



CPRN RCRPP

Indicators of Quality of Life in Canada: A Citizens' Prototype

**Summary of Results of
Public Dialogue Sessions and
Prototype of National Indicators**

Quality of Life Indicators Project

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Foreword

While much activity is underway in Canada on quality of life indicators, until now there has been no initiative of a national scope that seeks input from citizens.

CPRN is seeking to fill that void. We have been working with a Steering Committee representing a broad cross-section of organizations interested in developing a prototype set of national indicators to track Canada's progress in quality of life. Our fundamental goal for the Quality of Life Indicators Project is to create a national set of indicators that reflects the range of issues that truly matter to Canadians. By helping to create a common language for dialogue across the public, private and voluntary sectors, the prototype will enable a more balanced discussion on public priorities across social, economic, environmental and other dimensions of quality of life.

The project reports include six discussion papers, each of which will be of interest to different audiences:

- This paper, *Indicators of Quality of Life in Canada – A Citizens' Prototype*, includes the prototype set of national indicators and information on how it evolved. It is intended for a wide range of audiences, including researchers, policy makers, the media and members of the public.
- *Asking Citizens What Matters for Quality of Life in Canada – Results of CPRN's Public Dialogue Process, October 2000* includes the analysis of the findings from the citizen dialogue sessions. It is intended for a small audience, including researchers, academics and policy makers.
- *Quality of Life: What Matters to Canadians – Lessons Learned* focuses on the project context, dialogue methodology, lessons learned and next steps. An internal document, this report is intended for distribution primarily among CPRN staff and consultants.
- An evaluation report of the Quality of Life Indicators Project will be of interest to CPRN staff, consultants and funders, community practitioners and others working in the area of public involvement and societal indicators. (Forthcoming in Spring, 2001)
- A report card on national indicators will describe the testing of the prototype (see the *Next Steps* section of this report). The first report card will provide citizens, researchers and public policy leaders with a solid foundation for determining where Canada currently stands on quality of life. These audiences will also be able to assess the usefulness of the prototype and whether Canada should undertake a regular accounting of its quality of life. (Forthcoming in Summer, 2001)
- A generic evaluation framework has been developed to guide the assessment of the Quality of Life Indicators Project and lay the foundation for other public involvement projects that may be undertaken by CPRN and others. (Forthcoming in Spring, 2001)

I want to thank Joseph H. Michalski, Department of Sociology, Trent University for his analysis of the findings from the public dialogue sessions. Entitled *Asking Citizens What Matters for Quality of Life in Canada - Results of CPRN's Public Dialogue Process, October 2000*, Dr. Michalski's report is the source for the findings presented here. His full report is available electronically on the CPRN web site (www.cprn.org).

I also want to thank Allium Consulting Group Inc. who prepared this summary report of the project findings. As well, I wish to acknowledge the many people who have been involved in the project, including Sandra Zagon, Project Manager, and her team of independent consultants and researchers, indicator experts, moderators and note-takers for the dialogue groups, and members of the Steering Committee. They all have made an invaluable contribution in shaping the project. Many thanks of course to the participants in the cross-Canada dialogue groups – their input is the basis for the prototype set of national quality of life indicators.

A special word of appreciation goes to our funders, who include The Institute for Research on Public Policy, The Atkinson Charitable Foundation, Canadian Pacific Charitable Foundation, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Policy Research Initiative, Canadian Rural Partnership, Human Resources Development Canada, National Round Table on the Environment and on the Economy, Privy Council Office and NOVA Chemicals.

Judith Maxwell

Introduction

People are becoming more aware that traditional measures of quality of life do not reflect all of the issues that concern Canadians. With this in mind, Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) collaborated with a number of organizations to develop a prototype set of national indicators to track Canada's progress in quality of life, as defined by citizens.

