

## **2007 National Vital Signs Report – Expanded on-line version**

### **2007 National Vital Signs Report**

Vital Signs is an annual check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our communities, identifies significant trends, and assigns grades in at least ten areas critical to quality of life. The Vital Signs project was originally developed by the Toronto Community Foundation and is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada.

#### ***Local Reports: Vital Signs Communities***

In 2007, Vital Signs reports are being issued in 11 communities: Saint John, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Waterloo Region, Sudbury, Calgary, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Vancouver, and Victoria. The list will continue to grow in 2008. See the [local reports](#).

Vital Signs is a powerful tool. It zeros in on where communities are doing well and where improvement is needed. It engages citizens in ranking the priority issues that need to be addressed.

Community foundations see enormous value for donors and the entire community in Vital Signs. Measuring the vitality of Canadian communities in critical areas helps community foundations:

- Increase the effectiveness of our grantmaking
- Better inform our donors about pressing local issues and opportunities
- Assist ourselves in making connections between individuals and groups to address those issues

With Vital Signs data and all the players at the table, communities can find creative, multi-sector solutions to their most important concerns.

#### ***National Report: Vital Signs Canada***

Vital Signs Canada provides the national data on each 2007 indicator and a context for the local, more detailed reports in Vital Signs communities. This year, the national findings in three of the ten issue areas demanded extra attention, and in those areas we provide more context, and highlight action examples across the country.

## Indicators

Vital Signs communities have agreed to report on ten common issue areas. Then each community adds to that set, according to local priorities. Common indicators are being used in each issue area, on a rotating basis.

Issue Area	2007 Indicator
Learning	Proportion of population with completed post-secondary education
Work	Unemployment rate
Belonging and Leadership	Volunteer rate
Getting Started in Our Community	Unemployment rate of immigrants
Housing	Average housing prices as a proportion of median income
Safety	Property crime rate
Arts and Culture	Employment in cultural industries
Health and Wellness	Physicians per capita
Gap Between Rich and Poor	Overall poverty rate
Environment	Greenhouse gas emissions

**“The Vital Signs report is contributing to deeper understanding of the big picture issues and opportunities we have in Vancouver, on the part of both citizens and decision-makers.” – Judy Rogers, City Manager, The City of Vancouver**

## Our Nation’s Vital Signs – What Are they Telling Us?

On the surface, Canada’s Vital Signs look healthy. Unemployment is at its lowest in a generation, Canadians are better educated than they used to be, median family income is advancing, and property crime is down.

But just below the surface is a different story. Canada’s Vital Signs also show we’re a country of growing disparity. Between rich and poor. Between those who have opportunity and those who have not.

More than 20% of our population still lives in poverty.<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal poverty remains at unacceptable levels. New immigrants are twice as likely as other Canadians to experience poverty, despite bringing more credentials than ever to this country. And as the gap between rich and poor widens, homeownership is becoming an impossible dream for many Canadians.

On the environmental front, the picture is not encouraging. Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. We are one of the biggest per capita producers of carbon dioxide in the world.

As a nation, we are at a crossroads. Canada has an opportunity to be a world leader in multiculturalism, in social justice, and in environmental responsibility. We have the resources and the skills to do so. Do we have the collective will?

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<sup>1</sup> (Based on the pre-tax Low Income Measure). Source: [Statistics Canada](#).

Can we be a model for other nations without first improving the lives of our own citizens?

Community foundations across Canada are searching for ways to come to grips with these questions in partnership with our communities. We made grants of \$137 million in 2006 to charitable organizations working in every field of interest. Now, by taking the pulse of our communities through Vital Signs, we are highlighting both the assets and the warning signs that will help guide decision-making and planning in local communities. At the national level, Community Foundations of Canada is doing the same.

This report exists, first and foremost, to stimulate discussion, debate and action. We hope it will serve as a wake-up call to individuals, communities, and our nation, reminding us that our prosperity must be shared. And we must work together to find ways to do better for all Canadians.

Monica Patten  
President and CEO

Vincenza Travale  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Community Foundations of Canada

### **Vital Comments**

The First Nations population is the fastest growing and youngest population in Canada, with more than 50% under 23 years of age. Yet, as recognized in the Vital Signs Report, more than half of First Nations people have not graduated from high school and/or are unemployed. As a result, one in four First Nations children live in poverty. Community infrastructures are underfunded and subject to a 2% cap on annual budget growth by the federal government. In housing alone, the picture is dismal and expected to worsen: one in three First Nations report that their home is in need of major repairs, 44% report mould or mildew, and close to one in five live in overcrowded conditions.

The cycle of First Nations poverty can be broken. Canada does not have to abandon First Nations communities as a failed enterprise. Opportunities can be created for First Nations citizens, especially First Nations youth, which will contribute to Canada's economic prosperity. The Red Deer Community Foundation is a positive example of how citizen engagement can contribute to addressing social injustices affecting our peoples. Ongoing support is needed to press for the recognition and implementation of First Nations governments, with secure, flexible and sustainable funding. Urgent investments in education, human and resource development are also critical to build sustainable First

Nations economies and, ultimately, fulfill Canada's commitment to support all of its citizens.<sup>2</sup>

Phil Fontaine, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations

Those who don't know their history are condemned to remain children. The same can be said for understanding what is happening in our own society today. What is really happening? Emotion and opinion can't solve problems. They can help you once you understand. I read this report as a mechanism for action.

We walk by homeless people on our streets as if this were unavoidable. It isn't. Vital Signs shows that we have been stuck in the same place on poverty for decades, and that this is the result of having no solid strategy to reduce poverty.

But this report and the increasingly coordinated conscious words and actions of community foundations across Canada is a key mechanism for facing poverty, dealing with the financial risks of immigration, confronting the income gap and the low-cost housing shortage. Conscious people have the tools to act and this report is just that – a vital tool for action.

John Ralston Saul, Writer and Co-Chair of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship

