

CANADA'S

VitalSigns®



COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS OF CANADA
FONDATIONS COMMUNAUTAIRES DU CANADA

Community foundations taking the pulse of Canadian communities.

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Community snapshots

Local and national surveys stimulate programs to improve Canadians' quality of life by pinpointing areas of need

Each fall, Canadian community foundations from the Atlantic to the Pacific prepare local report cards for, and about, their communities. Like an annual check-up, each *Vital Signs* report looks at how one community is doing across many aspects of quality of life. *Vital Signs* monitors change, informs needed action and celebrates signs of community health.

What makes for "good" quality of life varies from one community to another just as surely as Canada's varied peoples, geography and even weather shape so

Like an annual check-up, each *Vital Signs* report looks at how one community is doing across many aspects of quality of life.

much of our daily realities. While some communities are concerned about attracting more residents, others worry about how to integrate so many newcomers. Some face the challenge of increasing birth rates, while others are dealing with the impacts of a rapidly aging population. Some are facing economic hard times while others contend with keeping pace with rampant growth.

Each *Vital Signs* report reflects this diversity, tracking the measures that are

important to its community. Measures as varied as tons of food-producing sea life, number of boil-water advisories, distance to buy fresh food and proportion of kids with weapons are examples of statistics that reflect local concerns. They provide the information residents need to take action to improve their own community's quality of life.

Collected from the "street level" views provided by local reports, *Canada's Vital Signs* zooms out to report on issues that all of the local communities agree are a priority such as the gap between rich and poor, safety, health, learning, and the environment.

This "aerial" view provides the opportunity to more clearly identify shared problems and progress and spot regional variations. Looking at leading indicators from local and national perspectives helps community foundations and those we support place ourselves and our communities into a larger context. By sharing and comparing we all gain understanding of the problems other communities are facing and learn from those that have overcome challenges we confront.

Some of the key findings from *Canada's Vital Signs 2008* are:

- Canada has made progress in recent years, but not enough, to eliminate child poverty. In 2006, more than 1.6 million Canadian children - more than one in five (23 per cent) lived in poverty, according to the



Photo by Victor Penner, provided by The Calgary Foundation

Community foundations use information collected at street level to produce *Vital Signs*, creating an aerial view of community needs and opportunities, which in turn enables clear identification of shared problems and potential solutions.

low-income measure (LIM) of relative poverty. Using post-tax low-income cutoff (LICO) measure, it is at virtually the same level (around 11.5 per cent) as in 1989 when our country vowed to eliminate child poverty.

- Immigrants' incomes are falling farther behind.

While the real median income of non-immigrant Canadian families increased by over 5 per cent from 2000 to 2005, the income of immigrant families fell by 1 per cent. Among recent immigrants, incomes fell more than 3 per cent.

- Canadians' interest in live

performances is on the rise. About 41 per cent of Canadian adults reported attending a live arts performance in 2005, up from 38 per cent in 1998 and approaching the rate of participation reported in 1992 (42 per cent).

- It's estimated that this year, 21,000 Canadians

will die from the effects of air pollution. Air quality is worst in central Canada (Ontario and Quebec) where communities report the most days with concentrations of ground-level ozone and tiny particulate matter exceeding national standards.

Fostering vitality

Inclusive. Forward-looking. Fair. Creative. Safe. Green. Fun. There's no end of words to describe what community foundations want our communities and country to be. But there's one word that sums it all up. Vital. The vitality of our communities, or community vitality, is something we care a great deal about.

Community vitality has been our purpose, promise, and passion since 1921, when we started connecting donors to community needs and opportunities. Together, Canada's 164 community foundations help people invest in building strong and resilient places to live, work and play.