Obtaining the input of Canadians was an essential component of the Quality of Life Indicators Project. To learn about what citizens consider important to their quality of life, CPRN conducted 40 dialogue discussions in nine provinces across Canada over a two-week period in October 2000. The results of these discussions, together with existing research on quality of life, have been used to create a prototype set of national indicators of quality of life in Canada. This work will be shared widely with citizens, members of the media, governments and other researchers, with the goal of stimulating further discussion, debate and research on Canadian quality of life indicators.

This report presents a summary of the results of the public dialogues. Section I summarizes the findings from the national dialogue sessions with Canadians, including the collective portraits of what constitutes quality of life, priorities for key themes to be addressed in any discussion of quality of life and suggestions for specific indicators for monitoring Canada's progress on quality of life issues. The full research report on the dialogue sessions is presented as a companion document entitled *Asking Citizens What Matters for Quality of Life in Canada – Results of CPRN's Public Dialogue Process, October 2000*, and is available electronically on the CPRN web site (www.cprn.org).

Section II sets out a draft prototype set of national quality of life indicators, organised along nine themes. Based primarily on the findings from the citizen dialogue sessions, the prototype also builds on existing research about quality of life indicators.

Section III of the report provides an overview of next steps, including a brief discussion of how the results will be used to further discussion and research on quality of life issues in Canada.

Additional background information about the project and a detailed description of the project methodology can be found in a companion to this report, entitled *Quality of Life: What Matters to Canadians – Lessons Learned*. Copies of all reports are available electronically on the CPRN web site (www.cprn.org).

I What Canadians Said

This section of the report summarizes the major findings of the 40 dialogues that were conducted across Canada in October 2000, including highlights of Canadians' views on priority themes and appropriate indicators for monitoring quality of life. A detailed analysis of the study findings is presented as a companion document entitled *Asking Citizens What Matters for Quality of Life in Canada – Results of CPRN's Public Dialogue Process, October 2000*, and is available electronically on the CPRN web site (www.cprn.org).

A. Quality of Life: Where Are We Now?

Almost all participants completed questionnaires before and after the three-hour dialogue sessions. A comparison of the pre- and post-dialogue questionnaires demonstrates that participants' views on quality of life did not change appreciably as a result of the dialogue sessions.

The questionnaire findings also provide important context for the following analysis of citizens' views on priorities and themes for monitoring quality of life. The responses show that one in four participants believed that the quality of life in Canada had improved in the last five years, while about 36 percent suggested that things had not really changed. Just under 40 percent felt that the quality of life for Canadians in general had declined during that period. In contrast, participants generally expressed more favourable views about recent changes in their own quality of life. While the same proportion (about one in four) suggested that their overall quality of life had improved in the past six months, a much higher percentage (59 percent) said that their quality of life had "stayed the same."

More than half of participants believed that the quality of life in Canada had stayed the same or improved in the last five years.

Participants expressed the highest degree of satisfaction with their family, friends, health, and work or main activity, and five in six reported being at least somewhat satisfied with their lives as a whole. In addition, approximately three-fourths were generally satisfied with their standard of living and the schools in their area.

The highest levels of dissatisfaction (between 40-50 percent) were registered in response to public or government services in Canada, followed by the quality of the environment and the current level of stress they were experiencing in their lives. As well, more than one in three participants were at least somewhat dissatisfied with their finances, their free time, and the balance between their jobs or main activities and family or home life. Finally, some three in ten participants were either somewhat or very dissatisfied with the quality of life in their province or in their community.

There were no significant differences between men and women on most of the issues examined, with the exception that women expressed higher dissatisfaction with the quality of the environment in Canada. A more compelling factor, however, was the age of the participant.

Those who were 55 years of age and older tended to express significantly higher levels of satisfaction with several of the specific dimensions measured, including overall satisfaction with one's job or main activity, level of stress in their lives and the quality of their community.

B. Defining and Monitoring Quality of Life: Priorities and Indicators

The 40 dialogue groups provided enormously rich and varied discussions of quality of life issues in Canada. The multitude of themes that emerged encompassed literally hundreds of ideas about what contributes to quality of life. Despite the latitude provided in the dialogue process, a number of common themes emerged across a majority of the groups.