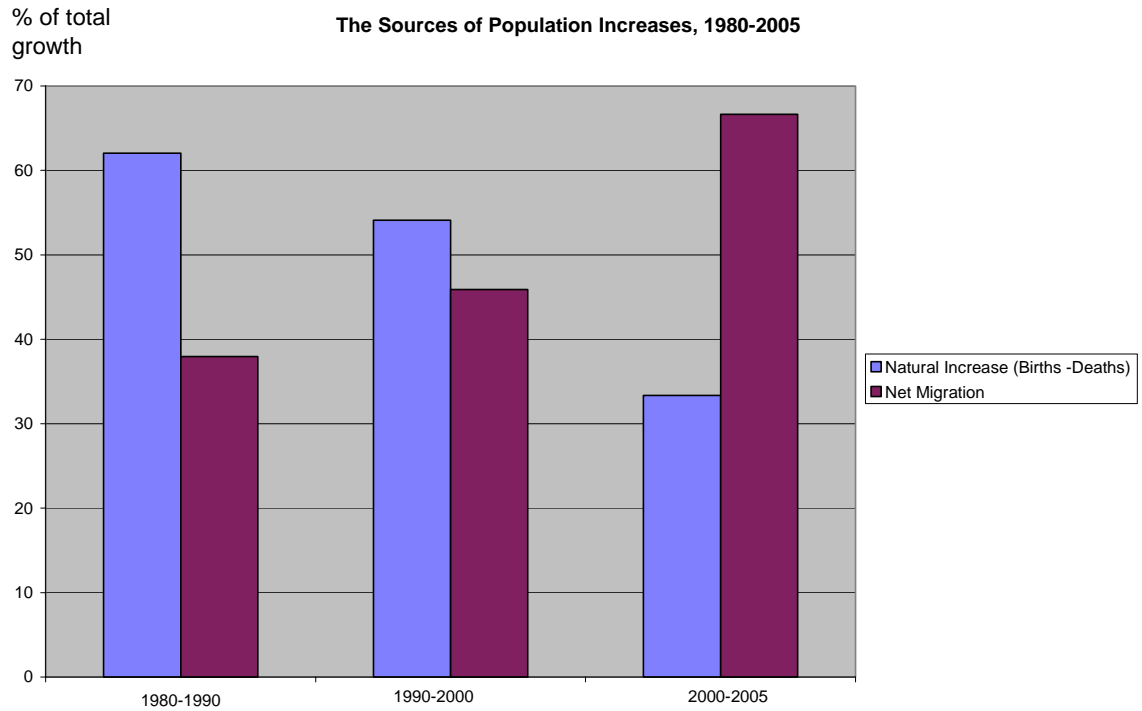
## Canada's Population

- Canada's population grew by 5.4% between 2001 and 2006<sup>3</sup>
- The average annual growth rate (1.02%) is almost identical to the rate in the 1990s (1.03%)
- Only Alberta and Ontario had population growth above the national average between 2001 and 2006
- Population growth is now largely due to immigration

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<sup>2</sup> Source: [First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, 2002/03](#)

<sup>3</sup> Population data in this section from [Statistics Canada Census 2001 and 2006](#)



Source: Statistics Canada<sup>4</sup>

- Canada's elderly population is growing: by 2031, Statistics Canada projects seniors will account for a quarter of the total population -- almost double their current proportion<sup>5</sup>
- The 2005 median family income in Canada was \$60,600 – an increase of 6.4% since 2000 when adjusted for inflation<sup>6</sup>

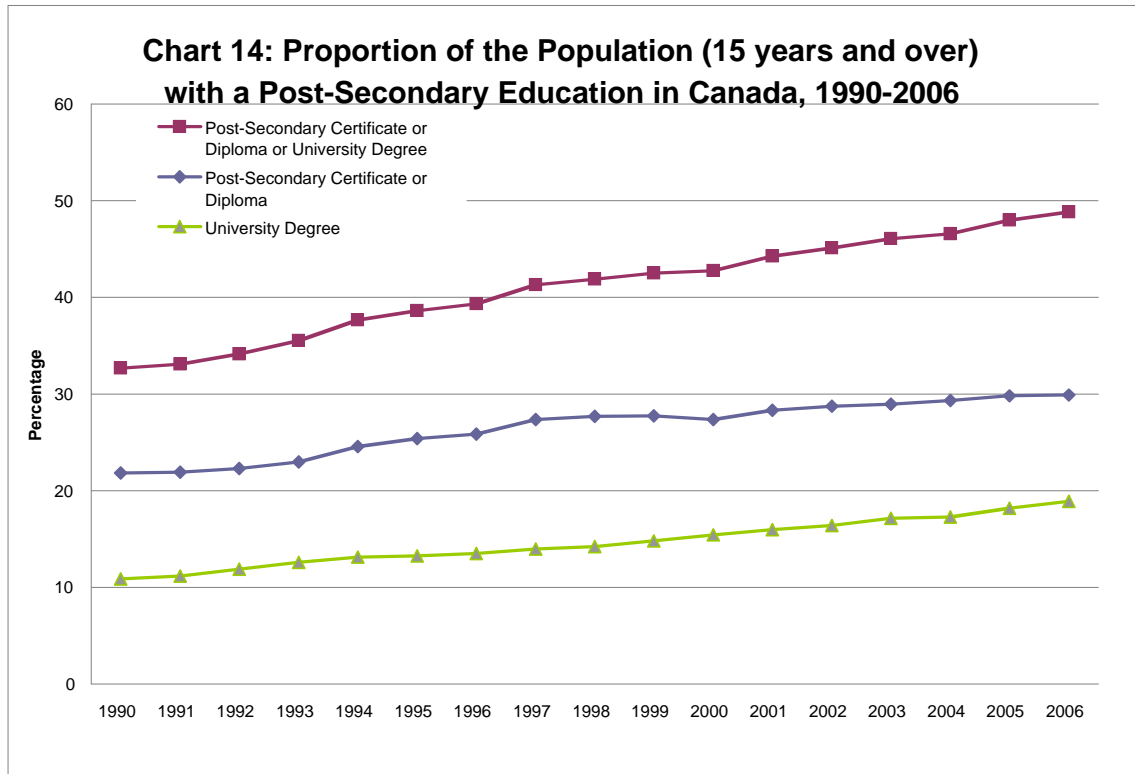
<sup>4</sup> Cansim II series v1,v391069, v391084

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada, [The Daily, December 15, 2005](#)

<sup>6</sup> Source: [Statistics Canada](#)

## LEARNING

The proportion of Canadians who completed post-secondary education is up nearly 50% since 1990. Close to half of all Canadians age 15 or older (48.8%) now have completed university degrees or post-secondary certificates or diplomas. In an evolving, information-based society, this is good news.



Source: Statistics Canada<sup>7</sup>

### Taking Action

Montreal Hooked on School was created in response to the concerning fact that 4 000 teenagers and young adults in Montreal quit school each year. In addition to working actively with the five school boards of Montreal to set up preventive initiatives promoting the importance of staying in school and obtaining a qualifying diploma, MHOS also serves as a forum that encourages partners to share their experiences and best practices. The organization offers services to young people, parents, education professionals, and the general public and implements activities with the business community and political partners to raise awareness about the drop out phenomena and its impacts on the socio-economic development of our society.

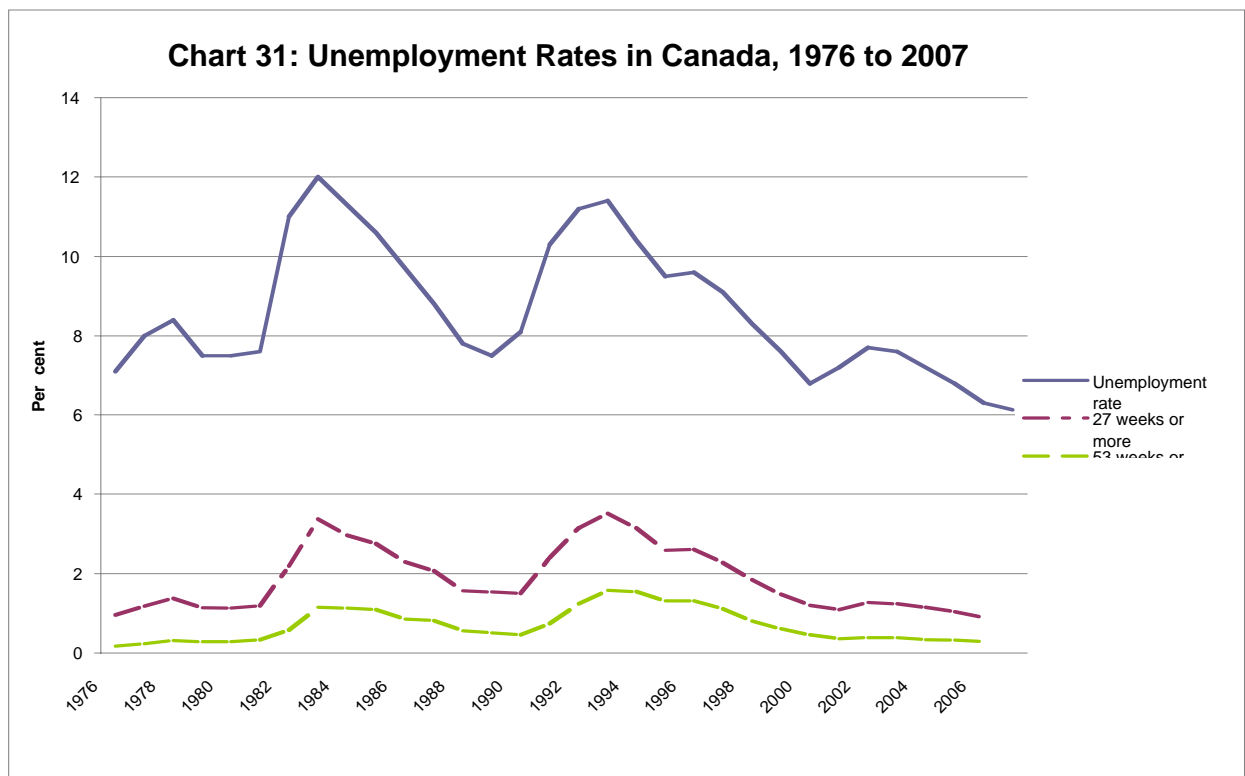
Over the last two years, Montreal Hooked on School has treated 850 cases of young people and parents through its Information and Referral hotline and