Vital Signs annual community check-ups are conducted by

community foundations across Canada. The Toronto Community Foundation first published *Vital Signs* in 2001. Now with generous support from the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and the Ford Foundation, *Vital Signs* reports are available in 15 Canadian communities:

- Calgary, Alberta
- Fredericton, New Brunswick
- Greater Montreal, Quebec
- Greater Saint John, New Brunswick
- Greater Sudbury, Ontario
- Guelph & Wellington, Ontario
- London and Middlesex, Ontario
- Medicine Hat, Alberta
- Metro Vancouver, British Columbia
- Oakville, Ontario
- Ottawa, Ontario
- Red Deer, Alberta
- Toronto, Ontario
- Victoria, British Columbia
- Waterloo Region, Ontario*

CFC gratefully acknowledges Mackenzie Investments as *Canada's Vital Signs 2008* National Sponsor.

*Jointly published by The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation and the Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation

'Vital Signs spurred us to combine the efforts of the different ethno-cultural communities to better address issues of diversity and inclusion.'

— Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary

To read the full *Canada's Vital Signs 2008* report in English or French, visit www.vitalsignscanada.ca

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Community reports cast wide net

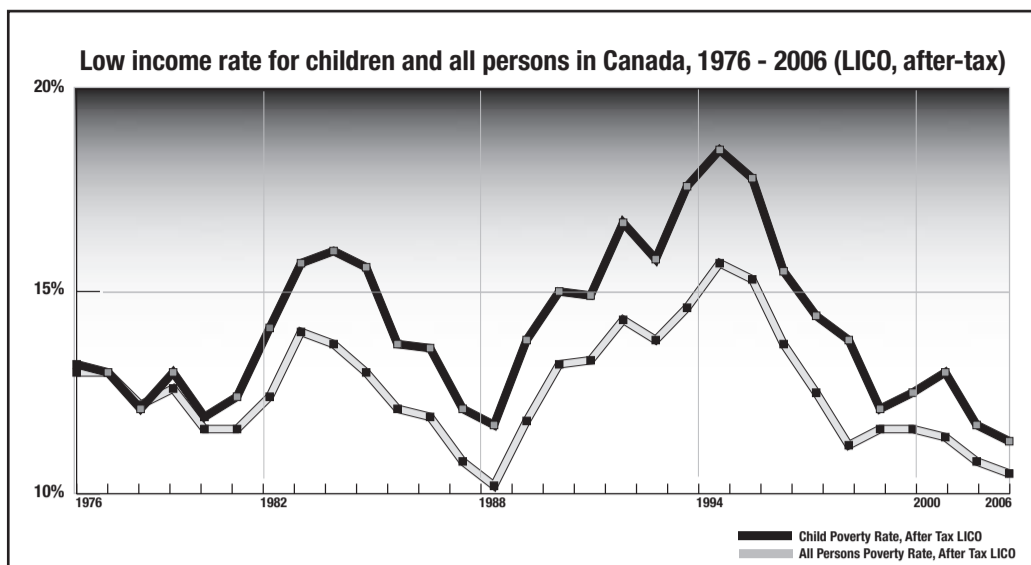
Canada's *Vital Signs* reports on broad-reaching issues of concern that all community foundation agree are a priority: The Gap Between Rich and Poor, Safety, Health, Learning, Housing, Getting Started, Arts and Culture, Environment, Work, and Belonging and Leadership. *Vital Signs* communities have agreed to report on these common issue areas, and each community may add to that set, according to local priorities. Common indicators, upon which *Canada's Vital Signs* is based, are presented in each issue area, on a rotating basis.

Getting started

Immigrants' incomes are falling farther behind. While the real median income of non-immigrant Canadian families increased by 5.3 per cent from 2000 to 2005, the income of immigrant families fell by 1 per cent. Among recent immigrants (in Canada less than five years) incomes fell 3.2 per cent.

And the gap in earnings between those who were born in Canada and those born elsewhere is growing. In 2000, the difference between the median income of immigrants, who have been in Canada more than five years, and that of non-immigrants was only 2.5 per cent. By 2005, the difference had grown to 8.3 per cent, raising doubt over whether earnings will even out over time. This growing disparity could be seen in all *Vital Signs* communities.

