 27 (Highlights of the 2021 Census-The Jewish Population of Canada, Charles Shahar author, Part 1, Basic Demographics)

44 Ibid - Table 15A, page 30

The Small Federations

There are four smaller cities with professionally staffed Federations that maintain a central communal structure and two communities that function as regional structures providing services to smaller communities in the surrounding region. Their combined population of 22,160 Jews makes up 5.5% of the 2021 Canadian Jewish population.

Among the 6 small Federations surveyed (Victoria, Edmonton, Windsor, London, Hamilton, and the Atlantic Jewish Council), there are 15 synagogues, 15 cemeteries, 5 Jewish Community Centres, 3 senior residences, 3 Hillel houses, and 5 day schools.

Community	Population (2021 census data)
Victoria (regional centre of the Jewish Federation of Victoria & Vancouver Island)	4,385 ⁴⁵
Edmonton	5,690 ⁴⁶
Hamilton	5,310 ⁴⁷
London	2,765 ⁴⁸
Windsor	1,270 ⁴⁹
Halifax (regional centre of the Atlantic Jewish Council)	2,740 ⁵⁰
Total across communities	22,160

45 Ibid - table 20c, page 84

46 Ibid - table 19c, page 74

47 Ibid - page 61

48 Ibid - page 63

49 Ibid - page 63

50 Ibid - page 41



Jewish social gathering in Edmonton, AB

VICTORIA/VANCOUVER ISLAND

Since 2011 the communities on Vancouver Island have grown by 61% (from 4,250 to 6,845). The fastest growing community on the Island is Victoria, with a 67% increase from 2,630 in 2011 to 4,385 in 2021.⁵¹ The fastest growing demographic are 29–40 year olds, including many families with young children. The community's initial growth came from retirees from both Canada and the US. However, over the last decade the Island has become home to Canadian families relocating from Toronto, Montreal and the US for university positions, and Israeli newcomers. The growth of government services, medical facilities, and industry have expanded job opportunities, and increase remote work patterns have helped fuel the growth of population.

The Jewish Federation of Victoria/Vancouver Island (JFVVI) is the central community organization of the rapidly growing communities on the Island. In Victoria, with the largest concentration of Jewish population, there are three synagogue communities: Congregation Emanu-El (Conservative), Temple Kolot Mayim (Reform), and Chabad of Vancouver Island.

The Victoria/Vancouver Island Federation manages its own annual UJA Campaign and supports a variety of community services and programs. The rapid Jewish population expansion has brought significant challenges to the Federation as it is thinly staffed and not equipped to provide or support programming to the many new young families and individuals. The annual campaign is small and has not grown to match the growing



Purim celebration hosted by Jewish Federation of Victoria/Vancouver Island

community. The campaign has an aging donor base with top donors passing on, others now on fixed incomes; new donors have not yet stepped up to revitalize the donor ranks.

There is a JCC in Victoria, a separate organization, operating in a small building with limited room and security enhancements to accommodate community programming. The Island, together with small numbers of Jews living on neighbouring Gulf Islands, now total almost 7,000 Jews, a population larger than any of the other small Federations surveyed in this report. Roughly one-third of this number are living in small, scattered communities throughout Vancouver Island and neighbouring islands, including Nanaimo, Duncan, Campbell River, Courtenay, and Salt Spring and Hornby Islands, and others. The Federation, though seen as a community umbrella organization, has limited resources to service this diverse and growing community.

⁵¹ Ibid - table 20c, page 84



Artistic rendering for the new Edmonton Jewish Community Centre

EDMONTON

The community grew slightly since 2011 (4.6%, or 250 people) to 5,690.⁵² The JCC facility was sold in 2012, and the lack of a central facility to bring the community together and staff dedicated to community programming has hampered the community building efforts of the Federation. However, the Federation has just purchased a new building to house a new JCC and community gathering hub. While it will not have significant gym or physical workout facilities it will provide a variety of creative programs to build community engagement and connection. Programs aimed at attracting young families, children, and youth are expected to add to the attractiveness of Jewish family and community life in Edmonton. The annual UJA Campaign is facing challenges, particularly in the top donor and new donor categories. The opening of the new JCC (for which funding has been secured) is an investment in building

the community, attracting new leadership and strengthening the campaign.