<sup>7</sup> [Labour Force Survey](#).

offered information workshops to 17 853 young people in 78 schools of the five school boards of Montreal.

## WORK

Canada's unemployment rate in 2006 (6.3%) was the lowest in a generation, and the first half of 2007 was even lower, at 6.1%. Long-term rates, for those out of work for 27 weeks or longer, also reached record lows. However, we also know that unattached individuals, Aboriginal people, recent immigrants, youth, people with disabilities, and other specific groups continue to experience higher than average unemployment. Aboriginal Canadians, for example, are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as non-Aboriginals (16.5% vs. 5.9% in 2001).<sup>8</sup>



Source: Statistics Canada<sup>9</sup>

## BELONGING AND LEADERSHIP

In 2004, when the last national survey was taken, 45.3% of Canadians over age 15 were engaged in unpaid volunteer work. As we look toward the future, younger Canadians age 15-24 volunteer at an even higher rate: 55%.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Source: Statistics Canada

<sup>9</sup> Labour Force Survey (CANSIM Tables 282-0002 and 282-0001). Data for 2007 is for the first six months.

## Taking Action

Toronto's Vital Signs report in 2005 helped relate the growth in youth violence, the ten-year high in youth unemployment, and the dramatic drop in youth involvement (after the age of 12) in all forms of recreational activity. Armed with this data, the Toronto Community Foundation led the development of a partnership between the Foundation, the City, Toronto's school boards, United Way and sports organizations. The result was the Toronto Sport Leadership Program that, in its first two years, recruited and trained over 200 youth from 21 different high schools in two of Toronto's most vulnerable areas. Youth were given the opportunity to train for certification in sport leadership in aquatics, basketball and soccer coaching. They were introduced to recreation employers. Many secured employment in community leadership roles as lifeguards, coaches and camp leaders, not only enhancing their own futures, but also providing positive role models in their communities.

## GETTING STARTED IN OUR COMMUNITY

Whether we realize it or not, immigration affects every Canadian and every community. The growth and prosperity of our country literally depends on newcomers. Immigration accounts for about two-thirds of our population growth and 70% of the net growth in our labour force.<sup>11</sup>

Our country has one of the highest percentages of foreign-born population in the world – in 2001, 18.4% of Canada's population was born overseas.<sup>12</sup> Visible minorities make up an increasing share of the newcomer population. In our long history as a country of immigrants, newcomers will shape our future more than ever before. How we welcome them and help them settle has never been more important.

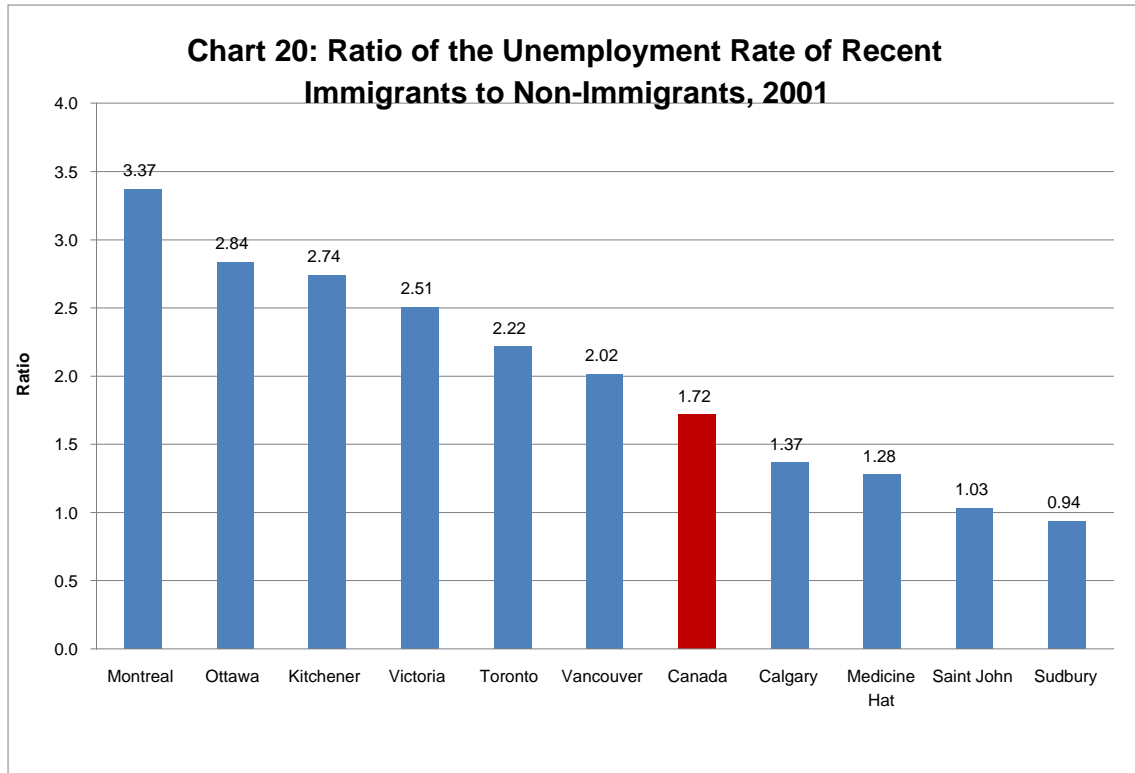
Despite Canada's falling unemployment rate, it is harder for new immigrants than for other Canadians to get a job. While the 2006 Census figures aren't available yet, the picture in 2001 showed that recent immigrants – those who had arrived in the previous five years – were almost twice as likely (1.72 times to be exact) to be unemployed as people born in Canada. In cities with high immigration, the difference was even more dramatic.

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<sup>10</sup> [Highlights from the 2004 Canada Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating](#)

<sup>11</sup> Source: [Statistics Canada Census 2006](#) and [Census 2001](#)

<sup>12</sup> Source: [Statistics Canada Census 2001](#)



Data not Available for Red Deer

Source: Statistics Canada<sup>13</sup>

This is particularly worrying, when immigrants are arriving with more education and qualifications than ever.

Our immigration system evaluates potential newcomers on a point system that favours education and qualifications, tacitly holding out the promise of employment in that field. But many immigrants find that the qualifications that got them into the country can't get them a job.

