

# Toronto, Chicago and which city rules while the other drools

**I**n naturally assumed last week's news that Toronto is now North America's fourth-largest city, inching ahead of Chicago by 84,020 people (with Toronto's population now at 2,791,140), would be greeted with one question and a comment: So what? No big whoop.

But by week's end, with a little encouragement from flame-fanning media and a lot of back-and-forth provocation in the comment sections of assorted websites by denizens determined to stick up for (or slag) their city, it somehow became a battle between Chicago and Toronto over which is the better city.

Of course it's a war that can't be won. It's obviously subjective and hard to define. What makes one city better than another? There are so many factors, and what makes a city appealing to one person may be irrelevant to another. It's called perspective. And point-of-view.

Still, who can resist weighing-in on a great debate?

So, without further ado, let me proclaim that from my perspective, from my point-of-view, Chicago rules and Toronto drools. For now. But before Torontonians blow a gasket, let me explain where I'm coming from.

Back in the day, I lived in Toronto. And while I enjoyed the city immensely, I never fell head-over-heels in love. From a small town, I spent a year acclimatizing to the noise and bustle.

In time I overcame my culture shock, immersed myself in the city, and got to know Toronto intimately — its inherent beauty, and its warts. By

the time I left, I was married, with a young baby in tow, and wholly frustrated by the cost of housing — we were making decent coin, but could not find a closet in our price range. So, we headed out to the suburbs.

Nowadays, we live in the country, a quiet, secluded life that occasionally cries out for a pick-me-up, and people.

One year we drove down to the Windy City. And we fell in love. Chicago became our go-to city for escape. Why?

Well, for starters, it's a stunning city. With architecture so spectacular even normally oblivious teens take time to stop and mumble admiration. And talk about well-planned: the waterfront is (and should be) the envy of cities like Toronto that have obliterated their own waterfronts with eyesores (skyscrapers and the like). You could spend forever just wandering the waterfront parklands, being engaged and entertained.

Further, Chicago's a great theatre town and an incredible sports city. It also has world-class museums and art galleries, eclectic dining, and (please) don't get my wife started on the shopping, from Magnificent Mile to hip, eccentric enclaves.

I know what you're thinking: I'm not seeing Chicago clearly. I'm seeing the city through the rose-colored glasses of a tourist.

Chicago has its fair share of warts (not the least



Andy Juniper

of which are youth gang issues and a frightening murder rate).

And you know, you're right.

Years ago, my wife and I lived the Toronto life. We saw the city through the lense of our reality at the time. Perspective. Point of view. We're currently plotting an escape from the country life to... Toronto.

We want to see the city anew. We plan on hitting some tourist spots (something we never did

as Torontonians) and explore Toronto like we explored Chicago the first time we went there.

And we're hoping to fall in love with the fourth-largest city in North America just like we fell in love all those years ago with, ah, what was then the fourth-largest city in North America.

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