

BIG DROP FOR TOWN IN 'BEST COMMUNITIES' RANKING

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Ranked within sight of the top 100 Canadian communities to live by Maclean's magazine in 2019, Halton Hills is now closer to the bottom of the list.

In 2019, Halton Hills ranked 106th out of 415 assessed communities. The latest rankings, released this spring, had the town sitting at 293rd.

But despite the drop, the town has seen a marked increase in real estate prices driven by people eager to live in Halton Hills.

"I find that Halton Hills has a real pride of ownership," Melanie Frazer, executive director of the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, said. "People love the fact that our local business owners actually live here."

Maclean's list was released earlier in the month and new considerations have shaken Halton Region's rankings. While Halton Hills fell the furthest, 2019 champion, Burlington, has been unseated, falling to 13th. Halifax is now No. 1, followed by Charlottetown.

"It's pretty special actually," Frazer said about the business community in Halton Hills. "There's a great interest beyond 'how does this benefit my business' and instead 'how does this benefit my community?'"

This year's data points considered the value of remote work and thus eliminated assessments of the local economy in favour of assessed internet quality. For Halton Hills, Maclean's ranked internet quality as its top feature,



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Maclean's ranked Halton Hills as the 293rd out of 415 best communities to live in Canada. In 2019, the town ranked 106th.

followed by low crime, and access to amenities.

"The chamber has been working remotely since July, and we've been thinking long and hard about if (re-

mote work) is the future of business," Frazer said. "It's not — We need to be in front of each other and our members."

For many local busi-

ness, Frazer said the appetite for full-time remote work was low.

"We're realizing Zoom does not make for a great connection," she said.

With real estate costs as evidence, many prospective buyers may be looking at Halton Hills as a middle ground for the future of work.

"People from downtown Toronto know they'll be able to work a little bit remotely," Frazer said, "but I don't think it will go back to 100 per cent in office."

Halton Hill's neighbour, Brampton, enjoyed a massive improvement from its 2019 rank of 199th, climbing above all of Halton Region and landing at 13th. Internet quality, community, and amenities were cited as top features.

"Halton Hills is on the cusp — we're kind of in limbo right now," Frazer said. "We're a small town but we've got a lot of growth ahead of us. We've got to hold on to those small-town roots."



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