One study shows that many of our most highly-skilled immigrants encounter such difficulty finding work that they stay only a short time in Canada before deciding to move elsewhere. Studies also show that while immigrants arrive in Canada healthier than Canadian-born counterparts of the same age, they lose this advantage over time.

**“My husband and I got into Canada by the points system. We passed and became landed due to our education, English skills, and other factors... But then we got here and there were no jobs. Our diplomas were not really worth anything.” – Focus group participant, Unsettled: Legal and Policy Barriers to Newcomers to Canada**

<sup>13</sup> [Source: Census 1996 and 2001](#)

Not surprisingly, given their employment difficulties, poverty within immigrant communities is much higher than the Canadian average: 35% of newcomers who arrived in 1991 or later were living below the poverty line in 2001 (using the before tax LIM measure – see the Gap Between Rich and Poor for details on poverty measuring sticks).<sup>14</sup>

“The costs of not utilizing newcomers’ skills are numerous, and they impact Canada, the sending countries, and the immigrants themselves and their families. Economic costs include labour shortages, unnecessary retraining, a greater burden on social programs, the loss of potential tax revenue, and an overall increase in immigrant poverty rates. In social terms, the exclusion of newcomers has costs in terms of ethnic and race relations, human rights, the settlement process, and mental health.” – Unsettled: Legal and Policy Barriers for Newcomers to Canada

### **Taking Action**

The Maytree Foundation is a Canadian organization established in 1982. Maytree views immigration and urbanization as powerful elements in the Canadian landscape, and works to accelerate the settlement of refugees and immigrants in large urban centres. Maytree also aims to strengthen the vibrancy of civil society by supporting the development of strong leaders and organizations.

A key Maytree initiative is the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), a multi-stakeholder collaboration of employers, occupational regulatory bodies, post-secondary institutions, assessment service providers, labour, immigrant professional associations, community organizations and all three levels of government. Together, this group works to address an urgent need -- effective and appropriate inclusion of skilled immigrants in the labour market. Amongst many successful initiatives, TRIEC has developed the Mentoring Partnership, a collaboration of community organizations and corporate partners that brings together skilled immigrants and established professionals in occupation-specific mentoring relationships. Since the program was launch in November 2004, over 2000 mentoring matches have been made, with 70% of mentees finding employment at the end of the relationship.

Other examples include The Calgary Foundation’s Immigrant Access Fund., which provides loans of up to \$5,000 to immigrants to fund the accreditation process (study and examination fees, for example) that makes it possible for them to work in their field in Canada.

The Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network, a region-wide strategy to ensure that immigrant skills are better used – to benefit newcomers and their families, the local economy and the community as a whole. WRIEN includes

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<sup>14</sup> Source: [Statistics Canada](#)

fundings, businesses, immigrants, educators, governments and community-based organizations. The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation was an early funder and catalyst of the WRIEN initiative.

### **Vital Comment**

Canada's future economic growth and competitiveness will depend on how quickly and effectively we can integrate immigrants into our workplaces and our communities. We look at international experience as an asset and try to consider how we can leverage it for competitive advantage, to better serve increasingly diverse clients, to generate new ideas, and to develop knowledge about global markets. Effective immigration, integration and inclusion policies, plus employment practices focused on diverse talent, will be critical in confronting labour shortages and sustaining economic growth. The stakes are higher than ever before.

Zabeen Hirji, Chief Human Resources Officer, RBC

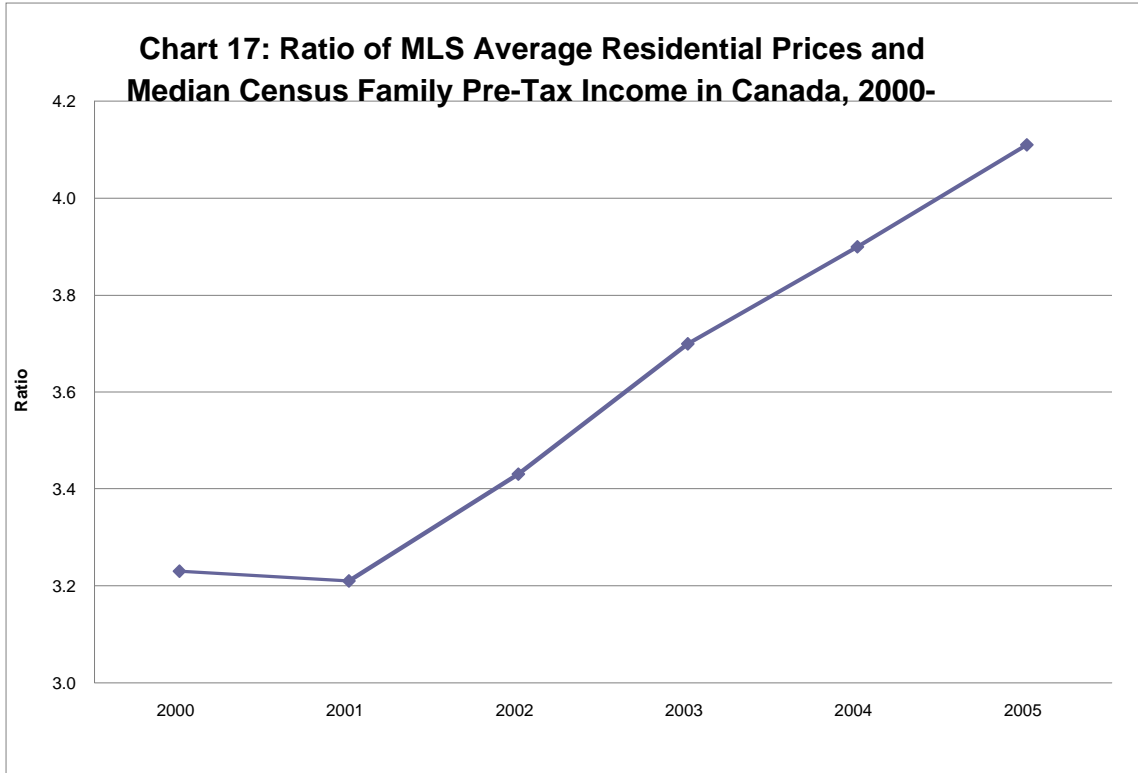
For more [expert commentary](#)

## **HOUSING**

Stable, affordable housing is essential to quality of life. Owning a home is a Canadian dream, and a significant hedge against poverty. For many Canadian families, their home is their most important asset. But housing prices in Canada have increased faster than income since 2000, making it more difficult for many Canadians to purchase a home.

The ratio of average residential prices to median family income measures this gap. As illustrated below, the ratio rose from 3.23 in 2000 to 4.11 in 2005, meaning that in 2000, the cost of the average Canadian house was 3.23 times the amount of a Canadian family's annual pre-tax income. In 2005, the house cost more than 4 times the family's income.