Table 1 summarizes the collective portraits and priority themes for quality of life that participants developed during the dialogue sessions. In general, almost every group addressed various aspects of political rights, health, education, the environment, social programs/conditions, personal well being, safe communities and the economy as important to the quality of life in Canada.

Notably, this also holds true for the different types of groups or "group clusters" (i.e., urban/rural, influencers, hard to reach and youth) who participated in the research. This finding underscores the fact that a broad spectrum of Canadians shares a common vision of what constitutes quality of life in their country.

In general, participants were less comfortable identifying specific indicators for future monitoring than they were in building a portrait of quality of life and identifying general themes. This was not surprising, as the selection of indicators is a more technical matter that is generally reserved for experts. A summary of participants' suggestions for potential indicators for each priority theme related to quality of life can be found in the companion document entitled *Asking Citizens What Matters for Quality of Life in Canada – Results of CPRN's Public Dialogue Process, October 2000*, and available on CPRN's web site or in print from CPRN.

Following are highlights of the group discussions for the nine top priority themes that, together, paint a portrait of quality of life in Canada. Included in the overview are frequently mentioned sub-themes and participants' suggestions for specific indicators for monitoring and measuring quality of life. Where appropriate, findings related to specific cluster groups are also identified.

1. Political Rights and General Values

Every group discussed political rights and other general values or principles believed to be important to the quality of life in Canada. The majority of groups discussed the importance of human or civil rights, democracy, autonomy or choice and freedom as core elements of quality of life.

Most groups discussed the importance of human or civil rights, democracy, autonomy or choice, and freedom as core elements of quality of life.

A number of groups, for example, identified civil or human rights as a foundation for a healthy society. Some groups made specific references to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but most discussed basic human rights from a common sense or “taken-for-granted” perspective. In speaking about the issue, participants usually regarded Canada in a positive light with respect to protecting and respecting human rights.

There were two concerns, however, that permeated some of the discussions. One was the notion that human rights might be compromised in situations where individuals or families did not have the basic necessities (i.e., adequate food, shelter, and clothing) to enable them to express their political or other rights. A second concern was the relative balance between the rights of the individual and those of the community, particularly in a multicultural context. Some participants thought that erosion of individual rights sometimes jeopardized individual freedom, while others believed that individual rights appeared to supercede the public interest (especially in regard to the justice system).

Finally, a majority of the groups identified civic involvement or democratic participation as a cornerstone to quality of life. However, participants expressed concern about a growing apathy among Canadians. Furthermore, some groups considered the idea of expanding the democratic process or ensuring maximum participation in the political and civic spheres in general as important to quality of life.

Citizens’ Suggested Indicators

- civic involvement or democratic participation
- personal responsibility
- equality of opportunity
- extent of long-term planning
- racist or discriminatory attitudes

2. Health

The dialogue sessions provided powerful testimony to the value that Canadians place on their health and the health care system. At the personal level, many comments tended to equate any compromises in health with compromises to the quality of life.

At the health care system level, the overarching theme was that universal health care should be maintained. While fewer than 20 percent of the groups actually used the term “two-tier” system, most participants reacted negatively to the concept. Some participants expressed the opinion that the health care system had already moved too far along a path toward a two-tiered system.

At the health care system level, the overarching theme was that universal health care should be maintained.

For many, health care accessibility was the most pressing issue. Participants from the more remote regions of the country often raised the issue. Other participants viewed health care access

as an equity issue. Still others lamented the costs associated with certain health-related services, such as dental care, which were seen as reserved for the wealthy or the employed with benefits.

Mental health was an issue in one-third of the dialogue groups and was a particular concern in the hard-to-reach and youth groups. Some participants cited factors such as work-related stress as a threat to mental health while other groups identified access to mental health services as an important prerequisite to quality of life.

One in three groups stressed the importance of health promotion and prevention in maintaining a high quality of life. Participants in several dialogue groups spoke about the *reactive* nature of the health care system, which emphasizes treatment rather than prevention and wellness.

