



## **NEWS RELEASE – OCTOBER 6, 2009** **COMMUNITY FOUNDATION RELEASES ANNUAL CHECKUP**

The Greater Saint John Community Foundation is releasing, "Greater Saint John's Vital Signs® 2009" today, its fourth report on the quality of life in Greater Saint John. The annual community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada, measures the vitality of our cities, identifies significant trends, and assigns grades in at least ten areas critical to quality of life, using data compiled from many national, provincial and local sources. The Greater Saint John Community Foundation is part of this national Vital Signs® effort.

"Our Community Foundation was established in 1976 to improve the quality of life for our citizens" said Cheryl M.G. Robertson, Foundation Chair. "With the support of our national membership organization, Community Foundations of Canada, we are in year four of a ten year project to annually gather and present data of wide benefit and interest to all sectors of our community," she added. "This year a new Expanded Online Report will be available with additional information and links to original data sources," states Sara Mudge, the Chair of the Community Foundation's Vital Signs Committee. "We are pleased to have had community representatives Dr. Greg Marquis and Philip Reeves also serve on our committee," she added.

"Greater Saint John's Vital Signs" displays economic, social and population data, in ten broad categories or Indicators. They are: Housing, Work, Belonging & Leadership, Safety, Health, Getting Started, Environment, Learning, Arts & Culture and The Gap between Rich and Poor. The aim is to ensure that the report has fairly, comprehensively and accurately described our community using the best data available. It is a quality of life measurement tool for community groups, leaders, businesses and researchers. The Greater Saint John Community Foundation has commissioned the Saint John Human Development Council, a social planning agency, with wide knowledge of our community, to produce the 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 reports.

This project of Community Foundations of Canada, whose members number one hundred sixty-four community foundations, is being launched in sixteen Canadian communities today: Greater Saint John, NB; Wolfville, NS; Kingston and Area, ON; Ottawa, ON; Toronto, ON; Waterloo Region, ON; Guelph and Wellington, ON; Oakville, ON; Greater Sudbury, ON; Calgary, AB; Red Deer, AB; Medicine Hat, AB; Central Okanagan, BC; Sunshine Coast, BC; Boundary Communities, BC; and Victoria, BC.

Vital Signs Community Foundations seek out community opinions. Over the summer, the Community Foundation released an online survey on "Greater Saint John's Vital Signs®", using data highlights from the full report, to be released Oct. 6. They invited the public to "grade" our community's quality of life. More than three hundred community members responded and gave their input into a "Star" grading for forty data sets, to be included in Greater Saint John's 2009 "report card".

There are some trends and challenges which the Community Foundation is drawing to the community's attention. Positive data in such sectors as population and birth rates, are reflecting a rise similar to Canada's, giving hope to educators, aware of the continued slide in school and post-secondary enrollment. On the economic front, unemployment rates have stayed at low levels while high non-residential building permits have been on the rise. In spite of a slight upturn, home prices remain relatively low. It's no wonder Saint John has been named one of the country's cultural capitals, given the data on arts-related community events. Composting and recycling rates are climbing. Social Assistance caseloads are declining but still unacceptably high, particularly in Saint John's vulnerable neighbourhoods. Continuing elevated levels of poverty and teen pregnancy in Saint John City, as well as violent crime continue to be of significant community concern. An aging populace coupled with growing waiting lists for nursing homes are among our challenges. Elevated cancer rates, particularly for men, are substantially higher than can be explained by the local smoking rates and are puzzling.

Community Foundations of Canada is releasing Canada's Vital Signs, their national report measuring the vitality of our communities and our country, online, October 6 and in the Globe and Mail's Report on Business, October 14th. Greater Saint John's Vital Signs report will be launched at their office, 40 King St. at 10am, October 6. All are welcome.

The Greater Saint John Community Foundation serves as a trustee for charitable, educational and cultural purposes. It administers funds given by the public-spirited individuals for the benefit of the people of this area. Established in 1976, the Foundation's assets stand at approximately \$8 Million. They will be making grants to local registered charities this fall, viewing applications through the lens of the latest Vital Signs information.

***"Grants of \$5.02 Million to over 275 Saint John area charities for youth, seniors, social services, health, education, heritage, the arts and the environment since 1976"***

### ***For further information contact:***

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**Vital Signs® reports can be viewed or downloaded at:**

**[www.vitalsignscanada.ca](http://www.vitalsignscanada.ca) \* [www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca](http://www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca) \* [www.sjhdc.ca](http://www.sjhdc.ca) \* [www.greatersaintjohnvitalsigns.ca](http://www.greatersaintjohnvitalsigns.ca)**