

## Sault Ste. Marie

Positioned on the St. Marys River between Lake Superior and Lake Huron, Sault Ste. Marie is one of the oldest European settlements in Canada. It has a population of nearly 75,000, which is a rise of only about half a percentage point from 2001, and a substantial drop from the city's 81,000 in the early 1990s. In 2001, about 13% of adults 20 years of age or older had attained a university degree, whereas 29% neither graduated from high school nor obtained a trade certificate or diploma. Like most communities, the age distribution is gradually shifting toward older residents. In 2006, adults 25–44 (23.4%, down about 3% from 2001) and 45–65 (29.6%, about 3% more than in 2001) made up the largest segments of Sault residents. Children under 15 dropped from 17.5% to 15.3%, although the youth sector (15–24 years old), remained stable at about 13%. Senior citizens of 65 years and older now outpace children younger than 15: they constitute 18.5% of the population – up from 16.6% in 2001, with almost all the increase reflecting people 75 and older.

Along with steel manufacture, forestry, telephone outsourcing, and gambling are important to the city's economy. Much of the labour recovery in the 1990s was attributable to the growth of phone centres in the city. (This change in the nature of jobs available is reflected in average incomes. In 1991 the town's average family income was just above \$54,000, then dropped by thousands of dollars. In constant dollars, it took until 2002 to recover.)

### Sault Ste. Marie Cultural Policy

The city nicknamed “the Soo” has demonstrably paid attention to the value of its cultural resources for more than a decade. Recommendations from a cultural forum held in September of 1995 were incorporated into the revised *Cultural Policy for the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie* (April 1996), along with those arising from a review of policy implementation conducted in a municipal forum in February of 2002. The policy encourages the appreciation and enjoyment of culture, and strives to encourage, promote and maintain the development of cultural expression at both amateur and professional levels.

As recommended in 1991, a Cultural Advisory Board has been set up, which recommends Cultural Financial Assistance Grants to City Council each year with the committed support of the City of Sault Ste. Marie. The grants have provided supportive funding to, for example, the Arts Council, the Fall Festival, the Sault Symphony, and the Algoma Conservatory of Music. The city's Recreation and Culture Division also has an administrative/supportive role with the Sault Ste. Marie Museum, the Arts Council & other community-based cultural organizations.

Every year, the Planning Advisory Committee acknowledges outstanding development or redevelopment in Sault Ste. Marie. The purpose of the award is to recognize significant achievement in community development, highlight successful development ideas that others can use, and inspire other projects. Examples of winners include the local Algoma University and the Canadian Bushplane Heritage Centre.

The aims and objectives of the *Cultural Policy for the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie* are:

- To encourage, promote and maintain the development of cultural expression in Sault Ste. Marie, at both the amateur and professional level
- To encourage the appreciation and enjoyment of culture
- To provide and maintain appropriate conditions in which culture can thrive and prosper

- To acknowledge the importance of the cultural industry in the development of civic pride and a municipal sense of identity
- To provide arms-length funding of culture
- To encourage the preservation of historic buildings and their rehabilitation for cultural uses
- To promote and encourage the community's cultural identity and cultural differences

Examples of policy implementations to be made in Sault Ste. Marie according to these aims and objectives have included:

- Encouraging and promoting the development of cultural expression. *Examples:* To expand the City practice of displaying works in the lobby and public corridors of civic buildings and to encourage access to the arts in public spaces such as malls, the media and the Public Library (the Cultural Advisory Board to suggest sites to City Council and to oversee the installation, maintenance, etc. of the works).
- Appreciation and enjoyment of culture. *Examples:* To facilitate formal and informal presentations of artists and their creations, e.g. making municipal gifts to dignitaries be locally produced cultural items; to expand historical and art education programs at sites (such as the Art Gallery of Algoma) and events (the Algoma Fall Festival); Artists in the Schools and Artists Career Programs.
- Providing appropriate conditions for culture to thrive and to prosper. *Examples:* To accept in concept the dedication of up to 1% of total construction or renovation costs of public facilities (and, where appropriate, major municipal infrastructure projects) toward commissioning and installing art or other cultural activities (allocated funds to be directed toward similar use in alternative facilities or to the *City of Sault Ste. Marie Cultural Endowment Trust Fund*); to give the Cultural Advisory Board an opportunity to comment on rezoning or development applications to City Council when they impact cultural facilities.
- Acknowledging the importance of the cultural industry. *Examples:* To present Cultural Advisory Board Community Recognition Awards annually; to encourage local businesses and corporations to support culture in a variety of ways (not only financial contributions but also gifts in kind, venues for display or advertising, and other innovative means).
- Providing arm's-length funding. *Examples:* To screen and recommend applications for civic grants (from the municipality's designated budget and a newly established City of Sault Ste. Marie Cultural Endowment Trust Fund) according to the Cultural Financial Assistance Policy and the Provincial/National/International Cultural Competition Policy; to develop uniform criteria that will ensure that new and existing cultural groups or individuals have equal opportunity to apply for financial assistance.
- Preserving heritage by repurposing historic buildings. *Examples:* With advice from the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee and suggestions from interested entrepreneurs and the community, to encourage and review proposals for alternative uses of historical buildings and sites; and when appropriate, to lease municipal historic buildings with the stipulation that they be maintained to a specified standard.
- Celebrating cultural diversity and identity. *Examples:* To encourage the community to preserve art and artifacts that represent the community's culture and history, and to donate or loan them to appropriate cultural institutions; to work with agencies (e.g., the Economic Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce) to promote Sault Ste. Marie as a good place to live and visit, in part because of our cultural activities and attractions.