



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
OF CANADA

NEWS RELEASE

ANNUAL QUALITY OF LIFE REPORT CARD FINDS CANADA'S CHILDREN, IMMIGRANTS GETTING LEFT BEHIND

Canada's Vital Signs 2008 also reports Canadians improving education levels, showing more interest in arts

OTTAWA (October 7, 2008) – Child poverty in Canada is stuck at the same level as 1989 and immigrant family incomes are falling behind, according to *Canada's Vital Signs 2008*, the annual report card on quality of life from Community Foundations of Canada (CFC).

Highlights of the report were released today and show:

- More than one in five Canadian children (23 per cent or 1.6 million) lived in poverty in 2006. This is virtually the same level as in 1989, when Canada pledged to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. At the current rate, achieving this goal would take 43 more years or until 2050.
- While the median income of non-immigrant Canadian families increased by over 5% from 2000 to 2005, immigrant families' incomes fell by one per cent and recent immigrants' (those in Canada less than five years) incomes fell more than three per cent. The situation is most striking in Canada's largest cities, where recent immigrants' incomes were half the median income of non-immigrant families: Toronto – 50 per cent, Montreal - 51.1 per cent, Vancouver - 51.8 per cent.

Canada's Vital Signs 2008 also includes some revealing trends about Canadians' individual challenges and achievements.

- More Canadians are finishing high school. In 2007, only 22 per cent of Canadians hadn't finished high school, down from almost 38 per cent in 1990, which bodes well for Canadians' economic success and competitiveness. However, there are some disturbing gaps in education levels. Among Canadians aged 25-44, the share of men without a high school education is more than 30 per cent higher than that of women. In 2006, 43.7 per cent of aboriginal people did not have a high school diploma.
- The obesity rate in Canada has swollen to 16 per cent in 2007 from 12 per cent in 1996, increasing the risk of future health problems and escalating health care costs.
- Canadians are showing increasing interest in the arts. About 41 per cent of Canadian adults reported attending a live arts performance in 2005, up from 38 per cent in 1998.

“At a time when Canadians are considering our country’s priorities and determining its future direction, *Canada’s Vital Signs* challenges us all to think about what actions we can take, as individuals and as a society, to improve quality of life for ourselves and other Canadians,” said Monica Patten CFC’s President and CEO.. “Canadian community foundations urge our partners - business, governments, other organizations and individuals – to use our *Vital Signs* reports as a catalyst for action.”

Canada’s Vital Signs 2008 is part of a growing nation-wide initiative by Canadian community foundations to measure quality of life and take action to improve it. Today, 15 local *Vital Signs* report cards are being released by community foundations across Canada. This is an increase from 11 reports issued last year and six produced in 2006. As a result of the Canadian initiative, community organizations in Australia and Brazil are also researching similar reports.

Community foundations participating in *Vital Signs 2008* include:

- Calgary
- Fredericton
- Greater Montreal
- Greater Saint John
- Greater Sudbury
- Guelph & Wellington
- London and Middlesex
- Medicine Hat
- Metro Vancouver
- Oakville
- Ottawa
- Red Deer
- Toronto
- Victoria
- Waterloo Region

The reader-friendly report cards track and grade each community’s quality of life in key areas such as the gap between rich and poor, health, housing, and the environment – transforming facts and figures into research that is easily understood. The effort is coordinated by CFC, the membership organization for the country’s 164 community foundations, which produces *Canada’s Vital Signs*.

“*Vital Signs* provides individuals and organizations with a focus for improving quality of life in their communities,” said Vincenza Travale, Chair of CFC’s Board of Directors. “It’s clear that the *Vital Signs* program is becoming an increasingly important catalyst for change at the both local and national levels.”

For example:

- When its *Vital Signs* report indicated a local obesity rate higher than the national average, the Greater Saint John Community Foundation committed itself to encouraging physical activity. The Foundation is helping to build a new running track, scheduled to open this fall, for walkers, joggers and active residents of all ages in the Greater River Valley area.
- In Victoria, B.C., students at Oak Bay High School were struck by data on homelessness and the shortage of basic hygiene supplies reported in *Victoria’s Vital Signs*. Working with local hotels and businesses, students collected boxes of soap, shampoo and body wash which they assembled into kits for downtown shelters and street outreach programs.

Canada's Vital Signs

CFC's *Canada's Vital Signs* looks at the 10 indicators shared by every community foundation issuing a report this year. It collates data from a number of recognized sources to provide an overview and make connections between key quality of life issues in our country. It is designed to share important research in a reader-friendly way that is accessible to all Canadians. It is based on *Toronto's Vital Signs*®, a successful report developed by Toronto Community Foundation first published in 2001.

Canada's Vital Signs 2008 will be distributed across Canada in *The Globe and Mail* on October 16, 2008 and will be available as a downloadable file at www.cfc-fcc.ca.

CFC recognizes the generous support of **Mackenzie Investments** as Canada's Vital Signs 2008 National Sponsor.

About Canada's community foundations

Community foundations build and manage permanent endowments, using their knowledge of their communities' needs to connect donors to the causes and organizations that can help them make a lasting difference. With more than \$2.9 billion in assets, the community foundation movement is one of Canada's largest grantmakers, providing more than \$176 million in grants last year to thousands of charities.

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Note to editors/producers: See attached backgrounder for more findings from Canada's Vital Signs 2008.

All 15 local *Vital Signs* reports and media contacts for participating community foundations can be found at www.vitalsignscanada.ca.

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