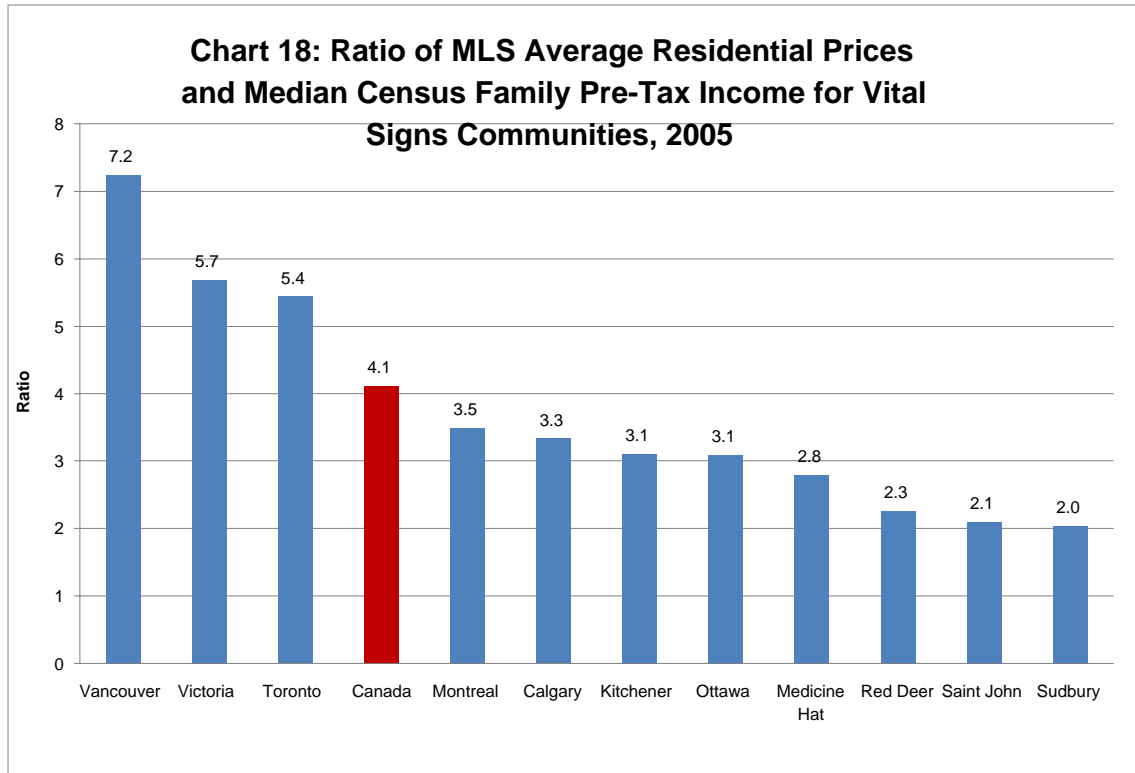
The big increase from 2000 to 2005 (27.4%) is due to a 45% increase in house prices far outpacing the 19% increase in family income during that time.



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Statistics Canada<sup>15</sup>

Reflecting the difference in housing prices across the country, the ratio varies dramatically between Vital Signs communities, from an affordable 2.0 in Sudbury to a high of 7.2 in Vancouver, as illustrated below.

<sup>15</sup> Based on data from [Canadian Housing Observer](#) for housing prices and [Tax Data](#) for income.



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Statistics Canada<sup>16</sup>

### **Vital Comment**

Affordable, safe, and appropriate housing is a major poverty prevention and amelioration measure. Financing shelters for the homeless is not a solution. There is a pressing need for supportive non-market housing for people whose lives are most at risk and for non-market housing (non-profit, cooperative and publicly-owned) and for low end market housing (rental and ownership) for low income Canadians. Affordable home ownership through accessible and manageable mortgages and incentives for builders can generate powerful social and economic benefits. People move out of non-profit and public housing, freeing up space in the existing stock. They develop equity in their home, improving their long term assets. This equity means debt can be paid down, opportunities for savings and investments are increased and prudent consumer spending takes place.

Michael Clague, President of the Carold Institute for the Advancement of Citizenship in Social Change, Vancouver, British Columbia

For more [expert commentary](#)

<sup>16</sup> Based on data from [Canadian Housing Observer](#) for housing prices and [Tax Data](#) for income.

## **SAFETY**

In 2006, property crime was down 41.8% since 1991.<sup>17</sup> Much of the decrease took place between 1991 and 2000 (an annual average reduction of 4.5%). The decrease has slowed down since then, to an annual average of 1.7%. Although the property crime rate varies significantly across Canada, it has come down in every Vital Signs community. Violent crime is also down in Canada, by just over 10% since 1991.<sup>18</sup>

## **ARTS AND CULTURE**

Thriving arts and culture is one mark of a vital community. And one measure of the health of a sector is the amount of employment it generates. In our nation's cultural industries (publishing, motion pictures and video, broadcasting, Internet publishing and broadcasting, performing arts, spectator sports and related industries, and heritage institutions), employment has increased significantly since 1987: an average annual growth rate of 1.44%. However, 2006 showed the first drop-off in recent years – a significant one-year reduction of 3.7%.<sup>19</sup>

The arts and culture sector's share of total employment has remained steady over the last 20 years: fluctuating between a high of 2.06% in 2005 to a low of 1.81% in 1991. The share is generally higher in Canada's large cities than in small ones.<sup>20</sup>

## **HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

This year's Vital Signs core indicator in health tracks the number of physicians (general practitioners and specialists) per 100,000 people. The trend? Thanks to larger medical school enrollments, the supply of doctors has gone up: an increase of 3.6% between 1997 and 2005. But there is huge variation between communities, as illustrated by the chart below, and large cities tend to have more physicians, per capita, than smaller ones (with the notable exception of Toronto).

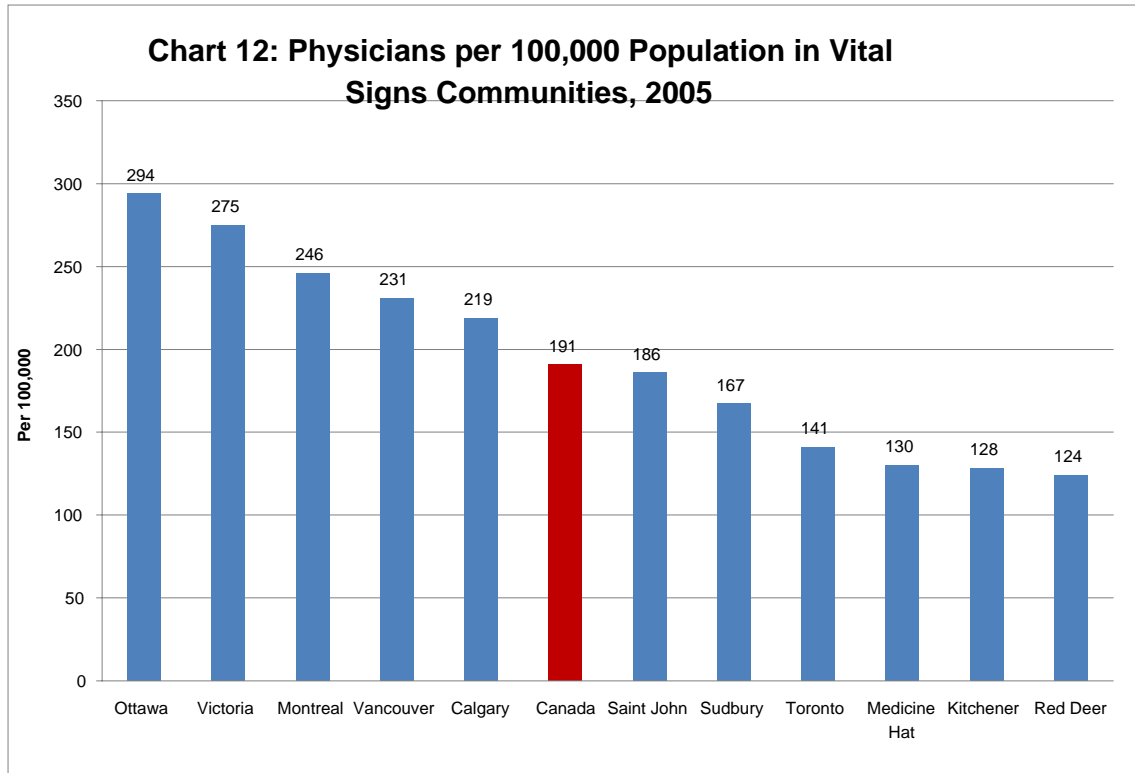
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<sup>17</sup> Source: [Statistics Canada](#)

<sup>18</sup> Source: [Statistics Canada](#)

<sup>19</sup> Source: [Special run from Labour Force Survey, Statistics Canada](#)

<sup>20</sup> Source: [Special run from Labour Force Survey, Statistics Canada](#)



Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information<sup>21</sup>

### Vital Comment

The consequences of poverty are reflected in most social and health indicators: reduced life expectancy in general and, more specifically, a higher proportion of illnesses or psychosocial problems, low birth weight babies, developmental delays, school dropouts, teenage pregnancies, psychological distress, etc. If we want to make any meaningful gains on the health front, we need to intensify our efforts to improve living conditions, particularly through better access to proper housing and a general improvement of quality of life in the communities where the need is greatest.

