

## Why Owen Sound will not reach 30K by 2030: The math

Back a few years (fall 2017/winter 2018) the mayor of Owen Sound came up with the tagline of "30,000 people by 2030" - or something like that. I have been thinking on this, off and on, for a while and decided the math needed doing.

Is "30 by 30" reasonable projection, or even possible?

Without considering any births or deaths, based on the last census, Owen Sound would need to attract 8,659 people. Amending the formula to include births and deaths, this is reduced to 7,984. In the latter case, this equates to 665.3 people each year, or, stated another way, 1.82 people *every day* until 2030.

Now, I like optimistic politicians but more importantly I like those that use "informed optimism". It might have been better to sit down and figure out just what might be realistic, then announce that figure. Based on past performance (which is not a guarantee of future performance - so my financial planner says!), Owen Sound could expect a 2030 population of between 22,100 and 22,600. This is based on a mean (average) growth rate of 0.92% per year over 8-years. Owen Sound has experienced, according to the census, four periods (or census years) of negative growth, including between 2011 and 2016. If the negative trend (from 2006) continues, Owen Sound will see a 2030 population of about 20,760.

Growth rates from 1986 to 2016 have been 55.9% for Ontario, 27.1% for Grey County, 13.5% for Bruce County, and for Owen Sound separate from Grey, 7.4%.

Projections for the "natural increase" in population by the Ontario Ministry of Finance (OMF) do not bode well for this area. Bruce is expected to have positive natural growth in 2017-2018 and shift to negative by 2030-2031. Grey is projected to have a negative natural increase in both 2017-2018 and 2040-2041.

Again, according to the OMF, the trend is towards a 2041 share of seniors in population of 30-35%, which will have an impact on birth, and death, rates.

Overall, Southwest Ontario will have, according to OMF, a total share of Ontario's population of 10.8% in 2031 and 10.3% in 2041. In 1991 the share was 13.7%.

To house these 8,659 people in Owen Sound, approximately 3,900 housing units will need to be built. The breakdown, using the current census numbers, this will be about 2,230 owned and 1,670 rentals. The unit breakdown will include 190 condos and 3,710 non-condos (e.g., houses, apartments). These 3,900 units will have to be built at the rate of almost one (0.97) units each and every day until the end of 2030.

And all these units will need infrastructure, including water and waste treatment.

To answer my original question, "Is "30 by 30" a reasonable projection, or even possible?" Maybe, but the math, and expert analyses, suggests that 30 by 30 is very unlikely.

David Clark, Independent Researcher  
DMCmetrix.com  
Owen Sound