

**York Region Community Foundation**

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For Immediate Release

York Region Community Foundation Releases First *Living in York Region Vital Signs Report*<sup>®</sup>

Markham, Ontario – Today, York Region Community Foundation (YRCF) released its first *Living in York Region Vital Signs*<sup>®</sup> report.

*Vital Signs*<sup>®</sup> is an annual community check-up conducted by 22 Community Foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our communities. York Region's 2011 *Vital Signs*<sup>®</sup> report, called *Living in York Region: Our Community Check-up*, is a project of YRCF, in partnership with York University's Knowledge Mobilization Unit and with funding generously provided by The Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The *Living in York Region Vital Signs*<sup>®</sup> report provides baseline indicators and resident perceptions of how well York Region's communities are faring in key quality of life areas such as learning, health, housing and the environment.

"In four short decades, York Region has been transformed," says Ian Sideco, Chair of The York Region Community Foundation. "We have experienced rapid population and economic growth and, as one of the newest Community Foundations in Canada, we are in a good position to reflect back to the community a measure of its well-being and progress through the Community Foundation of Canada's Vital Signs initiative."

Guided by a cross-section of extraordinary leaders from York Region and led by Seneca College President David Agnew and YRCF founding board Chair Rosemary Park, the *Living in York Region Vital Signs*<sup>®</sup> report presents context indicators for 12 issue areas and summarizes the opinions of over one thousand York Region residents who attended focus groups and completed an on-line survey between March and June, 2011.

Rosemary Park explains, "Our mission at YRCF is to enhance the vibrancy of the Region's diverse communities by building endowments and convening community action and awareness." She continues, "over the past 18 months we have listened to both the experts and residents, and with this report as our starting point, we now have baseline indicators to measure what matters most today and in the future to York Region residents."

If a single theme emerged in the report, it is the importance of connections in a Region that encompasses 1,756 square kilometres of rural, forested and urban landscape. The report concludes that York Region is a healthy community. People are proud of their communities and, whether they are long-time residents or newcomers, they feel good about where they live, work and play. Nonetheless, years of sustained growth – and the prospect of much more to come in the future – have created pressures in two key areas that will urgently require collective energy, resources and creativity:

**Getting Around** – Making sure infrastructure and services – and most importantly public transit – keep pace with growth so people are able to move conveniently and efficiently within York Region and connect to neighbouring communities.

**Housing** – Making sure there are more affordable choices and more supports for people in emergency situations.

To these two priority issues the report adds a third that speaks of the need to build awareness and to better communicate York Region’s existing strengths:

**Navigating Existing Resources** – Making sure people know what services and programs already exist and how to access them.

Ian Sideco says, “This is a starting point – our work has just begun.” The next steps, he says, will be to share the report and its findings with residents, municipal councils, organizations and leaders in York Region. “With all our *Living in York Region Vital Signs*<sup>®</sup> partners, we will continue the dialogue to determine how we can support and mobilize community action so that York Region and its residents continue to prosper for the next 40 years and beyond.”

Robert Haché York’s Vice-President Research & Innovation agrees, “Quality of life issues affect us all. York University looks forward to continuing to work together with our partners, by sharing this report with leaders and decision makers, to help support informed decision-making on issues that impact the health and sustainability of our communities.”

“Our goal, which we know is shared by every York Region resident, is to remain a healthy community in every sense of the word,” says David Agnew. “Thanks to the inclusive process that led to this report, we can now move forward with focus and determination.”

York Region Community Foundation was established in 2005 and is committed to connecting donors with opportunities to support causes and charities they care about. As well as identifying and responding to the changing needs of the region, they are a reliable source for funding for community initiatives that will strengthen our district over the long term. By understanding the philanthropic wishes of donors and working with successful, committed agencies, the Foundation provides funding for worthy programs and services that improve the quality of life in our community.

York University’s Knowledge Mobilization Unit is a service unit supported by the Office of the Vice President Research & Innovation. The Knowledge Mobilization Unit supports researchers and research stakeholders with an objective of enabling research and evidence to help inform decisions about public policy, social programming and professional practice. Knowledge mobilization drives social innovation and helps turn research into action. York was the first university in Canada to develop institutional capacity to broadly support knowledge mobilization.

The full report can be downloaded at [www.LivinginYR.ca](http://www.LivinginYR.ca) .

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