



i CANADIAN
index

OF WELLBEING

Measuring the things that matter

**Prepared by the Atkinson Charitable Foundation
February 2006**

Table of Contents

- 2 Charting the Path to Progress**
- 3 The CIW: Connecting the Dots**
- 5 Measuring the Things that Matter**
- 6 Unique Features of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing**
- 7 Making It Happen**
- 9 The Time is Right**

- 10 Appendix A: The Leadership*
- 13 Appendix B: Imagining the Possibilities*
- 17 Appendix C: Reality Check Magazine*

Charting the Path to Progress

Indicators are very powerful. What we count, measure, and report often drives our understanding of whether we are better off than we used to be, whether we are leaving a better world for our children, and what we need to change.

We currently gauge how we are doing as a society according to a narrow set of indicators of economic activity. Although the architects of national income accounting never intended tools such as the GDP to be used as a gauge of overall wellbeing, when the economy is growing rapidly, we are led to the assumption that “we are better off.”

Such a narrow perspective on wellbeing means that we fail to capture many of the things that matter to Canadians. As our natural environment is depleted, life for Canada’s Aboriginal peoples fails to improve, the gap between rich and poor gets bigger, and the pressures of time stress mount, it is no wonder that a rosy economic picture is often at odds with what Canadians know to be the reality of their everyday lives.

This narrow perspective also means that we fail to seize opportunities to take action on those factors that will fundamentally improve our health, wellbeing, and economic prosperity.

And this is where the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) will make a real difference.

The CIW: Connecting the Dots

When we build a new industrial plant or purchase new equipment, we recognize this as a capital investment that will depreciate over time. Eventually, we will need to repair or replace that equipment if we want to maintain or expand the value of our assets. We place great stock in the value of our capital, measuring how well off we are according to our material wealth, and even measuring our progress as a society by whether our collective wealth is growing.





But we ignore other kinds of wealth that are just as valuable, and we don't pay enough attention when they depreciate, or when it's time to re-invest. Under our current way of measuring growth, we count timber cutting as economic gain, but we don't count the depreciation of our forest wealth. Fish stocks decline, and soil erodes, but the national balance sheets do not track the health of natural capital, even though its depreciation can affect future production of timber, fish, and crops, as surely as if we sold off machinery.

Similarly, if the health of Canadians declines or if our investments in early childhood development fall short, then our human capital is depreciating, our economy will suffer, and the necessary reinvestments will be substantial.

Yet we don't track the health and wellbeing of our population as a vital component of our human wealth. We count spending on cigarettes and cancer treatment as contributions to economic growth, but we don't count efforts to prevent disease and improve health, or address the debilitating impacts of poverty and expand access to early childhood education, as investments in human capital.

Now imagine an index (a set of indicators) that actually links the economic reality and longer-term economic prosperity of our country with the social, health and environmental conditions that shape our communities. Imagine an index:

The CIW: Connecting the Dots

-  That distinguishes between good things (like health and clean air) and bad things (like sickness and pollution).
-  That promotes volunteer work and supports unpaid care giving as social goods, and overwork and stress as social deficits.
-  That puts a value on things like educational achievement, economic security, a clean environment and social equity.
-  That values a better balance between investment in health promotion and spending on illness treatment.

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing – or CIW – is that type of a measuring stick. It is being built around powerful indicators that count and measure the extent to which we are realizing our values and goals as a society and whether we are leaving the world a better place for our children.

We want the CIW to help foster a common vision for the future of Canada. Our mission for the CIW is to provide Canadians with a clear, valid, and regular accounting of the things that matter to them and to the genuine progress of Canada. We want to create a new tool that will account honestly and accurately for changes in our human, social, economic and natural wealth.

The CIW will shine a spotlight on how the strategic allocation of economic resources ‘upstream’ will reduce the need for expensive health care and social services ‘downstream’. In other words, it will focus on getting things right at the beginning – where the solutions are cheaper and far more effective – instead of fixing them at the end.

We want to use this as the basis for improving our performance in areas that matter to Canadians. We want to provide a valuable public policy tool that resonates with opinion leaders, media, and decision makers, while informing the “water cooler chat” about how we are really doing. To do that, we have to create a tool that is easy to communicate and simple to understand.

Measuring the Things that Matter

The CIW team is working towards an integrated index that can best capture the full range of factors that determine current wellbeing and sustainable wellbeing in Canada. The team is developing a set of indicators that will monitor progress in seven areas, or domains.

