



**TORONTO COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**

The Art of Wise Giving™

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Toronto: A City of Startling Contradictions**

**Toronto** - Toronto's Vital Signs® Report 2009, released today by the Toronto Community Foundation, finds Toronto still climbing the ranks of "world class" cities, but like so many of them, Toronto is failing on too many issues vital to its future success.

For the fourth year in a row Toronto ranks 15<sup>th</sup> out of 215 global cities in the 2009 Mercer Quality of Living Survey. The 2008 MasterCard index of 75 leading global centres of commerce says Toronto is 13<sup>th</sup> in liveability and 4<sup>th</sup> in ease of doing business in the world.

Now here's the "but"!

Toronto is "seriously unaffordable", ranking 190<sup>th</sup> in the world for affordable housing. We are in a country that ranks last among 14 western nations in spending on early learning, childcare, and kindergarten programs. And the indicators show that more than 30% of children five and under are in Low Income families.

The youth unemployment rate has surpassed 20%, which means a 5% climb in just one year. This puts Toronto 4% higher than the national rate.

"We will not be able to count on young families and immigrants to support our declining population and workforce because life here is getting just too hard for those just starting out," said Rahul Bhardwaj, President and CEO of the Toronto Community Foundation.

Toronto's Vital Signs® foresees young families choosing other cities where the cost of living is lower than Toronto and affordable housing is available. The effect is leading to an expanding gap between rich and poor which will reduce social cohesion increasing the risk of disengagement and crime.

“Despite what the data suggests, demographics need not be Toronto’s destiny. Toronto can still choose its future,” says Bhardwaj. “We believe that the knowledge and creativity that rank us so high internationally give us the tools to build a better city for the future.”

Toronto's Vital Signs was created to provide an integrated snapshot of the vitality of our city. This annual Report looks at key indicators in 11 specific areas ranging from Work and Housing, to the city's record on Environment, Safety, Learning, Getting Around, Belonging, Getting Started in Toronto and Gap between Rich and Poor.

The Community Foundation is committed to the vitality of Toronto. The findings from this Report guide our grant making while also informing our donors and Torontonians on the priority issues facing our city. Toronto’s Vital Signs® has inspired similar reports in major cities across Canada. This year Vital Signs will be published in 16 cities as the report is also considered a valuable tool for policymakers, philanthropists and community groups across Canada.

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**Toronto Community Foundation:** With more than 375 funds, and assets of more than \$200 million, Toronto Community Foundation is one of Canada’s largest charitable foundations. Community vitality has been our purpose, promise, and passion since 1981, when we started connecting donors to community needs and opportunities. We help people invest in Toronto, making it the best place to live, work, learn and grow. We monitor the quality of life in our city, identifying its strengths and weaknesses through our Toronto’s Vital Signs® Report. We provide the leadership and guidance to bring people together from all parts of our community. We exist for Toronto - for now and for always.

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## Context:

- In 2008, Toronto ranked 13<sup>th</sup> worldwide and 3<sup>rd</sup> in North America (after New York and Chicago) on an index of 75 leading centres of commerce. Toronto placed 4<sup>th</sup> globally on the ease of doing business and 13<sup>th</sup> overall on liveability.
- Toronto ranked 15th out of 215 global cities as having a highly desirable quality of life, for the fourth year in a row.
- Toronto consistently ranks in the top 20 world cities for the number of patents registered each year (one of the most direct measures of innovation).

## What the indicators are saying by Vital Signs issue area:

### **Learning**

- Children risk scoring poorly on the Early Development Instrument (EDI) in 43% of Toronto neighbourhoods with low incomes, high immigrant populations and many lone-parent families.

### **Arts and Culture**

- Toronto scores third among its peers (ahead of Seattle, Boston and Chicago) on the 'Bohemian' Index – a measure of a region's proportion of professionally creative people.

### **Work**

- The youth unemployment rate in the Region surpassed 20% in June 2009, up 5% in just one year and 4% higher than the national rate (at 16%).

### **Getting Around**

- Traffic congestion costs each Torontonians \$555 annually in lost time, additional vehicle operating costs, accidents and emissions. Toronto is the second most congested among Ontario's 15 largest municipalities and regions.

### **Getting Started**

- Recent immigrants are more than 3 times as likely to have lost jobs in the economic downturn than their Canadian-born colleagues.

### **Health & Wellness**

- 1,316,000 people (58%) report that they are inactive during leisure time, including 38.9% of youth.

### **Environment**

- Toronto diverted 44% of its residential waste in 2008. The 2% increase over 2007 was offset by an increase in total waste produced, so the amount going to landfills remained about the same (494,539 tonnes). The goal of 70% waste diversion by 2010 is still a long way from being met.

## **Housing**

- The Toronto Region is rated “seriously unaffordable”, ranking 190<sup>th</sup> internationally and 29<sup>th</sup> in Canada for housing affordability, with median housing prices of 4.8 times median household incomes.

## **Safety**

- The Toronto Region’s overall crime rate (3,998 per 100,000) was well below the national average as both the volume and overall severity of crime fell in 2008 for the fifth year in a row (6% over the year prior, and was the lowest of Canada’s 33 large metropolitan centres).

## **Gap Between Rich and Poor**

- In 1970, 66% of Toronto neighbourhoods were middle-income; in 2005, it dropped to 29%. Projections for 2025 erode them further to 20%.

## **Leadership, Civic Engagement, and Belonging**

- One indicator of a community’s sense of civic engagement, is the number of people who turn out to vote. Only 39% of all eligible voters turned out to vote in the last two civic elections in Toronto.