Like many communities the Federation has been receiving significantly more speaker requests regarding the Jewish people, antisemitism and is dealing with increased advocacy concerns. While managed strategically these growing responsibilities are spread among several staff who have other duties and a dedicated staff position for this community function would be extremely helpful. Marketing resources and scholarships to attract youth to Israel programs are also concerns.

The Edmonton community has substantial capital assets, including 3 synagogues, 2 day schools, the Edmonton Chevra Kadisha Burial Society, the Edmonton Jewish cemetery, a Chabad House, and the new JCC.

52 Ibid - table 19c, page 74

HAMILTON

The community grew slightly since 2011 (5% or 255 individuals) to 5,310.⁵³ In 2021 Hamilton had the reputation of having the most hate crimes in Canada. The Federation is repeatedly called on to speak to the press, hold public education presentations on antisemitism and Holocaust education, and address various civic and provincial bodies, but has no dedicated staff for this role. CIJA is consulted but the volume

of requests is such that a dedicated staff role is required. As well, the Jewish population of the Niagara region depends on Hamilton's Jewish Family Service for counselling and food security services, but the Federation receives no additional revenue to support this activity. Increased Jewish education and camp scholarships would assist in reaching the community's youth and their families.



Shalom Village long-term care facility serving the Hamilton region



LONDON

The community experienced small growth since 2011 (5.9% or 155 individuals) to 2,765.⁵⁴ Many professionals come for medical or academic stints at the university but then move on, posing a challenge for sustained growth. For a small community it has significant capital assets to sustain, including three synagogues, a JCC, a senior's residence, two cemeteries, and a day school. The Federation has a young and dynamic board, but many of its top donors are aging and have moved to larger communities to be with children. The Federation's primary needs are

in staffing and marketing of the community to attract new families. London serves as a hub for many small towns in western Ontario, with the Federation receiving numerous requests from various municipalities and school boards for presentations concerning Judaism, fighting antisemitism, Holocaust education and Israel. This has stretched the director, the small staff and volunteer leadership.

The London Federation feels it is financially stable for the next 5-10 years, but that increasing its Jewish population is central to strengthen the community.

WINDSOR

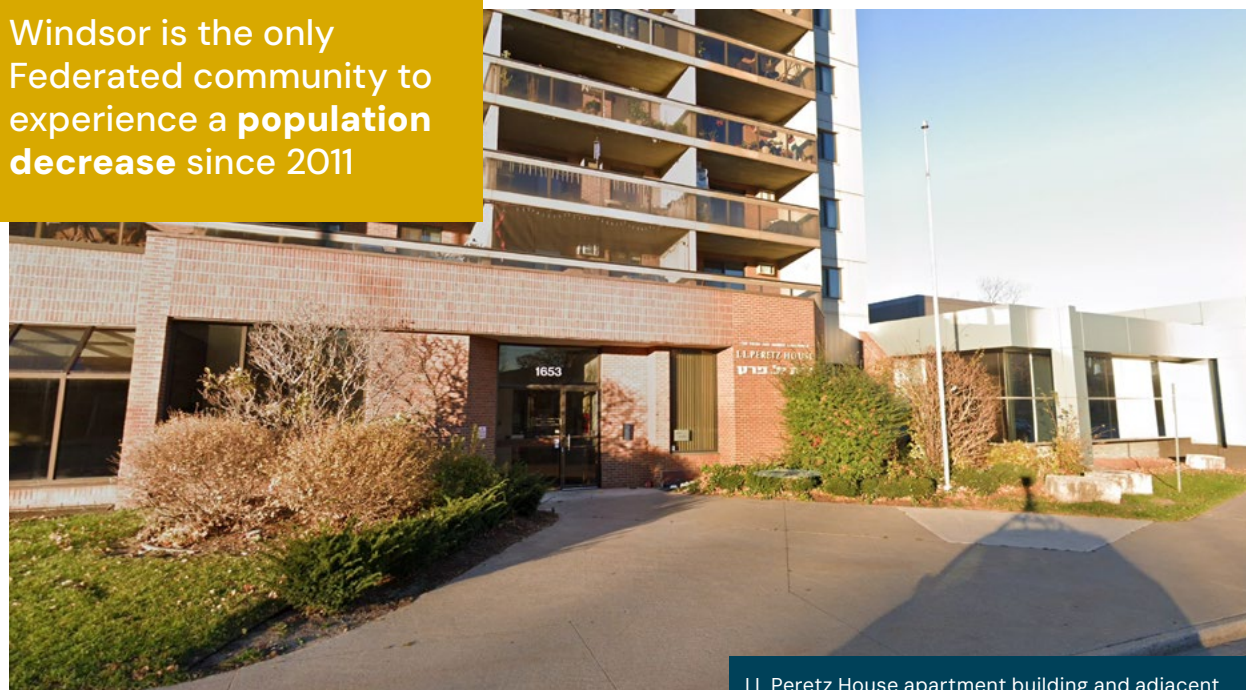
The Jewish community population of Windsor numbers 1,270 and has been losing population since 1971. In the last decade there has been a decrease of 13.9%, or a loss of 205 Jews.⁵⁵