Living Standards

Secure and meaningful employment, adequate income, low-income rates, gap between rich and poor, food security, and affordable housing.

Time Allocation

Balance between paid work, unpaid work, and free time, the capacity to make choices about the use of time, and the stress of overload.

Healthy Populations

Self-rated health, functional health, disability-adjusted life expectancy, infant mortality, low birth weight, mortality and morbidity due to circulatory diseases, cancers, respiratory diseases, and diabetes, rates of depression and suicide, body-mass index, smoking, and physical activity.

Ecosystem Health

Good air and water quality, healthy forests, soils, and marine environment, greenhouse gas emissions, waste diversion, and environmental sustainability.

Educated Populace

Literacy, numeracy, and indicators of educational attainment and quality.

Community Vitality

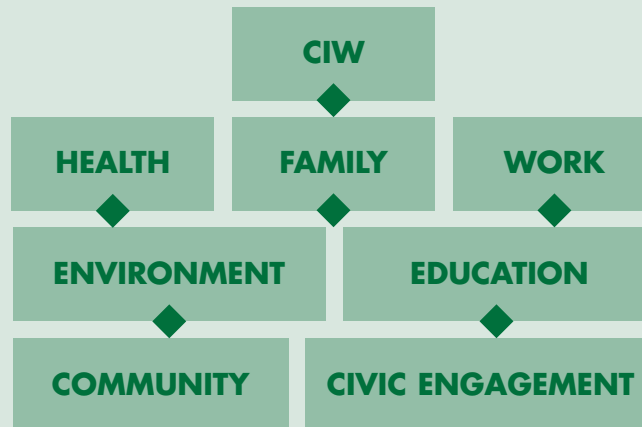
Safe communities, cohesion, equity, diversity, identity, culture, arts and recreation, and inclusion of all communities in our vision for a better world.

Civic Engagement

Including meaningful participation.

The first CIW release, using a life path model measuring life chances or overall quality of life within the first three domains – Living Standards, Healthy Populations and Time Allocation, is scheduled for release in 2006.

Unique Features of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing






- ✓ Indicators available at the **national, provincial, regional and community level** with data allowing comparisons across jurisdictions;
- ✓ Strong attention to **communications value and utility for a wide range of users**;
- ✓ **Internationally comparable indicators**, to the extent possible, that track Canada's genuine progress in comparison to other global jurisdictions and economic competitors;
- ✓ Measures of **current wellbeing and sustainable development** reported within the same analytical and reporting framework, i.e. the CIW will incorporate measures assessing the influence current life styles have on choices for future generations;
- ✓ Sound **methodology** and the **best available data sources**, with Statistics Canada's active participation;
- ✓ Provides a **publicly accessible web-based database** that can provide information for citizens, policy makers, the media, researchers, and indicator practitioners;
- ✓ Combines **quantitative/qualitative indicators** with assessments of the hidden value of our human, social, and natural capital, thus facilitating assessments of true benefits and costs;
- ✓ Builds a strong capacity to track and assess program effectiveness, real costs, and **implications of decisions and trends**, e.g. social and economic costs of crime, homelessness, and disinvestment in education;
- ✓ Provides **linkages and coherence** amongst various health, social, economic, and environmental variables;
- ✓ Allows for **simulation modeling**, based on the interaction of key determinants of wellbeing;
- ✓ Ensures **reasonable frequency** with a capacity to update, and report regularly as data become available;
- ✓ Maintains **quality control** and overall integrity to ensure the products and methodologies are accepted, and can be actively promoted and disseminated on a non-proprietary (public domain) basis, to ensure maximum take-up and use.

Making It Happen





Making the CIW a reality requires an organizational home to support ongoing research and development, coordinate and expand networks, and lead the dissemination of work emanating from the CIW.

A National Steering Committee, comprised of the key Canadian leaders in indicator work, strategic thinking, resource development, voluntary sector initiatives, and governance – with the support of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation – has been hard at work to lay the groundwork for the establishment of the Canadian Institute for Wellbeing.

The **objectives** of the Canadian Institute for Wellbeing include:

-  Ongoing R&D on indicators;
-  Sponsorship of research and dissemination of findings;
-  Developing and maintaining an effective national and international network of researchers, policy experts and community, regional, provincial, and federal stakeholders.

