The Canadian Index of Wellbeing: 
A New Approach to Measuring the Progress of Societies

October 2010
How are we doing as Canadians?

“IS THIS WELLBEING?”

Figure 1.1
Canadian Total Trade in Goods and Services, 1990 to 2003

Figure 2.9
Unemployment Rate in Canada and the US, 1994 to 2004

Source: Statistics Canada, 2005

Source: Statistics Canada, 2004

“Around the world, a consensus is growing about the need for a more holistic and transparent way to measure societal progress – one that accounts for more than just economic indicators such as the Gross Domestic Product and takes into account the full range of social, health, environmental and economic concerns of citizens.”

—The Honourable Roy J. Romanow Chair, CIW Advisory Board
Measuring what Matters

✓ Indicators are powerful
✓ What we count and measure, influences how we make policy decisions

If we don’t measure wellbeing, in all of its dimensions, it doesn’t count…leaving Canadians to:

✓ Gauge wellbeing using a narrow set of economic indicators
✓ Misinterpret wellbeing or use surrogate measures
✓ Ignore policy options that will fundamentally improve wellbeing

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What is the Canadian Index of Wellbeing?

A national index that will report on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain Name</th>
<th>Release date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Populations</td>
<td>June ‘09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Standards</td>
<td>June ‘09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Vitality</td>
<td>June ‘09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democratic Engagement</td>
<td>Jan ‘10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time Use</td>
<td>June ‘10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leisure and Culture</td>
<td>June ‘10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Fall ‘10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Fall ‘10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite Index</td>
<td>Winter ‘11</td>
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**Why a New Measure of Wellbeing?**

- **Promote** a shared vision of what really constitutes sustainable wellbeing and the elements that contribute to or detract from it;
- **Measure** national progress toward, or away from, achieving that vision;
- **Understand** and promote awareness of why society is moving in the direction it is moving;
- **Stimulate discussion** about the types of policies, programs, and activities that would move us closer and faster toward achieving wellbeing;
- **Give Canadians tools** to promote wellbeing with policy shapers and decision makers so as to account for why things are getting better or worse; and
- **Add momentum** to the global movement for a more holistic way of measuring societal progress.
Imagine an Index that...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>distinguishes between good things like health and clean air…</td>
<td>… and bad things like sickness and pollution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>promotes volunteer work and unpaid care-giving as social goods…</td>
<td>… and overwork and stress as social deficits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>values a better balance between investment in health promotion…</td>
<td>… and spending on illness treatment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

...actually links the economic reality and longer-term prosperity of Canada with the social, health and environmental conditions that shape communities.
Keys to Success – Collaboration

Building relationships with Canadian and International organizations

...and growing
The following government agencies, non-governmental organizations and universities are working together to develop the Canadian Index of Wellbeing.

**Canadian Research Advisory Group (CRAG)**

**Québec**
- Département d'études en loisir, culture et tourisme, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières
  - www.uqtr.ca
- Faculté des sciences sociales, Université Laval
  - www.soc.ulaval.ca

**Newfoundland Memorial University**
- www.mun.ca

**Newfoundland Labrador Community Accounts**
- www.communityaccounts.ca

**Nova Scotia**
- Genuine Progress Index (GPI) Atlantic
  - www.gpiatlantic.org
- Nova Scotia Community Counts
  - www.gov.ns.ca/communitycounts
- Time Use Research Program, Saint Mary's University
  - www.smu.ca/partners/turp

**Ontario**
- Canadian Index of Wellbeing
  - www.ciw.ca
- Lifestyle Information Network
  - www.lin.ca
- Statistics Canada
  - www.statcan.gc.ca
- University of Toronto
  - www.phs.utoronto.ca
- University of Waterloo
  - www.uwaterloo.ca

**British Columbia**
- Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia
  - http://ecps.ubc.ca
- Institute for Social Research and Evaluation, University of Northern British Columbia (Prince George)
  - http://web.unbc.ca/isre

**Alberta**
- Acielski Management Inc. (Edmonton)
  - www.acielski.com
- Sustainable Calgary
  - www.sustainablecalgary.ca

**Saskatchewan**
- Community University Institute for Social Research, University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon)
  - www.usask.ca/cuisr
- Prairie Wild Consulting Co. together with Holden & Associates
  - www.prairiewildconsulting.ca

**Manitoba**
- International Institute for Sustainable Development
  - www.iisd.org

**Quebec**
- Canadian Council on Learning
  - www.ccl.ca
- Canadian Council on Social Development
  - www.ccsd.ca
- Centre for the Study of Living Standards
  - www.csls.ca
- Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa
  - www.iph.uottawa.ca
CPRN conducts nationwide consultation on quality of life

2000

2002

2005

2007

2008

2009

Expert roundtable reviews CPRN results

Cross-Canada consultations

Cross-Canada roundtables

National workshop with key partners

Launch

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Criteria for Indicator Selection