Windsor is the only Federated community showing a decline in population since 2011. The 2021 census revealed Windsor as the Jewish community with the largest percentage of 75+ year-olds and older, and the smallest number of children under 14. The community has numerous physical assets but cannot sustain them with its declining and aging population and a struggling UJA campaign. There is a community endowment fund, but it may not

be large enough to sustain the community for the long-term.

The leadership aspires to launch a Grow Windsor campaign to attract new Jewish families but would need professional marketing assistance and part-time staffing to establish a job opportunity-based recruitment structure. The community has affordable housing and community infrastructure, and the short drive to Detroit provides easy access to job opportunities, and other Jewish resources. With so many people working remotely this may add to the attraction of the community.

Windsor is the only Federated community to experience a **population decrease** since 2011



I L Peretz House apartment building and adjacent Jewish Federation and Community Centre building

THE ATLANTIC JEWISH COUNCIL (AJC) — HALIFAX

The AJC provides services to and represents the communities across the Atlantic provinces, including small communities in Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John, Charlottetown, Halifax, Cape Breton, and St. John's, and other smaller pockets in the region. Halifax is the main Jewish population centre.

While the Atlantic communities listed above have all experienced growth, Halifax has led with a 31% growth to 2,740 since 2011.⁵⁶ The community has significant infrastructure with two synagogues, two cemeteries, a Hillel House, a Chabad House, and a Jewish summer camp. The long-time community members and leadership, who have been at the core of the annual campaign over several decades, are still active but looking to the next generation to step up. The new influx of families and individuals is changing the demographics, and the leadership is adjusting to the stresses that

come with rapid change. Most newcomers are Israelis and are more drawn to cultural connections than synagogue affiliation. As with many of the small communities surveyed, the demographic changes have brought challenges arising from the different cultures and attitudes of those new to the community and the established membership.

The community has endowment funds that support its synagogues and cemeteries, and the real estate value of the two synagogues is significant. The community leadership see two needs:

- a plan to develop a community space where gatherings and programs can occur outside the two synagogues;
- a strategic plan that addresses the new needs of this changing and growing community.



Camp Kadima in Nova Scotia



Beth Israel Synagogue, Halifax (Photo: Wikipedia)



Marketing image from Windsor, ON Jewish communal program



Common Needs — Small Federated communities

The small Federations surveyed are all thinly staffed. While each Federation relies on the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) for consultation and assistance on matters of advocacy and combatting antisemitism, all expressed the need for the hiring of dedicated staff in this area.

The southwestern Ontario Federations (Hamilton, London and Windsor) have begun marketing campaigns to attract new families. However, with no marketing staff and limited resources the efforts have not progressed. Edmonton is also looking to attract newcomers. All the small Federations noted that expert marketing resources are needed.



The Beth Jacob Synagogue and Temple Shalom in Waterloo, ON, partner around food security in their community

Detailed Survey Findings — Non-Federated Communities

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Among the 51 non-Federated communities surveyed there were 26 synagogues, 25 synagogue-owned cemeteries and three JCCs. In addition, five of the non-Federated communities had purchased plots within a “Jewish section” of the local municipal cemetery. In the two regional centres (Halifax and Victoria) there are 4 synagogues, 3 cemeteries and 1 JCC. In the 4 Federated communities there are 11 synagogues, 11 cemeteries, 6 JCCs, 5 day schools and 3 senior residences. In total, in the 55 small communities surveyed owned 97 capital assets, exclusive of Chabad houses.