We now have the **right mix of people and partnerships** in place to accomplish this work. They include such leaders and visionaries as:




-  **The Hon. Roy J. Romanow**, P.C., O.C., Q.C., Former Premier of Saskatchewan and Commissioner on the Future of Health Care in Canada
-  **Dr. Robert McMurtry**, Chair, Wait Times and Accessibility Committee, Health Council of Canada;
-  **Dr. John Evans**, C.C., Former Chair of the Rockefeller Foundation and Chair of MaRS (The Medical and Related Sciences Discovery District in Toronto);
-  **Dr. Judith Maxwell**, C.M. Former President, Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.

Making It Happen




World class experts guide the design of the Index anchored by:

-  **Dr. Ron Colman**, Executive Director of GPI Atlantic and a world recognized expert in measures of sustainability, wellbeing and quality of life;
-  **Dr. Laszlo Pinter** and **Dr. Peter Hardi**, International Institute for Sustainable Development;
-  **Dr. Ron Labonte**, Canada Research Chair, Globalization/Health Equity, Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa;
-  **Dr. Alex Michalos**, internationally recognized Professor Emeritus, Institute for Social Research and Evaluation, University of Northern British Columbia.

Senior participation from Statistics Canada ensures buy-in to critical data sets as evidenced by the involvement of:

-  **Hans Messinger**, Director, Statistics Canada;
-  **Robert Smith**, Director of Environment and Statistics Division;
-  **Michael Wolfson**, Assistant Chief Statistician, Analysis and Development, who acts as a special advisor to the CIW National Research and Development Council.

Critical advice from the voluntary sector is provided by leaders such as:

-  **Dr. Judith Maxwell**, C.M., former President, Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.;
-  **Frances Lankin**, President and C.E.O., United Way of Greater Toronto;
-  **Mr. Ross McGregor**, former President of Ketchum Canada.

For a full list of participants currently involved in steering and developing the CIW please refer to Appendix A.

The Time is Right

What Canadians are saying about the CIW...

Canadians need a tool like this to help them take part in discourse around public policy.

This is really capitalizing on what I think is a world-wide trend: the development of community information systems, although this is the most ambitious and comprehensive project of its type I have heard about

We know about Adam Smith's invisible hand. Well this index will help to show people the importance of the visible hand [of government].

What Canadians say:
Cross-Canada roundtables fall 2005

Canada and Canadians are increasingly open to a new barometer that will give a full and accurate picture of how we are really doing across the many dimensions of our lives. This has been reinforced by cross-Canada roundtables.

We have gathered crucial insights into how the CIW and its domains capture what Canadians care about and value. We heard about where we are getting really close and what's still missing. We also listened carefully to what Canadians are telling us about how the CIW can be used as a tool to guide policy and track program effectiveness at the community level.

Common themes are emerging from these roundtables about the need for and the utility of the CIW and the importance of raising the profile and dialogue about economic, social and health trends for Canadians.

Canadians envision a tool that will provide policy shapers and decision-makers with the information they need to measure the full benefits and costs of policy changes. An index that gives Canada, the provinces, and the diverse communities of Canada with a clear and accurate measure of human and natural capital so that our economic capital is used prudently and strategically.

The CIW – given time, appropriate resources, the execution of a superior communications strategy, and great leadership – will yield positive transformative progress for Canada and its citizens.

It will spotlight the kind of progressive changes that Canada truly needs and engage Canadians in a meaningful dialogue about what it means to have global-leading quality of life and sustainability.

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing: It's time to measure the things that matter.

The Canadian Institute for Wellbeing Steering Committee

The Honourable Roy J. Romanow P.C., O.C., Q.C.

Founding Chair, Canadian Institute for Wellbeing

Dr. Ronald Colman

Co-chair
Executive Director
GPI Atlantic

Dr. John R. Evans, C.C.

Former Chair
Rockefeller Foundation
Chair of MaRS (Medical and Related
Sciences Discovery District in Toronto)

Dr. Colleen Flood

Associate Professor, Faculty of Law
University of Toronto & Canada Research
Chair in Health Law and Policy

Dr. Ronald Labonte

Canada Research Chair,
Globalization/Health Equity,
Institute of Population Health,
University of Ottawa

Frances Lankin

President and C.E.O.
United Way of Greater Toronto

Hugh Mackenzie

President
Mackenzie Consulting

Dr. Robert McMurtry

Co-chair
Chair, Wait Times and Accessibility
Committee
Health Council of Canada

Dr. Judith Maxwell, C.M.

