

# Location Matters

## A Student Inquiry Activity



### About This Activity

This investigation takes learners through the inquiry process to discover how transportation is a significant factor in helping people in cities decide where they will live. It uses the RBC & Pembina Institute Location Matters report.

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this activity, learners will:

- Develop an understanding as to why location matters when deciding where to live based on various factors
- Calculate and compare the differences in monthly costs between different locations in the GTA
- Use what they learned to decide where they think a 25 year old self would choose to live
- Go beyond the report and discuss other factors that should be considered when deciding where to live

### Grade Level

7 – 12

### Length of Activity

60 – 90 minutes

### Materials List

Internet-enabled device  
RBC & Pembina Institute Location Matters Report  
Calculator  
Map of the GTA

### Inquiry Stage One: Initiate and Plan

Allow the class to Imagine themselves as a 25 year old living in the Greater Toronto Area. This is not a prediction just an exercise in imagination and deduction. Get learners to create a short profile of themselves by answering these following questions:

- What is your job? Where is it located?
- What cultural interests do you have?
- What sports or exercise do you take part in?
- What kinds of entertainment interest you?

Using the RBC & Pembina Institute Location Matters Report, learners will move on to investigate it further to help them decide where in the approximately 7,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the GTA they may choose to be located based on their imaginative 25 year old selves.

### Inquiry Stage Two: Perform (Investigate) and Record

Give learners an opportunity to look over the four profiles in the report (p. 5). It will present a general overview of each person and their decision to move. Learners can compare thoughts of each scenario to make sure they fully understand it.

Allow learners to browse through the different detailed scenarios which are found on:

- Derek (p. 6)
- Priya (p. 12)
- Julie (p. 18)
- Dominic (p. 25)

Inform learners to watch for the various characteristics of each scenario all while answering these following questions:

- What is the difference between detached and semi-detached?
- Why would someone want a finished basement?
- Do you know what your guardian's total commuting time per month is? Come back to this question if you do not know, or make a rough estimate.
- Which profile is closest to someone you may know?
- Which one matches the 25 year old you that you imagined at the start of this activity?

As learners are familiarizing themselves with the report, check their understanding by asking the following questions:

- How many moving options does each person have?
- Compare each moving option to what each scenario wants, do you think this is important when weighing your options?
- What is meant by less 'walkable', or more 'walkable' when looking at the walk score?

Commuting is costly for all families. Using the table below, allow learners to choose one of the people profiled. Either as a class, in groups, or individually calculate the percentage increase in each scenario's housing cost if transportation costs are taken into account. The table below has been started to get a sense of how it should be done:

Scenario	Option	% Housing Cost Increase When Transportation Costs Are Added
Derek	A: Danforth Village	~47.5%
	B: Roncesvalles	~32.7%
	C: Oakville	?
	D: Scarborough	?
	E: Thornhill	?

Priya	A: B: C: D: E:	
Julie	A: B: C: D: E:	
Dominic	A: B: C: D: E:	

**Example calculation:**

Derek's monthly housing cost in the Danforth Village is approximately \$4,000, and their monthly transportation cost is approximately \$1,900. We know \$1,900 is about 47.5% of \$4,000. Therefore, there is a 47.5% increase in the housing cost when we take into account the monthly transportation cost.

As a class, discuss what conclusions you can draw from this completed chart. For more curious learners, or educators you can discuss how the report came up with the different numbers in the charts. For a general overview, look at p. 4, and for more details of the calculations, see the Appendix which begins on p. 31.

**Inquiry Stage Three: Analyze and Interpret**

Learners now need to think about the information that they discovered and apply it to the impacts of their original questions of where they will be living when they are 25 years old.

The Location Matters report demonstrated how four people were looking at housing costs, commuting time and neighbourhood walkability and livability. The report helps explain the cost of commuting in terms of money and time. As learners think again about where they might be living when they're 25, allow them to work with a partner to answer the following questions:

- If possible, allow learners to ask a guardian, family member, or an adult they know about whether they took into account commuting costs when they chose where to live.
- How could commuting be considered a quality of life issue?
- What is your present place of residence walkability score?
  - Use this website to calculate it: <https://www.walkscore.com>

The Location Matters report does a very complete job of calculating the impact of commuting on the decision to choose where to live, but learners might have other ideas for factors that could be included. Put learners into small groups in your class to brainstorm what else could be added as considerations. Give learners the following prompts to help them generate a list in their groups or as a class together:

- Are there other monetary costs that the report has not been able to take into account? (see Appendix pp. 31 for more details on their calculations)
- Are there other non-monetary factors you would take into account that don't fit into the categories of housing costs, commuting time and neighbourhood walkability and livability?
- Imagine that you had a huge budget to make an online calculator to help people plug in their individual data for different housing choices. What data is there already? What additional data would you need to create an online calculator?

There are wider impacts of this report that need to be examined. One group that could be affected is real estate agents. If possible, bring in a real estate agent into the classroom and discuss their reaction to the report. Some questions to think about are:

- Is this information valuable to real estate agents?
- How could they make use of it?
- How might they need to adjust their business as a result?

Politicians and political parties are also impacted by studies on transportation and housing. Some questions for discussion with the class are below:

- Why would a Premier praise this report?
- Why are transportation costs for families of such interest to the Premier of a province?
- Which Ministers of a Premier's government would be interested in the findings of this report?
- What are three policies that could be created that would change the situation for the four people profiled in the report?

With all this information in mind, ask learners what they conclude is the most desirable place for them to live when they are 25 years old? Obviously, costs will change and policies and other realities might make the GTA and commuting very different. But thinking of the GTA as it is now, what would be your choice of where to live?

### Inquiry Stage Four: Communicate

The final step in our inquiry is to communicate our findings. To begin, allow learners to communicate the importance of the report to others. Learners can choose one of the following people to send a message to:

- a. Real Estate Agent
  - How does the real estate industry need to change as a result of the Location Matters report?
- b. A Guardian
  - What is the best place for our family to live, based upon the findings of the Location Matters report?
- c. An MPP (Member of Provincial Parliament)
  - Be aware of the importance of the Location Matters report and its impact on your riding.

Finally, allow the class to share the results of our central questions: Where should I live? Place a big map of the GTA (Greater Toronto Area), such as a road map, on the wall of the classroom and have everyone put a push pin or a sticky dot on the map on the location that they have concluded is the best choice for them to be living when they are 25 years old. Allow learners to explain and discuss as a class why they choose the location they did. Be sure to conclude the importance of this report with the class.