Citizens' Suggested Indicators

- illness rates/higher health rates
- access (e.g., health care facilities and professionals)
- natural/alternative health care interventions
- coverage (e.g., drugs, dental care)
- life expectancy rates

3. Education

More than half of all dialogue groups discussed access to a free, universal system of education. Nearly everyone agreed that “quality of education equals quality of life.”

Many participants were concerned specifically about the quality of primary and secondary education, with some voicing concerns about funding or program cuts. Participants identified a number of needed improvements to public education including strategies such as rewarding or valuing teachers more, giving teachers more latitude to exercise creativity, and having smaller classes and more parental involvement.

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As with the health care system, participants emphasized the importance of maintaining the universality of the education system and, where possible, enhancing accessibility even further. These concerns applied in particular to the post-secondary system. In fact, nearly half of the dialogue groups discussed *post-secondary* education as well as the public school system. At issue for post-secondary schooling were *access* or *affordability* rather than *quality*. A common view was that post-secondary education was not feasible for many Canadians, which had further ramifications with respect to job opportunities, income disparities and quality of life in general.

Finally, nearly 30 percent of the dialogue groups discussed the issue of lifelong learning or continuing education as important to quality of life in Canada. Apart from the issue of employment, some viewed lifelong learning as intrinsically valuable to citizens and the broader quality of life in society as a whole.

Citizens' Suggested Indicators

- high school completion rates
- accessibility and affordability of post-secondary education
- public education funding levels
- teacher-student ratios
- school violence rates

4. Environment

In almost all the groups, the environment was seen as an indispensable feature of “quality of life.” Most groups identified specific aspects of the environment as crucial, such as water quality, air quality, toxic waste, waste management, responsible stewardship of natural resources and access to the outdoors.

Nearly 90 percent of the groups cited a clean environment as essential to a quality of life indicators prototype.

Some groups discussed the issues of sustainable development, managing renewable resources more effectively, or environmental stewardship in general. In this context, participants cited the loss of habitat for wildlife, clearcutting and overfishing practices that overuse renewable resources, acid rain and water pollution resulting from toxic wastes and run-off of chemicals in farmers' fields.

Some participants identified tradeoffs involved between a healthy environment and support for business, while others cited the failure of industry to police themselves and lax enforcement of environmental regulations. By the same token, there were a number of voices calling for individuals to accept more personal responsibility for protecting the environment, such as through carpooling or reducing their commuting.

Others focused on toxic waste or waste management in general as high priorities. Local issues often dominated discussions of waste disposal, though most participants stressed the need to consider waste management in the context of broader tradeoffs involving healthy living habits, consumption patterns, and recycling practices.

Citizens' Suggested Indicators

- recycling levels
- ozone layer restoration and/or acid rain levels
- local sustainability indicators
- neighbourhood cleanliness
- access to green space
- protection of green space

5. Social Programs/Conditions

Nearly every group identified issues pertaining to social programs, which were generally considered essential to the quality of life in Canada. Specific programs varied somewhat, although many groups stressed the importance of a variety of income maintenance supports to cover basic necessities for vulnerable populations.

In a few groups, however, participants raised concerns about those who might abuse the system. The issue of personal responsibility surfaced occasionally as some participants expressed their reservations about existing

The general sense for many of the groups was that there should be social support systems adequate to respond to and meet basic human needs.

income supports. Some emphasized the importance of having expectations of or additional requirements for social welfare recipients.

Roughly half the groups identified programs in support of children and youth as a priority for quality of life. The notion of support varied across groups, from availability of youth programs, and better financial, emotional and parental support, to child protection and safety. Many discussion groups identified the availability, affordability and quality of daycare or childcare programs as essential to quality of life. A related concern was that unpaid caregiving be recognized more fully.

Hard-to-reach groups prioritized several social program issues far more often than other groups. Their priorities for national indicators included affordable housing, accessible social programs in general, meeting basic needs, child care, lower poverty rates, increased access for persons with disabilities, women's issues, access to dental care and quality food.