Former President
Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.

Dr. Hans Messinger

Director
Statistics Canada

Dr. Charles E. Pascal

Executive Director
Atkinson Charitable Foundation

Lynne Slotek

CIW Project Manager
The Atkinson Charitable Foundation

CIW National Research and Development Council Group Contributors

Dr. Ronald Colman
Executive Director
GPI Atlantic
Glen Haven, Nova Scotia

Dr. Alex Michalos
Director
Institute for Social
Research and Evaluation
Professor Emeritus,
Political Science
University of Northern
British Columbia
Prince George, B.C.

Dr. Ron Labonte
Canada Research Chair,
Globalization/Health
Equity,
Institute of Population
Health, University
of Ottawa

Dr. Mark Anielski
President
Anielski Management Inc.
Edmonton, Alberta

**Dr. Peter Hardi &
Dr. Laszlo Pinter**
International Institute for
Sustainable Development
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Dr. Andrew Harvey
Economist and President
Time-Use Research
Program
Saint Mary's University
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Noel Keough
Sustainable Calgary
Calgary, Alberta

Dr. Simon Langlois
Professor of Sociology
University of Laval
Quebec City, Quebec

Kim Lauzon
Chief
Operations Systems
Support & Marketing
Statistics Canada
Ottawa, ON

Dr. Doug May
Economics Department
Memorial University &
Nfld. Statistics
Department
St. John's, Newfoundland

Dr. Hans Messinger
Director
Statistics Canada
Ottawa, Ontario

**Dr. Nazeem
Muhajarine**
Community Health &
Epidemiology
University of
Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Katherine Scott
Vice-President Research
Canadian Council on
Social Development
Ottawa, Ontario

Dr. Robert Smith
Director
Environment Account &
Statistics Division
Statistics Canada
Ottawa, Ontario

Dr. Andrew Sharpe
Executive Director
Centre for the Study of
Living Standards
Ottawa, Ontario

Malcolm Shookner
Community Development
Project Director
Voluntary Planning,
Citizens' Policy Forum
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Sandra Zagon
Research Associate
Canadian Policy Research
Networks Inc.
Ottawa, Ontario

SPECIAL ADVISOR

Dr. Michael Wolfson
Assistant Chief Statistician
Analysis and Development
Statistics Canada
Ottawa, Ontario

Appendix A: The Leadership

The National Network of Experts: A Cross-Canada Check-in

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



CIW Sets Stage for Environmental Public Awareness Campaign

A coalition of environmentalists has gathered in Vancouver. The group is concerned about the logging of old growth forests in British Columbia. In the three years since the province allowed the expansion of logging activities on crown lands, the volume of logging has increased by 20 percent. The group is preparing to raise public awareness about policy changes that are needed to preserve the province's natural resources. It has mapped out a full strategy, including advertising, public service announcements, e-newsletters, household brochures, public meetings, discussions with journalists and editorial boards, and letters to legislators.

But as someone points out at the meeting, the coalition needs some kind of spark to kick off the public campaign – something that will elevate the visibility of environmental issues and create a receptive public mood. Someone else notes that the CIW Annual Report is coming out in a month. The three previous quarterly reports have shown a decline in B.C.'s natural resources, so it is logical to assume that the Annual Report will also show a substantial drop.

A month goes by and the CIW Annual Report is released. B.C.'s index has dropped by 7 points from 132 to 125. A key contributor has been environmental degradation. The media are full of stories about the province's declining natural resources. The following day a strategic public awareness campaign begins...

CIW Shines Public Spotlight on Medicare Issue

The editor of a major newspaper in Western Canada looks at his schedule of stories coming in later in the day over the wire. One in particular catches his eye – *Canadian Index of Wellbeing Down Two Points*. He calls in an investigative reporter and tells her to keep an eye out for the story.

Later in the morning when the story comes in, she quickly skims it and sees that in the quarterly report of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW), the Index has dropped from 112 points in the previous quarter to 110 points.