Most of the communities surveyed have their community capital assets financially secured by either endowment funds or long-term business plans. The smallest of the non-Federated communities with synagogues, however, are struggling and are looking at a

five year window before financial challenges (i.e., dwindling membership, decreased income from members and facility rentals) and capital repair needs (i.e., roof replacement) might force the need for building closure and/or sale. Communities in Ontario such as Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Owen Sound fall in this latter category. The North Bay, Sarnia, ON communities may be in a similar financial situation, although this could not be confirmed.

An interesting source of new revenue for several of the small non-Federated communities is from non-members from large cities who are buying cemetery plots, as these are much less expensive than in their home communities. Although this is a small phenomenon it has brought some income relief and built up the cemetery perpetual care funds.



Interior of Beth Jacob
Synagogue in Kitchener, ON

IMMIGRATION



**More
than 50%**
of newcomers to
small communities
are Israeli.

For decades, the Canadian government accepted 200,000 – 250,000 immigrants annually. In the last few years that target has increased to more than 400,000. The new policy will likely lead to an increased number of Jewish immigrants arriving annually, greater than the current annual average of 1,500.⁵⁷ While the largest group of Jewish immigrants to Canada had been from the Former Soviet Union, now more than 50% of newcomers to the small communities are Israeli. This is particularly true in the non-Federated communities.

The Israeli immigrants are usually professionals, in skilled trades, or entrepreneurs. The Israeli group comes Jewishly identified and knowledgeable, usually from a cultural and secular perspective. The

Israelis are active in social media and tend to create informal *chavurah*-type connections, as opposed to joining the existing local synagogues. When a local organization provides cultural programs or holiday celebrations the Israelis come out in large numbers, but they generally do not integrate themselves through membership in the local community structures. This is a common trend with most first-generation immigrant groups who immerse themselves first with work and family, with little time for community engagement.

RETIREES



Retirees (Canadian and American) are moving to smaller “scenic” communities for reasons of quality of life. They are moving from large cities to smaller communities across Canada, seeking a more relaxed and less expensive lifestyle. In Ontario, communities like St.

⁵⁷ Robert Brym, What the 2021 Census Reveals about the Canadian Jewish Community-article Canadian Jewish News December 6, 2022, page 2.

Catharines (Niagara-on-the Lake and the Escarpment), Simcoe County (Barrie, north of Toronto), Prince Edward County (Belleville/Picton region) are seeing increased numbers. In the West, Victoria/Vancouver Island, Kelowna, and the Sunshine Coast are experiencing the same phenomenon. The existing leadership of these small communities has found engaging this new group challenging, as the retirees tend to keep their allegiance to their former communities and membership-based organizations.

SOCIAL MEDIA-BASED GROUPS



The Prince Edward County (Ontario) Jewish community chavura group meets for a Shavuot program.

As many small communities experience growth, particularly from Israel, use of social media has emerged as a preferred means of connecting. Younger families look to social media to find and connect with other Jews in their new community. They often find the existing local community structures, mostly synagogues, not attractive, as neither attending religious services nor paying membership dues is part of their background or lifestyle. Affordability can also be an issue for new immigrant families.

This study found that most newcomers prefer a less formal and more socially oriented framework. Informal “*chavurah* group or friends’ networks have popped up in most of the small communities.

In a 2021 survey of Ontario small Jewish communities, conducted by Jewish Federations of Canada staff, publicizing the survey through Facebook yielded 89 new responses, mostly from individual Jews living in communities with a single or just several Jewish persons nearby, many of whom were previously unknown to the community.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF LEADERSHIP

All communities surveyed reported concerns regarding leadership and volunteers. Many of the “old timers” continue to hold the leadership reins because they lack alternatives and new people have not stepped forward. This situation is common to all the communities surveyed, including the 6 Federations. In some non-Federated communities this has led to tension between veteran residents and newcomers, as the old leadership focuses on and values synagogue membership as a sign of community commitment and gets discouraged when outreach efforts do not yield new members.