Recent immigrants fare much worse. On average, recent immigrants' incomes in Canada were 35 per cent lower than those of non-immigrants. Put another way, for every dollar that a non-immigrant earned, a recent immigrant earned 65 cents. In Canada's largest cities, recent immigrants' incomes were half the median income of non-immigrant families — in



The gap between rich and poor

In 1989, when the House of Commons unanimously passed a resolution seeking to eliminate poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000, the rate of child poverty was 15.1 per cent. By 2000, that rate had increased to 18.1 per cent. These alarming statistics are based on the low income cut-off (LICO before tax) method of gauging poverty, which measures the proportion of the population who spend more than two-thirds of their income before tax on basic needs: food,

shelter and clothing.

Most recent figures remind us how little progress we've made. In 2006, the child poverty rate stood at 15.8 per cent; higher than when the resolution

Any way you measure it, child poverty persists at levels Canadians find unacceptable.

was passed. Measured after tax, it's virtually unchanged since 1989, meaning that more than 700,000 Canadian children are still living below the low-income cutoff.

Using the low-income measure of relative poverty (LIM), which considers the proportion of the population whose income is less than half the median income — the situation is even worse. In 2006, over 1.6 million Canadian children (23.1 per cent) lived in families below the LIM poverty line (before tax). Measured after tax to account for the redistributive effects of our tax system, the LIM rate goes down to 19.6 per cent — still representing one in five Canadian children.

Toronto, 50 per cent, in Montreal, 51.1 per cent and in Vancouver, 51.8 per cent. And, with the exception of Guelph, Vancouver and Victoria, all *Vital Signs* communities and national averages showed signs of growing disparity between the incomes of recent immigrants and non-immigrants from 2000 to 2005.

Safety

Although Canadians are driving more, our roads are getting safer. Traffic crimes, particularly offences of impaired driv-

ing, failure to remain or stop at the scene of an accident and driving while prohibited have fallen dramatically over the past 15 years and now register at less than half the rate of traffic crime seen in 1991. On average across the country in 2007, there were 400 criminal code traffic offences per 100,000 people. In 1991, the rate stood at 806 offences per 100,000. In Red Deer, Alta., traffic crime has dropped more than 80 per cent since 1991, but at 535 offences per 100,000 in 2007, traffic

offences there were still higher than the national average. Ottawa in 2007 hit its highest level of traffic crime in 15 years, but at 302 offences per 100,000 was still well below the national average.

Health

Every year, more Canadians become obese. Obesity is one of the leading causes of heart disease, stroke and Type 2 diabetes and increases risk for numerous other health conditions, including high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, breast

and colon cancer and depression. According to the 2007 Canadian Community Health Survey, four million Canadian adults or 16 per cent of all adults are obese. Another eight million adults or 32 per cent are overweight. Obesity rates vary quite significantly across the country from a high of 22 per cent in Newfoundland to a low of 11.5 per cent in British Columbia. It's worth noting that because of the tendency of survey respondents to over-report their height and under-report their weight, it's likely that actual obesity rates are higher than estimated.

Learning

More Canadians are finishing high school. In 2007, 22.2 per cent of Canadians 15 and over did not have a high school diploma. This has improved significantly since 1990 when 37.8 per cent of Canadians 15 and over had not completed high school. And progress has occurred right across the country. Of concern however, is a discernable gender gap. While older age groups reflect the tendency for more men than women to complete high school, today the situation is reversed. Among younger adults, aged 25-44, the share of men without a high school education is more than 30 per cent higher than that of women.

Housing

In some communities, a vacant apartment can be very hard to find. Availability of rental housing fluctuates across the country as Canadians move with employment opportunities. Among *Vital Signs* communities in 2007, vacancy rates for two-bedroom apartments ranged from 7.1 per cent in Fredericton to under 0.5 per cent in Sudbury, and Victoria. The national average was 2.6 per cent.