She also sees that while many of the sub-indices that make up the CIW are actually up – job security, education attainment – others, like health care are down. She quickly calls up the CIW web site and goes to the area marked sub-indices. Clicking on “health care” she sees a list of categories under which the health care system is measured. She clicks again on “access” and also on the box marked “list by province”. The next screen shows that while access is unchanged in most provinces, it’s down in Alberta and New Brunswick. Scrolling down from the statistical data to the written commentary, she discovers that since those provinces legalized private clinics offering fee-for-service back care and surgery, access to back surgery has actually worsened.

Making a few phone calls to her contacts in government, the reporter discovers that from the time the provinces legalized private back care clinics, 20 percent of the surgeons shifted from the public care system to the private one. But the prices were so high at the private clinics, only 5 percent of the patients moved over with them. With so many fewer surgeons but almost as many patients as ever in the public system, waiting times for surgery were rapidly going up. The next day, her story appears in the paper under the headline *Back Surgery Waiting Times Up, CIW Down*.

The newspaper editorial board meets that day and the following day an editorial appears: *Government Inflicts More Pain on Back Sufferers*. Later that day the Leader of the Opposition rises in the provincial legislature. “Mr. Speaker I would like to ask the Premier why, when he promised that private back care clinics would increase accessibility, the waiting list and waiting times are getting longer and people are suffering more hardship?”

CIW Statistics Support Non-Profit Groups Funding Proposal

The Executive Director of a Toronto non-profit organization sits in his office looking over his group’s application for increased municipal funding. His organization serves youth at risk and youth in conflict with the law. It is part of a city-wide coalition of agencies working to address issues of racism, poverty and the rise in gang and weapons violence.

He thinks back to a time 5-10 years ago when the city was in the midst of a tough “law and order agenda” – a time when the youth population in jails was growing, with less and less attention and money being paid to grass-root solutions such as social and recreational programs for marginalized youth. The only “official” research numbers he would see coming out of the city involved volume and types of crime and age of the offenders.

Fortunately, the city eventually realized that its crime and punishment focus was both short-sighted and delivering little in the way of results. Three years ago, pressure from the coalition of agencies and others had forced the city to introduce new programming for marginalized youth. But the city and its partners were uncertain as to how to measure the program’s impact. It was about that time that the Canadian Index of Wellbeing was created. Sub-indices of the CIW measured factors like social inclusion, acceptable living standards, youth employment opportunities, and security and freedom. Both the city and the coalition agreed it would be a good measuring stick for tracking progress.

The Executive Director looks again at the application for increased funding. Under a headline reading “supportive evidence” he sees a statement that reads “since the programs were introduced three years ago, the related CIW sub-index has gone up by 20 points.” “Well,” he thinks, “that’s certainly going to help!”

CIW Sparks Action Plan to Fight Unemployment

The president of a bank looks over the latest Quarterly Report of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing and she feels a sense of disappointment. The sub-index measuring factors like meaningful employment, job satisfaction and job security is down 10 points in Montreal. A number of factors have contributed to the drop: layoffs by two large employers have increased unemployment as well as fears about further job losses; an international company that was considering locating in the city went elsewhere because it wasn't satisfied that the community had the job skills for its niche product; and since the province had increased the minimum work week by two hours, there had been a lot of complaints about the deterioration of work/life balance.

The bank president feels a personal sense of disappointment. She has been a leader in the community in trying to get businesses to adopt a greater sense of social responsibility. She has actively initiated and supported employment and training programs across the business community. Within the bank, she has personally championed micro-loans to Women's Economic Development.

Concerned, the bank president convenes a roundtable with various business and labour leaders, as well as municipal, provincial and federal stakeholders, to discuss job skills, job search and job retention. A three-year Action Plan is developed for Montreal to turn the tide of lost income and rising unemployment. The plan is put into action and change begins to take place slowly over time. Three years later, the same bank president looks over the Annual CIW Report for Montreal. A smile begins to emerge.

Appendix D: Reality Check Magazine



Click any issue to read online



Issue 1:
Why We Need New Measures
for Wellbeing, 2001



Issue 10:
Introducing the Canadian Index
of Wellbeing, 2004



The Hon. Roy J. Romanow champions the CIW in speech to United Way of Canada's Conference.

Click here to read Roy J. Romanow's Speech: The Canadian index of Wellbeing: Taking Measure of the Things that Count.

More info and updates...

Visit our website at www.atkinsonfoundation.ca/ciw for frequent updates, to read articles about the CIW in the news, and to sign up for our newsletter.