Citizens' Suggested Indicators

- supports for single parents
- employment training programs
- housing accessibility and affordability
- daycare accessibility and affordability
- social assistance rates

6. Personal Well-being

Nearly half of the groups offered at least some direct support for including personal well being as a national indicator priority. Balancing work and domestic responsibilities clearly weighed on the minds of many participants. Others suggested that the failure to achieve a healthy balance has undermined the quality of many relationships.

Families and friends were certainly considered to be integral dimensions of quality of life. Participants often viewed the family as key to providing a sense of security, stability, morality and self-esteem. As one participant argued, “the quality of the relationships you have makes your life valuable or not. If you have a good circle of friends and family, things can happen but life still continues.”

The struggle to balance work and domestic responsibilities clearly weighed on the minds of many participants.

Another issue raised by participants was the sense of being in control of one’s life. As well, nearly one in three groups suggested leisure and recreation should be a national priority for a quality of life indicators prototype.

Citizens’ Suggested Indicators

- financial security
- stress levels
- availability of leisure time
- self-esteem or self-satisfaction measures
- drug/alcohol abuse rates

7. Community

At least one in four groups talked explicitly about the notion of a “healthy community” in relation to quality of life issues. The nature of what constitutes a healthy community, however, was not universally defined or accepted.

The sub-theme generating the most discussion was that of public safety and safe communities without crime. In addition, as previously noted in the section on political rights, more than 50% of groups attached importance to civic involvement.

Many participants talked about the level of volunteerism as it relates to civic engagement at the community level, as well as the satisfaction of working within a community, volunteer or faith-based organization. Some discussed the importance of communities recognizing those involved in volunteer activities.

For many participants, healthy communities included notions of social cohesion, of stable sets of relationships, where individuals had a shared sense of belonging, where resources were sufficient to provide learning and recreational opportunities, and where people experienced a sense of security.

Participants often identified links between certain issue areas and the plight of particular groups (e.g., health care for seniors), although particular groups such as children, seniors, newcomers, and many other demographic groups were not generally the focal point of discussions. Many of

these links occurred in the context of discussing healthy communities, which often addressed the importance of looking after particular groups such as children.

Citizens' Suggested Indicators

- Volunteer participation rates
- Church membership
- Poverty and homelessness rates
- Social cohesion (e.g., interaction rates with neighbours)
- Degree of segregation or cultural isolation

8. Economy and Employment

Most groups addressed the economy and paid work during their discussions. In speaking of the economy as a whole, nearly half of the groups emphasized the importance of keeping unemployment rates down or attaining full employment for Canadians.

Participants often acknowledged a healthy economy as important to quality of life. Their rationales embodied the notion that a healthy economy served as the fuel necessary to operate the broader engine of government and society at large.

Terms such as “sustainable,” “predictable,” “generating employment,” and “diversified” were linked with the concept of a “healthy economy.” In addition, nearly one in four groups recognized the importance of providing support for small business as important to quality of life. Those participants who discussed the issue generally viewed a healthy business community as vital to providing jobs and security, and otherwise contributing to the overall community.

Economic security was another key quality of life issue raised, which included sub-themes such as job security, employment opportunities, and rates of compensation or concerns about the minimum wage.

Economic security was another key issue raised, including sub-themes such as job security, employment opportunities, rates of compensation and concerns about the minimum wage. Job security was a prominent issue in one-third of the groups. The general view was that job security was less of a certainty now as a result of a dwindling supply of standard work opportunities.

With respect to compensation rates and the issue of minimum wage, a number of participants expressed sentiments similar to these of a Sydney, Nova Scotia participant: “(We need a) living wage beyond basic needs. Minimum wage should be up. You have to take two or three jobs to support your family these days. Emergencies, Christmas, birthdays. There’s no extra money when you need it.”

