

KINGSTON'S NEW QUALITY OF LIFE REPORT CARD FINDS HIGH YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND PERSISTENT POVERTY ISSUES

Community Foundation for Kingston & Area's Vital Signs 2009 also reports a reduction in crime rates and citizen commitment to the environment

KINGSTON (October 6, 2009) – Youth unemployment in Kingston reached 16.9% in June 2009 and climbed to 19.6% in July 2009. It had been 12.8% in June 2008. The comparable rates for Ontario were 18.9% in June 2009 and 14.6% in June 2008. The child poverty rate was 21% in 2006, the latest year for which statistics are available. Although declining modestly, child poverty has remained over 20% for several years. This information is according to Kingston's *Vital Signs 2009*, the Community Foundation for Kingston & Area's first annual report card on quality of life.

Highlights of the report were released today and also show:

- The number of workers employed is falling behind. From June 2008 – June 2009 employment declined by 4.7%. The comparable rate in Ontario is a 3.1% decline.
- While immigrants to Kingston in 2006 who had entered Canada within the last five years had an unemployment rate of 14.7%, those who had entered the country six – ten years ago had an unemployment rate of 4.8%. The non-immigrant population had an unemployment rate of 6.6%.
- In KFLA in 2007-8, 9.2% of babies born to mothers aged 15 – 19 were born with low birth weight. For females aged 15 - 49 the rate of low birth weight was 6.8%. The provincial rate for the latter group is 6.4%.
- In 2007, 68% of households in the Kingston Census Metropolitan Area participated in the composting program, more than double the number in 2006. Provincially, the equivalent number reached 72%.
- In 1996, 2001 and 2006 censuses, Kingston was among the top three Canadian cities in the percentage of people walking to work (in 2006: Victoria 10.4%, Halifax 10.1%, Kingston 9.6%) and among the top three in the percentage cycling to work (in 2006: Victoria 4.9%, Kingston 2.4%, Saskatoon 2.4%).

Kingston's Vital Signs 2009 also includes some revealing trends about individual challenges and achievements.

- Only 44% of KFLA residents aged 14 and over met the vegetable and fruit recommendations of Canada's Food Guide in 2005. The obesity rate in 2008 rose to 20.2%, increasing the risk of future health problems and escalating health care costs. Although not covered in this report, recent national media attention covering the rising

frustration among physicians, scientists, hypertension experts and health advocates on the dangerous levels of salt that Canadians consume, as well as the description of sodium as one of the most urgent public health matters facing Canada, highlights an important challenge for our community.

- Both the violent crime and property crime rates in Kingston have declined sharply over several years. By 2008 the violent crime rate was 668 per 100,000 persons (1,443 in 1991). The property crime rate was 2,772 in 2008, down from 3,905 in 2001. In addition, the Violent Crime Severity Index for Kingston in 2008 was 61.2, below the provincial index (81.5) and the national index (94.5). Ours is one of the lowest indices for Canadian cities. This index weights the volume of each type of violent crime by its incarceration rate and its average incarceration period.

Canada's Vital Signs: reports across the country

Canada's Vital Signs 2009 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. Begun in Toronto in 2001, and now coordinated by the Community Foundations of Canada, today 16 local *Vital Signs* reader-friendly report cards are being released. This is an increase from 15 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.

About 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 \$169 million in grants last year to thousands of charities. In addition, donors in 2008 invested \$230 million through new gifts to community foundations.

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Note to editors/producers:

Kingston's *Vital Signs 2009* Report is available at – www.kingstonandareavitalsigns.ca

All 16 local *Vital Signs* reports and media contacts for participating community foundations can be found at www.vitalsignscanada.ca.