PUBLIC EDUCATION/ADVOCACY AND COMBATTING ANTISEMITISM

Both Federated and non-Federated communities are feeling the pressure of more requests from local government bodies, school boards and faith groups wanting resources to educate them on Jewish culture and to address challenges related to fighting antisemitism. All communities see these

external requests as a positive opportunity, but do not have the professional or volunteer resources to respond to the demand. As antisemitism is fought on the national and provincial levels the need for local public education trickles down to many small communities, who are feeling the squeeze on local human resources.

Until recently Jewish Federations of Canada – UJA had a staff position dedicated to collaborating with small communities, providing regular communication and outreach to each community alerts regarding and assistance in accessing and program funding opportunities, and dissemination of new program ideas. Communities were kept in regular communication with each other, community challenges were brought for consultation and assistance, and liaison to national and international Jewish organizations was facilitated. Fundraising for the UJA annual campaign was managed by this position as well. The lack of any current coordinating resources leaves these communities isolated and unsupported. They need resources to work with new families, raise funds for the community councils, and recruit leadership. (Note: The author of this report was the JFC staff member holding this position.)

CHABAD

Chabad has expanded its “*shlichim* (emissary)” services across Canada with 17 Rabbis in small communities at the time of this survey. Chabad has a presence in 10 of the non-Federated small communities, in each of the Regional Centres and in all four of the Federations surveyed. (see attached summary of communities). In addition, Chabad emissaries in larger cities (i.e.,

Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver) reach out to many surrounding small communities where they connect to the individual community members.

Chabad has had a significant impact across the country. It has invigorated many communities, touched the lives of many, and brought Jewish celebration, education, and tradition to communities. Chabad is embraced by some but is not everyone’s cup of tea. Depending on the personality of the shaliach/emissary there may be degrees of tension. Some are community-oriented players, while others have caused tension with the existing leadership.

Overall, the feedback concerning Chabad was positive and their presence, caring, and outreach appreciated. After a first year in a community a *shaliach*/emissary is responsible to fundraise to sustain their presence. This can create a sense of competition as the few donors active in these communities are being pulled in a new direction. On the other hand, Chabad has often been able to successfully canvass new participants and donors not reached before by the existing local leadership. Chabad’s success is in physical presence (“being there”) in the community and its long-term commitment to staying and community building.



Mayor of Kelowna, BC lights first Chanukah candle, December 2023

Conclusion

Canadian Jewish demographics are changing. Since 2011 the numbers of Jews moving to smaller communities has noticeably increased. Whereas in 2011, 13.4% of Canadian Jews lived outside of the 6 large cities of Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Calgary, in 2021 that increased by 1.2% to 14.6%.

The steady growth of these unconnected small communities raises the question of who takes responsibility for outreach to and support of these Jews and their communities. The 9.1% (36,580) of Canadian Jews who live in non-Federated communities, who collectively number more than Canada's third-largest community in the Greater Vancouver area, have extremely limited access to Jewish religious, education, or cultural resources. The small communities do not have any program staff, and meager funding with which

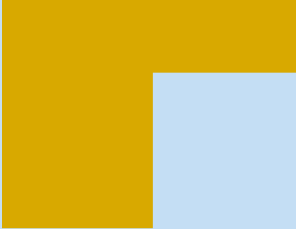
to address growing needs to service their growing Jewish populations and to engage their members in Jewish life and community. The additional 5.5% (22,160) of Jews living in small cities with staffing have similar needs and are struggling to maintain the limited communal infrastructure they have.

Canada's small Jewish communities are scattered over a huge geography and feel isolated from the "big communities." The October 7, 2023 attack on Israel and resulting war, and the surge in antisemitism across Canada have increased these feelings of isolation and vulnerability. The Jews of small Canadian communities are looking for connection with other Jews across Canada. What resources and mechanisms can best serve this population?



Purim party—Shaar HaShomayim Synagogue, Sudbury, On

The Jews of small Canadian communities are looking for connection with other Jews across Canada. What resources and mechanisms can best serve this population?



