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NEWS RELEASE

**VICTORIA RECEIVES ITS FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT CARD:
Housing continues to be our greatest area of concern**

Victoria, BC (October 6, 2009) – The Victoria Foundation released its fourth annual *Vital Signs* report earlier today, providing a snapshot of the liveability and wellbeing of life in the Capital Region. The report combines public opinion and statistics and presents them in an easy to read format aimed at stimulating conversation around 11 issue areas. More than 850 citizens in the region participated in this year's online survey to grade *Victoria's Vital Signs*.

"Vital Signs indicate that our concerns continue to be monopolized with housing – be it rental or social," says Victoria Foundation CEO Sandra Richardson. "We are also very troubled by the increasing loss of life from illicit drugs, the lack of childcare spaces and the cost of living for families in the region."

"Graders told us that we are proud of our environment and generally perform well when it comes to protecting it and we are also big users of the Internet," adds Richardson.

The issue area of Housing continues to be our greatest concern with the lowest overall grade in the report - a C minus. The three Individual indicators within the Housing section that received D+ grades include rental availability, the social housing waitlist and rental vacancy.

New to the report this year is a snapshot of Greater Victoria's Youth – a section made possible by funding from the TELUS Victoria Community Board. Hundreds of youth responded to an on-line survey and not only completed the grading but took the time to make thoughtful comments. The Youth Vital Signs is a great starting point for learning about what is important to and concerns the youth in our community.

The top five priorities for attention in Victoria, as identified by youth include:

- Youth Housing and Homelessness
- Youth Voice
- Poverty: Rich vs. Poor
- Education and Learning
- Growing Up Green: Environmental Awareness

“The knowledge that we have gathered from *Vital Signs* will serve as an important reference point for the work of many of us in the coming months and years,” says Chuck Burkett, Chair of the Victoria Foundation Board of Directors. “The report helps connect philanthropy to community needs and supports decision-making in the region.”

For instance, of the 30 pro-active grants the Foundation made last year there are two that stand out as significant grants addressing Vital Signs issues. First, a \$100,000 contribution to the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, to support its wide-ranging efforts to address this on-going challenge.

Second, a \$25,000 grant to pilot a running program called Every Step Counts (ESC) - geared to people experiencing barriers and challenges with housing, mental health, addiction and social isolation. ESC was a particularly good fit given the region’s status as a mecca for running in Canada, and it was also a unique way for the Victoria Foundation to support the needs being identified in Vital Signs.

The *Vital Signs* report is part of a nation-wide initiative, coordinated by Community Foundations of Canada. Fifteen other community foundations across Canada also released local *Vital Signs* report cards today.

The report, as well as an expanded version with additional indicators and full source information and links, is available at: www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca

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