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## Quality of Life in Canada: A Citizens' Report Card

**Ottawa** – CPRN is pleased to announce the release of the first Citizens' Report Card on the quality of life in Canada.

Judith Maxwell, CPRN President, calls the Report Card, “a pioneering effort to capture what citizens believe essential to quality of life and to assess Canada against that standard”.

“We are used to hearing our progress summed up in terms of purely economic measures, like the GDP or the stock market index,” says Maxwell. “Important as these measures are, they are not an adequate reflection of what Canadians regard as vital to their quality of life.”

In late 2000, CPRN led 40 dialogue sessions with Canadians from all walks of life and all regions of the country to develop a picture of what citizens think should be included in a national portrait of our quality of life. The result is *Quality of Life in Canada: A Citizens' Report Card*.

The Report Card presents comparative data for 40 national indicators under nine primary themes identified by dialogue participants. The themes are, in order of priority:

- democratic rights and participation
- health
- education/learning
- environment
- social conditions and programs
- community
- personal well-being
- economy and employment, and
- government.

The Report Card results show progress on some fronts, lack of movement on others and deterioration in still others (see the summary table attached).

Is the quality of life in Canada better than 10 years ago? That's difficult to say in the aggregate. While it might be possible, statistically speaking, to create a composite indicator, the result could be misleading and of dubious use.

“The Report Card's achievement is to present a balanced portrait – recognizing successes and setbacks,” says Maxwell. “This permits a constructive conversation about what needs to be done to improve our quality of life.”

The final judgement on the country's progress will depend on the circumstances of the observer.

“Perhaps most striking in this endeavour,” says Sandra Zagon, project manager, “are the serious data gaps it uncovers. Those who wish to claim progress on our quality of life will have to help address those gaps before their claims will be truly credible in the eyes of citizens.”

Maxwell says she hopes other Citizens’ Report Cards will follow.

“As the quality of the data improves, report cards like this one will be important tools in the hands of Canadians for holding their governments, at all levels, accountable.”

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The Report Card is a snapshot of a larger paper, *Quality of Life In Canada: A Citizens’ Report Card – Background Report* by Joseph Michalski of Trent University. The Background Report provides details on methodology, data sources, gaps in data and a full analysis of the results.

*Quality of Life In Canada: A Citizens’ Report Card* and the *Background Report* were made possible by the financial support of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation, the Treasury Board Secretariat and Health Canada. Much of the data was obtained with the help of the following organizations: the Canadian Council on Social Development, the Conference Board of Canada, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, GPI Atlantic, the Pembina Institute, Statistics Canada and the Treasury Board.

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- 30 -

CPRN is a national not-for-profit research institute whose mission is to create knowledge and lead public debate on social and economic issues important to the well-being of Canadians, in order to help build a more just, prosperous and caring society.

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