Appendix



Appendix A

Statistical Summary of Small Communities: Jewish Population and Community Assets 2011 – 2021

PROVINCE	COMMUNITY	JEWISH POPULATION CHANGE (2011 – 2021)			COMMUNITY ASSETS					
		2011 Census	2021 Census	Growth/Decline (%)	Synagogues	Cemeteries	Jewish Community Centres	Day Schools	Seniors Residences	Chabad
Alberta	Airdrie	NA	190	—						
	Banff/Canmore	NA	120	—						
	Edmonton	5,550	5,690	3%	3	2	1	2		1
	Lethbridge	NA	270	—		1				
	Okotoks	NA	100	—						
	Red Deer	NA	180	—						
	Rest of AB	1,900	1,290	(32%)						
British Columbia (Mainland)	Kamloops	275	315	15%						
	Kelowna	900	1,170	30%	1	1	1			1
	Prince George	185	180	(3%)						
	Vernon	155	250	61%						
	Rest of BC (mainland)	2,975	2,740	(8%)						
British Columbia (Vancouver Island)	Campbell River	45	105	133%						
	Courtenay	265	385	45%						
	Duncan	110	180	64%						
	Nanaimo	240	540	125%						
	Parksville	130	145	12%						
	Victoria	2,630	4,385	67%	2	1	1			1
	Vancouver Island & other islands	720	1,105	53%						
Manitoba	Brandon	85	110	29%						
	Rest of Manitoba	565	645	14%						
New Brunswick	Fredericton	250	450	80%	1	1				
	Moncton	280	350	25%	1	1				
	Saint John	195	415	113%	1	1				
	Rest of NB	135	365	170%						
Newfoundland and Labrador	St. Johns	155	400	158%	1	1				1
	Rest of NL	65	115	77%						
Nova Scotia	Cape Breton	185	145	(22%)	1	2				
	Halifax	2,120	2,740	29%	2	2				1
	Rest of NS	610	715	17%		1				

Table continues on page 35.

Table continued from page 34.

PROVINCE	COMMUNITY	JEWISH POPULATION CHANGE (2011 – 2021)			COMMUNITY ASSETS					
		2011 Census	2021 Census	Growth/Decline (%)	Synagogues	Cemeteries	Jewish Community Centres	Day Schools	Seniors Residences	Chabad
Ontario	Ajax/Pickering/Uxbridge	1,055	NA	—	1					1
	Barrie/Simcoe County	1,445	2,275	57%	1	1				1
	Belleville	235	345	47%	1	1				
	Guelph	925	1,210	31%	1	1				1
	Hamilton	5,055	5,315	5%	3	5	1	2	1	1
	Kingston	1,185	1,410	19%	1	1	1			1
	Kitchener–Waterloo–Cambridge	2,015	2,245	11%	2	1				1
	London	2,610	2,770	6%	2	2	1	1	1	1
	Newmarket	1,010	NA	—	1					
	Niagara Falls	50	NA	—		1				1
	North Bay	160	160	0%	1	1				
	Oshawa	1,670	1,645	(1%)	1	1				
	Owen Sound	65	150	131%	1	1				
	Peterborough	515	565	10%	1	1				
	Pictou	NA	NA	—						
	Prince Edward County	NA	NA	—						
	Sarnia	280	175	(38%)	1	1				
	Sault St Marie	300	100	(67%)	1	1				
	St. Catharines–Niagara	1,375	1,710	24%	1	1	1			
	Sudbury	165	320	94%	1	1				
Thunder Bay	225	290	29%	1	1					
Timmins	NA	80	—		1					
Windsor	1,475	1,270	(14%)	3	2	1		1	1	
Rest of ON	4,195	5,950	42%		1					
Quebec	Gatineau–Hull	655	900	37%						
	Quebec City	365	535	47%	1	1				1
	Rest of Quebec	1,820	1,270	(30%)						
Saskatchewan	Regina	900	685	(24%)	1	1				1
	Saskatoon	735	945	29%	1	1				1
	Rest of SK	270	300	11%						
NW and Yukon Territories	—	340	200	70%		1				
		51,765	58,750	14%	41	39	10	5	3	17

NOTES:

- The data in this summary is derived from the 2011 and 2021 National Household Survey: The Jewish Population of Canada.
- The National Household Survey uses the Jewish Standard Definition for identifying Jews, namely anyone identifying themselves on the Census as being Jewish by religion or ethnicity.
- 2011 Census is data taken from the 2011 National Household Survey–Jewish Population of Canada from Atlantic Canada – Table 14C page 48
- NA: Not Available

Ronald S Roadburg Foundation

Bernard Pinsky
Chair

David Bogdonov
Director

Stephen Gaerber
Director

Mark Gurvis
Chief Executive Officer

roadburgfund.org