1. Relevant to Canadians
2. Easy to understand
3. Reliable and valid
4. Politically unbiased
5. Timely, easy to obtain and periodically update
6. Comparable across jurisdictions and groups
7. Objective or subjective
8. Positive or negative
9. A constituent or determinant of wellbeing, or both
10. Attributable to individuals or groups
11. Obtained through an open, transparent and democratic consultative review process
12. Going to contribute to a coherent, comprehensive view of the wellbeing of Canadians
Keys to Success – Solid Evidence

Research & Validation Process

1. Expert literature reviews and/or environmental scans
2. Draft domain reports prepared
3. Project management team reviews
4. Domain reports revised
5. CRAG assessments
6. Draft final reports
7. Roundtable reviews
8. External reviews
9. Continuous validation
What the reports measure

✓ **Living Standards:** quality and quantity of goods and services and the distribution of these goods and services within the population.

✓ **Healthy Populations:** physical and mental health of the population – experiencing disease and disability and people’s life circumstances, and care people receive.

✓ **Community Vitality:** activities that work to foster individual and collective wellbeing e.g volunteering
What the reports measure

- **Democratic Engagement**: participation of citizens in public life and in governance; the functioning of Canadian governments and the role Canadians and their institutions play as global citizens.

- **Time Use**: use of time, how people experience it, what controls its use, and how it affects wellbeing.

- **Leisure and Culture**: activities including performing arts, visual arts, media arts and art facilities and institutes, and recreation and leisure activities.
Living Standards Headline Indicators

Living Standards Domain

- Ratio of top to bottom quintile of economic families (after tax)
- After tax median income of economic families (2007$)
- Incidence of economic families in poverty (%)
- RBC housing affordability index
- Incidence of long-term unemployment (%)
- CIBC index of employment quality (1994 Q1=100)
- Employment rate (%)
- CSLS scaled value of economic security

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Healthy Populations Headline Indicators

- Self-rated health (% excellent or very good)
- Diabetes prevalence (% yes)
- Life expectancy at birth (years)
- Teen smoking rate (aged 12-19, % daily or occasional smokers)
- Average HALE for 15+ (% of remaining years expected to be lived in good health)
- Influenza immunization rate (age 65+) (% yes)
- Patient satisfaction with overall health services (% rating services as excellent or good)
- Depression (% with probable depression)

Healthy Populations Domain
Community Vitality Headline Indicators

- % reporting participation in activities
- % with 6 or more close friends
- Property crime rate per 100,000 population
- Violent crime rate per 100,000 population
- % reporting unpaid volunteer work in the past 12 months
- % who provide unpaid help to others on their own
- % disagreeing that they worry less about the needs of others
- % who feel safe walking alone after dark
Democratic Engagement Headline

Indicators

- Voter turnout at federal elections (%)
- % that are not interested at all in politics
- % strongly agree it is every citizen’s duty to vote in federal elections
- International aid (net ODA as a % of GNI)
- % reporting that they are very or fairly satisfied with the way democracy works in Canada
- % of women in parliament
- Ratio of registered to eligible voters
- % reporting that policies of the federal government have made them better off

Democratic Engagement Domain

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Time Use Headline Indicators

- % 3-5 years old read to daily by parents
- % 20-64 years old working ≥ 50 hours/week
- % 20-64 years old reporting high levels of time pressure
- % 20-64 years old giving unpaid care to seniors
- % 6-9 years old having weekly organized extracurricular activities
- % 12-17 years old spending ≥ 2 hours/day on TV or video games
- % 65 years or more reporting annual formal volunteering activities
- % 65 years or more reporting daily active leisure activities

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Leisure & Culture Headline Indicators

- Expenditures in past year on all aspects of culture and recreation as a % of total household expenditures
- Average % of time spent on the previous day in social leisure activities
- Average % of time spent on the previous day in arts and culture activities
- Average # of nights away/trip in the past year on vacation trips to destinations over 80 km from home
- Average visitation/site in past year to all National Parks and National Historic Sites
- Average attendance per performance in past year at all performing arts performances
- Average # of hours in past year volunteering for culture & recreation organizations
- Average monthly frequency of participation in physical activity lasting > 15 min

Leisure & Culture Domain
An illustration of CIW trends of six domains (Living Standards, Healthy Populations, Community Vitality, Democratic Engagement, Time Use, and Leisure & Culture) 1994-2008

Notes
- Once the numbers in each domain are all converted into a common denominator, a single number (average) can be plotted
- Not necessarily comparing one number against another, but comparing one trend against another
- The CIW average has increased at a much slower pace than the GDP per capita over the same period
For more information:

Full technical reports and user friendly highlights reports are free and available for download at

www.ciw.ca