Arts and culture

Canadians' interest in the performing arts is on the rise. Canada's arts and cultural sector contributes billions of dollars to the nation's economy and employs over half a million people. But a recent study found that the arts may also strengthen our social fabric. Across a number of social indicators, it was found that those who attend live performing arts events reported a stronger sense of social engagement than those who do not attend. 41.2 per cent of Canadian adults reported attending a live arts performance in 2005, up from 37.6 per cent in 1998 and approaching the rate of participation reported in 1992 (42.4 per cent).

Environment

It's estimated that this year, 21,000 Canadians will die from the effects of air pollution. This year, over 92,000 emergency department visits and almost 11,000 hospital admissions are expected across the country resulting from exposure to air pollution. Of the almost 2,700 people estimated to die this year due to acute short-term exposure to air pollution, over 80 per cent will be seniors.

Work

Canada has enjoyed strong employment growth, especially in the West. With an average annual growth rate of 1.9 per cent since 2000, Canada's employment has grown faster than any other G7 country — a fact worth remembering as we weather more turbulent economic times. From 2000-2007, explosive job growth took place in Calgary (25.6 per cent) and Red Deer (33.3 per cent). Fredericton also experienced significant employment growth of 22.3 per cent in the same period.

To read the full *Canada's Vital Signs* 2008 report in English or French, visit www.vitalsignscanada.ca



COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS OF CANADA

We are Canada's Community Foundations

Community vitality has been our purpose, passion and promise since 1921 when we started connecting donors to community needs and opportunities. We help people invest in building strong and resilient places to live, work and play.

We are part of the Canadian movement for community vitality, represented by over 160 Community Foundations across the country. Visit cfc-fcc.ca to find the Community Foundation near you.

This message is brought to you by the community foundations involved in Vital Signs 2008. Visit vitalsignscanada.ca to find out more.

VitalSigns®



Vital Signs research spurs action

From education to fitness to cultural diversity, information gathered by community foundations acts as a catalyst for local action

Communities across Canada, with the support of their community foundations, are using *Vital Signs* to identify priorities and to take action to improve local quality of life.

Waterloo Region makes learning a priority

The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation and the Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation in Ontario co-produce *Waterloo Region's Vital Signs*.

'The report gives us an overview of our community's strengths and weaknesses. This is invaluable information.'

— Floyd Laughren,
former Ontario Finance Minister and Deputy Premier

Serving an area that's home to two world-class universities and a top-ranked college, the foundations and their communities were troubled by the region's lacklustre performance in high school completion and literacy.

Further research by the foundations revealed particular issues concerning school readiness and learning among young children. Working in partnership with local organizations, the foundations are stepping up efforts to engage

the community in discussions about the importance of education with a focus on early learning.

New Saint John track promotes fitness for everyone

When its *Vital Signs* report indicated a local rate of obesity higher than the national average, the Greater Saint John Community Foundation committed itself to encouraging physical activity. By supporting the River Valley Track Association, the foundation is now helping to build a new running track for the residents of the Greater River Valley area. The 400-metre track, built to Canadian Track and Field standards, but intended for walkers, joggers and active residents of all ages, is scheduled to open this fall.

Vital Signs fills businesses' need for accurate information about Sudbury

Local employers find that *Greater Sudbury's Vital Signs* report provides the information they needed to accurately describe life in Sudbury to potential employees. Local mining companies support the project and now use it in their national and international recruitment.

Calgary's Vital Signs makes minorities' struggles visible

By raising awareness of the barriers faced by visible minority residents (a quarter of Calgary's population), the *Calgary Foundation's Vital Signs* report gave confidence



Photo by Victor Penner, provided by The Calgary Foundation

Vital Signs findings are leading to action by local governments, donors, and community groups across the country, who are using the reports to identify community needs and opportunities.

to the city's diverse communities to work together to combat marginalization. The Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary's 1,000 Voices initiative is bringing together cultural community leaders and policy makers to address issues including racial profiling, access to health care, accreditation of foreign

credentials and hate crime.