Richard Lessard, M.D., Director of Public Health, Montréal Regional Health and Social Services Board

For more [expert commentary](#)

### GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR

In 2005, the median family income in Canada was \$60,600. That is a 19.3% increase over 2000 which, when adjusted for inflation, gave most families a 6.4% increase in real income.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> [Health Indicator Reports](#). Physicians include general/family physicians and specialists.

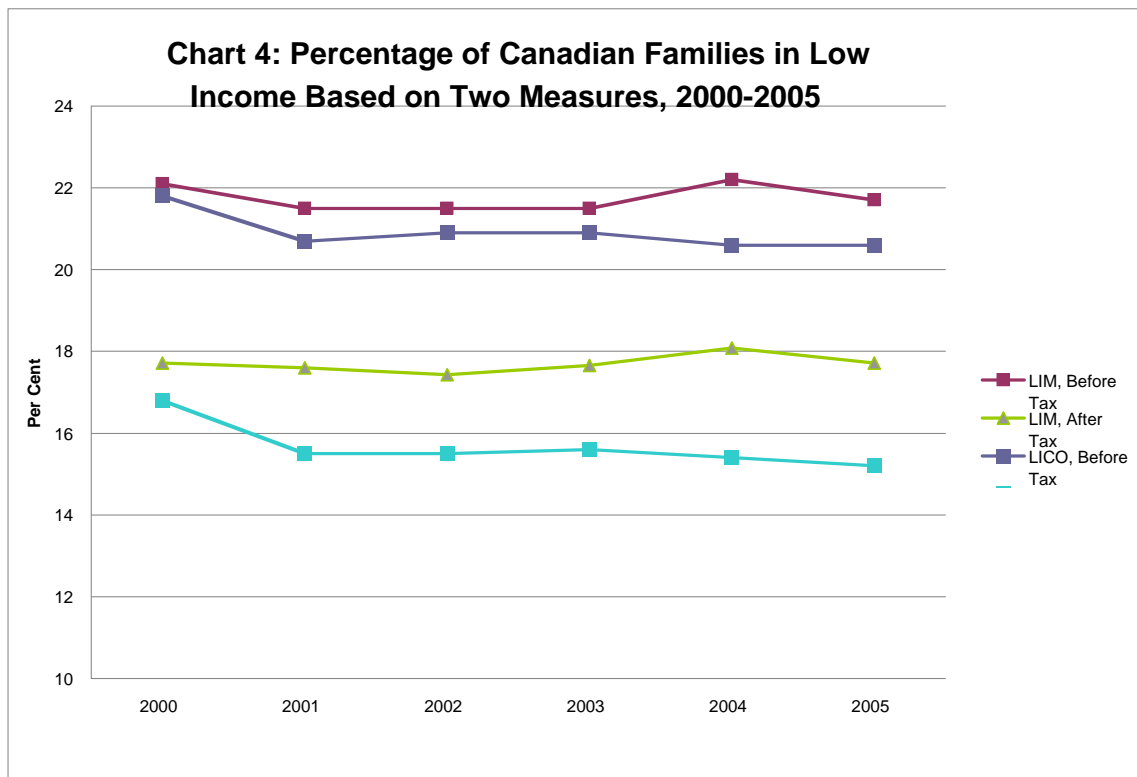
<sup>22</sup> Source: [Statistics Canada](#)

The real story, however, lies beneath the surface: over the past quarter century Canada has barely moved the needle on poverty. Too many Canadians remain trapped in the cycle – just getting by while others are doing better than ever.

There are two common measuring sticks for poverty:

- The LICO (Low Income Cut-Off measure) considers a family poor when it spends more than 63.6% of its after-tax income on food, shelter and clothing. In 2005, using the LICO, 20.6% of Canada’s families lived in poverty.
- The LIM (Low Income Measures) considers a family poor when its income is less than half of the median income for their size and type of family. In 2005, using the pre-tax LIM, 21.7% of Canadian families lived in poverty

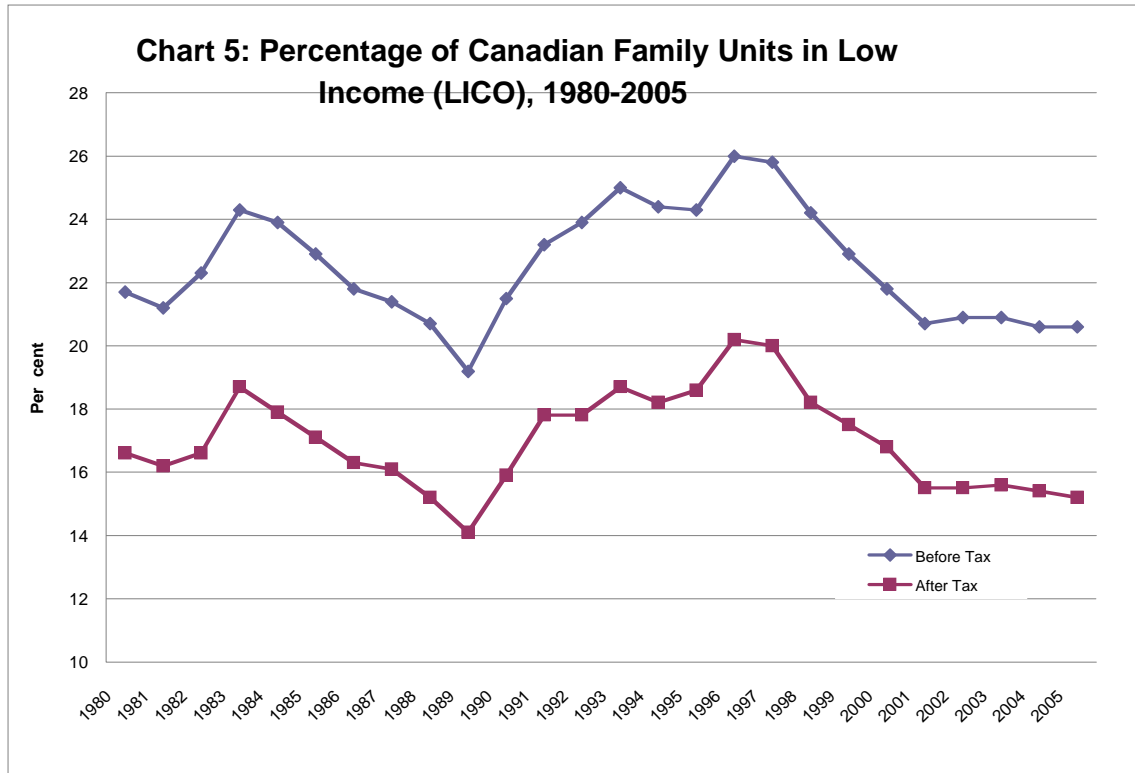
The chart below shows the percentage of Canadian families in low income each year from 2000 to 2005, using the two measures (LICO and LIM), calculated both before and after tax. Progress since 2000 has been negligible.



Source: Statistics Canada<sup>23</sup>

And if we take a longer view? The poverty rate over the 25 years from 1980 to 2005, as measured by LICO, has dipped below 20% only once – back in 1989.

<sup>23</sup> Low Income Measures (LIM) from [tax data](#). LICO data is from the [SLID](#).



Source: Statistics Canada<sup>24</sup>

Poverty levels vary considerably across the country, with higher levels in most of our largest cities. Poverty is also much higher in some populations than others. The average poverty rate (based on LIM) for Aboriginals in 2000 in all 27 Census Metropolitan Areas was 41.7 %, more than double the rate for all persons of 17.7 %.<sup>25</sup> Lone-parent families and new Canadians are also much more likely to experience poverty.

Another perspective on our prosperity is the difference between the wealthiest in our community and the least well-off. The “income gap” measures the ratio between people near the top of the income spread (those at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile) and people near the bottom (those at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile). Local Vital Signs reports show an increase in the gap between rich and poor in most of our urban centres between 2001 and 2005. That growing gap is consistent with various other national measures that show increased income inequality over the past quarter century.

### Taking Action

*Vibrant Communities* is a national movement dedicated to locally-driven efforts to *reduce rather than to alleviate poverty* in Canada. Its successful model includes comprehensive multi-sectoral collaboration where citizens, organizations,

<sup>24</sup> CANSIM Table 202-0803 (SLID).

<sup>25</sup> Source: [Statistics Canada](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/24-625-x/2006001/article/00001.htm)

businesses and governments identify the multiple issues and create innovative solutions to reduce poverty. It's an approach that allows communities to learn from — and help — each other. Now four years after the program began, Vibrant Communities has linked 15 urban centres from British Columbia to Newfoundland in the Vibrant Communities Pan-Canadian Learning Community with seven Trail Builder communities (BC Capital Region, Niagara, Montreal, Saint John, Edmonton, Calgary and Surrey). Local poverty reduction efforts have succeeded in reducing poverty for over 34,000 Canadians through partnering with: 315 non-profit organizations, 209 government agencies, 106 low-income leaders and 271 businesses along with 176 other key partners. Vibrant Communities believes that communities have the potential to reduce poverty but efforts have to be multi-sectoral, deliberate, and positive to be most productive.

Community Foundations of Canada is helping community foundations explore how they can best attack poverty in their communities. There are different approaches: in Winnipeg, the community foundation is focusing resources on one neighbourhood school, to test the notion that strengthening families and their relationship with education is a pathway out of poverty. In Hamilton, the community foundation is leading a city-wide, multi-sector initiative to reduce poverty and dedicating all its undesignated granting to poverty reduction, prevention and alleviation programs and. In Edmonton, the foundation is beginning a social enterprise fund that will use its assets to help generate affordable housing. In Red Deer, the community foundation (with other community organizations) is helping the aboriginal community address its challenges. An important step was creating an annual conference where aboriginal youth could learn about employment and careers and discuss issues like education and addiction. Concrete progress has come from the conferences. One example: Red Deer now has an important new voice in city government — the Community Facilitator, Aboriginal Affairs. There are many other approaches being explored and CFC has brought together a small learning community that, with support from the federal government, will share their experience in poverty reduction strategies with the 150+ other community foundations across the country.

### **Vital Comment**

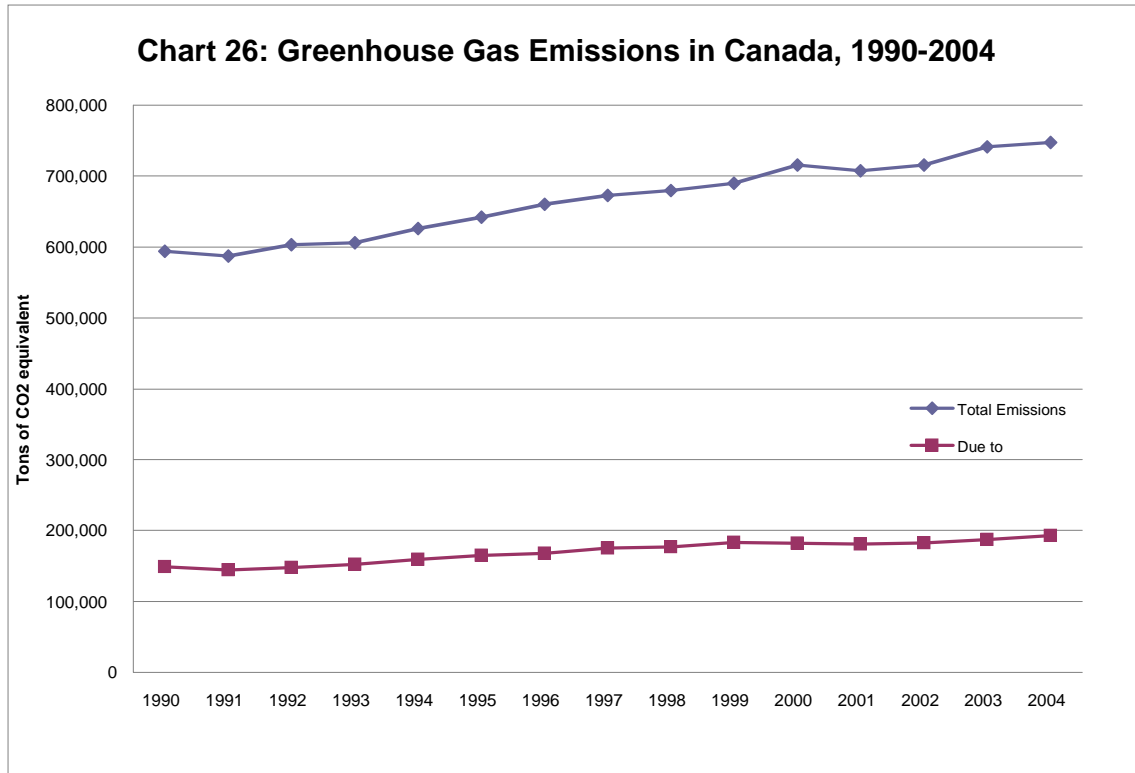
Over the past 25 years there has been barely a ripple in the fight against poverty. In order to fashion a strong social fabric we need to weave in many threads. One is adequate and affordable housing; others include alternative programs for youth at risk, who learn by doing and many of whom have unrecognized, underdeveloped manual skills (skills needed in the labour force of today and tomorrow). We need to emphasize prevention in health, encourage parenting skills and provide affordable childcare options. And we need mentors who live around the corner and who are there for us. We must raise the public consciousness of the nation and it begins at the top.

Dr. Erminie J. Cohen, retired Canadian senator, Saint John, New Brunswick  
For more [expert commentary](#)

### **ENVIRONMENT**

Canada is paying a high environmental price for our prosperity. We are one of the top per capita producers of carbon dioxide in the world. And our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – contributors to global warming – continue to rise.