Students turn learning into action

Improving quality of life in a community takes a group effort — and that includes kids. In many communities, *Vital Signs* reports are used in schools to help students learn more about

the problems "in their own backyard" and to think about the ways they can take action to make things better.

Last year, elementary and secondary school students in Montreal Island's two school boards took part in a project called School Needs. The project, led by the Foundation for Greater Montreal, encouraged youth to look at their own surroundings from different perspectives, to think about local needs and how their choices and actions could affect change. Next, the youth will become more involved in philanthropic activities in their schools and in the community.

In Victoria, *Vital Signs* inspired local youth to contribute to the community in their own way. Students at Oak Bay High School were struck by what they learned in *Victoria's Vital Signs* about local homelessness and resolved to do something to help those living in shelters. After finding out about a shortage of basic hygiene supplies, essentials in their view, the teens collected soap, shampoo and body wash and provided them, assembled in individual kits, to shelters and street outreach programs. Their effort caught the attention of local hotels and businesses, which donated more of the needed supplies.

Communities share secret of student success

Across communities, *Vital Signs* highlights the connection between lower income and lower educational success. In 2001, an ambitious program called Pathways to Education was started in Regent Park, one of Toronto's poorest neighbourhoods. Providing local high-school students with a combination of academic, social, financial, and advocacy support, the program, in just a few

short years has turned around the lives of hundreds of local students.

Pathways has:

- Reduced the local dropout rate from 56 to 10 per cent;
- Reduced school absenteeism by 50 per cent; and
- Increased post-secondary enrollment of high-school graduates from 20 to 80 per cent (over 90 per cent of them, the first in their families to go on to post-secondary education).

'The report card helps us build the right kind of public policies to address the true needs of Torontonians.'

— David Miller
Toronto Mayor

With *Vital Signs* showing the need, the Toronto Community Foundation has supported this program and its success in Toronto has sparked interest in other communities facing similar challenges. Pathways to Education programs have been launched in Ottawa, Kitchener and Montreal, with the support of their local community foundations.

Acknowledgements

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The Canada we believe in

Canada has a lot going for it. As *Vital Signs* demonstrate, the stability, safety, abundance and prosperity of our communities are truly remarkable. That's why, throughout Canada's history, people from all parts of the world have willingly faced adversity and uncertainty to settle here. Each new arrival, joining our Aboriginal people, only adds more courage and "can-do" attitude to our country.

This pioneering spirit, which has already enabled Canada to accomplish so much, fuels our collective belief in our ability to keep getting better and stronger as a nation. Community foundations share that spirit. While the job of ensuring Canada keeps getting

better and stronger is never finished, each effort moves us all forward. Community foundations believe that every person has a job to do in ensuring that we all enjoy the quality of life Canada is capable of achieving and we want everyone to have the chance to do their part.

What can I do?

Think about it. Discuss it. Act on it. If something you've read in our national report or in a local *Vital Signs* report has raised your curiosity, please don't stop there.

As the saying goes, every journey starts with a single step. Here are three simple ways you can take action. Today.

1. Read and reflect.

Consider how issues you're reading about in *Vital Signs* relate to you, your family, your neighbours, your community

2. Pass it on. Share and discuss this report, or your local *Vital Signs* report with your co-worker, your teacher, your best friend, your boss, or your elected representative

3. Find out more. Talk to or visit the websites of other organizations in your community working to improve on the issues that concern you. Contact your local community foundation. You can find your local community foundation at www.cfcfcc.ca. If you're looking for ways to make a difference, we can help.



Charitable or passionate?

For many, a charitable donation is simply not enough to satisfy one's personal desire to make a continuous and influential contribution to an important cause. If you are passionate about making a lasting difference, the various programs within BMO Financial Group can assist you.

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