Between 1990 and 2004, according to Environment Canada, our GHG emissions rose 25.8% -- or an average of 1.65% per year. On a per capita basis, the increase was 9%, or 0.6% per year. Although the growth rate of per capita emissions has slowed in this decade as compared to the 1990s, it has not yet begun to fall.



Source: Environment Canada<sup>27</sup>

According to a survey by Statistics Canada, the industries that contributed most to total greenhouse gases in 2002 were crop and animal production, oil and gas extraction, and electric power generation. Together, these industries accounted for 42.6% of total emissions. About one quarter of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions are due to transportation.<sup>28</sup>

When we compare ourselves to the rest of the world, the picture gets worse. According to United Nations research, Canada in 2003 had the second highest per capita level of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions out of major OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. Only the USA was higher. And from 1991 to 2003, Canada's per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions increased 21.4%, the second highest increase among major OECD countries. Carbon dioxide makes up about 80% of greenhouse gases.

**Per Capita CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions in Selected OECD Countries, 1991 vs. 2003**

	1991	2003	Percent Change
Canada	14.74	17.89	21.4

<sup>27</sup> Based on the [National Inventory Report, 1990-2004 Greenhouse Gas Sources and Sinks in Canada](#).

<sup>28</sup> Source: [Statistics Canada](#)

Australia	15.12	17.75	17.4
France	6.65	6.05	-9.0
Germany	11.16	9.77	-12.5
Italy	6.99	7.75	10.9
Netherlands	9.34	8.70	-6.9
Spain	5.55	7.37	32.8
Sweden	5.99	5.89	-1.7
United Kingdom	11.18	9.40	-15.9
United States	19.07	19.92	4.5
Japan	8.83	9.66	9.4

Source: [United Nations](#)

## Taking Action

As global anxiety about climate change grows, a number of organizations are finding ways to contribute to a healthier and more sustainable future. Some of their stories are shared below.

The Pembina Institute is one of the most prominent Canadian organizations working on climate change policy. Though the federal government has backed away from our Kyoto Protocol targets, Pembina continues research, education and advocacy on climate change and is working closely with provinces on their plans. Because nearly half of Canada's GHG emissions come from large industry, Pembina is working to reduce these emissions through a system of emission targets and emissions trading. Pembina also produces practical tools and educational resources to help Canadians understand and take action on climate change and has programs to help companies and communities reduce their GHG emissions.

With the passage of the first phase of Toronto's Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan on July 16, 2007, Toronto is poised to implement the most ambitious environmental plan in North America. Toronto has set targets to reduce GHG emissions in the city by 6% by 2012; 30% by 2020 and 80% by 2050. The targets are ambitious but the city is already exceeding its goals while generating jobs and reducing costs of many operations. The Better Buildings Partnership has created more than \$80 million in energy retrofits in buildings; the City's Energy Retrofit Program has carried out \$30 million worth of energy-related projects in City facilities. The Toronto Atmospheric Fund, the installation of wind, solar, hydrogen and tri-generation facilities at Exhibition Place, Enwave's Deep Lake Water Cooling system and policies such as the Toronto Green Development Standard are just a few other examples of ways in which the City of Toronto is making a significant effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2006, Community Foundations of Canada announced a new partnership with 1% for the Planet (1%FTP) to engage local companies in environmental philanthropy. The alliance aims to show that taking environmental responsibility is good for business, as proven by Yvon Chouinard, environmental activist and founder of 1%FTP and Patagonia outdoor wear. 1% for the Planet members

donate at least 1% of their revenues or sales annually to environmental organizations worldwide. CFC is also collaborating with Mountain Equipment Coop, a member of 1%FTP, to inspire Canadian businesses to be leaders in environmental philanthropy.

### **Vital Comments**

Canada is a nation that is heralded around the world for being a peacemaker, a true multicultural society, and a leader in environmental sustainability. Yet Vital Signs echoes what many Canadians are already beginning to realize: Canada is quickly losing the mantle of global environmental leader. Of course, as a country, we trumpet our vast ecological inheritance, yet reality is painting a stark counter-image – one that suggests the next generation will inherit an environment far less becoming than the one our generation enjoys and is quickly letting slip away.

Simon Jackson, Founder and Chairman of the 6 million strong Spirit Bear Youth Coalition, Executive Producer of THE SPIRIT BEAR – the forthcoming Hollywood CGI animated movie

With much of our lives depending on our natural world, you would assume that Canada would be an international leader in sustainable living. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Canadians have all the necessary conditions to make positive choices regarding our environment: information, resources, and opportunity. Yet, we still lack motivation!

Quinn Runkle, grade eleven student, organizer and speaker for Youth in Philanthropy: Going Green conference, Youth Liaison for Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden Society and Save Our Sunshine Coast

For more [expert commentary](#)

## **THE CANADA WE BELIEVE IN**

These Vital Signs give us an overview of how Canada is doing in key areas. They show us there are two realities in our country right now.

On the one hand, we are surrounded by opportunity and abundance, and many of us are doing very well. But we cannot let our apparent prosperity blind us to the reality faced by many Canadians. We must open our eyes and ask ourselves some difficult questions.

Can we accept a Canada where poverty is still a blight on our Aboriginal peoples and where newcomers can't use the skills that earned them entrance to this country? Are we comfortable witnessing the widening divide between the richest and the poorest among us? And are we content to watch our greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise while other countries take action?

Canadians believe in a country that is just and equitable and responsible. We believe we can be a model for the world – but reality strains that claim on several fronts, as our Vital Signs show.

Many Canadians are convinced we can and must do better. They are stepping up to find solutions – to “level the playing field” for all, and to demand responsible stewardship of our environment.

Community foundations are part of that movement, along with many others in the voluntary sector, and stand ready with their resources and leadership to tackle issues at the local level. But our sector can't do it alone. Canada needs our combined commitment. Governments, business, community organizations, ordinary citizens – all of us – must take up the fight against poverty, exclusion, and environmental degradation.

These issues are not too big to solve. The examples in this report show how Canadians are already taking action.

In the months ahead, community foundations will use their local Vital Signs reports to raise key issues with citizens and community leaders in their own communities. CFC plans to do the same with Vital Signs Canada. This report is the beginning of a process, not the end.

Working together, we can do better for all Canadians.

### **What can I do?**

Discussion. Debate. Action. Those are the next steps for Vital Signs Canada. If you or your organization is moved and motivated by what you've read in our national report or in a local Vital Signs report, please don't stop there.

Every mountain is climbed one step at a time. Here are three simple ways you can take action. Today.

- 1. Pass it on.** Share this report, or your local Vital Signs report with your employer, your teacher, your best friend, a neighbourhood business, library or community centre, or a government representative at any level.
- 2. Contact us.** You can find your local community foundation at [www.cfc-fcc.ca](http://www.cfc-fcc.ca). They know the issues and organizations in your community. If you're looking for ways to make a difference, they can help.
- 3. Find out more.** Visit the websites of the other organizations and experts featured in this report for more information about their work and opportunities to further their efforts or make your own mark.

## **About our Data**

The core indicators presented in this report are part of a set of common indicators that Community Foundations of Canada collects on behalf of communities participating in *Vital Signs*. Each *Vital Signs* community foundation supplements the centrally-collected data with local research. The central data collection is secondary research, made up primarily of data from Statistics Canada. Geographic units used are, for the most part, Census Metropolitan Areas or Census Agglomerations. Original source documents for data cited in this report are hyperlinked, where possible, in the footnotes of this expanded on-line version of the report.

The Vital Signs core indicators were identified through a priority-setting exercise with community foundations participating in *Vital Signs* in 2006, which was in turn based on local community consultations that participating foundations conducted.

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