Housing affordability and the availability of low-income housing received attention in more than one-third of the groups, with some consideration of the issue of homelessness. The predominant

view was that an imbalance between available income and housing options negatively impacted quality of life. Several dialogue groups focused on what participants variously described as adequate or affordable housing, especially for low-income households or those living in poverty. Some linked the “lack of affordable housing” to “cutbacks to subsidized housing,” as well as the absence or delays in building a larger supply of public housing.

Participants in nearly half the groups discussed a general concern about the distribution of wealth or the perception of an unhealthy growth in the “rich-poor gap” in Canada. A number of participants perceived the gap to be growing, which some believed was having a ripple effect across the entire society.

Some differences were apparent among the various cluster groups. For example, rural groups stressed the need to have indicators pertaining to agriculture, support for small business and improved benefits or compensation, while the hard-to-reach groups were more inclined to recommend training or upgrading and the cost of living as national indicator priorities. Youth groups focused on fair wages, an improved minimum wage, the cost of living, youth discrimination, meaningful work and support for small business.

Citizens’ Suggested Indicators

- employment rate/unemployment rate
- income above living wage
- economic growth rates
- GDP less credit card debt
- small business supports and investment

9. Government

Government received a fair amount of attention, with the most prominent issue being fair, equitable and effective fiscal policies. Certain groups had extensive discussions about the role of government and the concept of “governance.” Some participants expressed concerns about the quality of government leadership in particular, while a comparable number stressed the importance of having a more balanced and equitable approach to policies in support of business. Another concept that resonated among selected groups was the notion of stewardship.

Overall, governments were viewed as integral to the quality of life in Canada or at least in helping to maintain important systems of protection and service delivery. Some participants held out a certain degree of optimism that governments could provide vision and leadership, though many were less sanguine in their assessments.

Citizens’ Suggested Indicators

- voting participation rates
- equitable taxation rates
- access to government legislators

- levels of public trust in government (accountability)
- government waste or inefficiency
- measures of responsiveness

C. Cross-Cutting Themes

In addition to the substantive themes discussed above, the research identified four overarching or cross-cutting themes that arose consistently across the dialogue group sessions:

Accessibility

Quality of life for many participants meant access to a reasonable or fair share of resources and opportunities in Canada. The notion of access cut across virtually every sphere, including health care, healthy environments, education, social programs, housing and the labour market.

Personal Security/Control

The issues of safety, security and control spanned several quality of life themes, including discussions linking families and communities, social programs, education, civic involvement and employment opportunities. Some participants discussed security as meaning lower crime rates or a greater sense of personal safety in the community. Others spoke about security as having economic well being or control over one's financial situation and over one's own time.

Availability

Participants made repeated reference to the presence or absence of conditions such as low-cost housing that affected the quality of life. Other availability issues identified by participants were in the areas of health care (e.g., long-term or respite care, emergency services), education and social programs (e.g., breakfast programs for children).

Equity/Fairness

Most groups addressed equity or fairness issues as a facet underlying quality of life. In developing a quality of life prototype, participants stressed the need to address equity issues in several spheres. The two most commonly identified were the tax system and the distribution of wealth in Canadian society.

Table 1: Total Groups Discussing Selected Quality of Life Issues and Prevalence of Sub-Themes across 40 Groups

	THEMATIC AREAS	GROUPS	TOTAL # VOTES	SUB-THEME NUMBER 1	SUB-THEME NUMBER 2	SUB-THEME NUMBER 3	SUB-THEME NUMBER 4	SUB-THEME NUMBER 5
1	Political Rights/ General Values	40	206	Civic involvement (21)	Civil or human rights (16)	Autonomy (11)	Democracy (10)	Freedom (8)
2	Health	39	206	Accessibility (24)	Physical health (17)	Mental health (13)	Health prevention and promotion (13)	Universal system (13)
3	Education	39	177	Accessibility and/or universality (22)	Quality (17)	Primary/secondary schools (14)	Post-secondary education (12)	Lifelong learning (11)
4	Environment	38	189	Clean, healthy (35)	Water (24)	Toxic waste (11)	Waste management (7)	Renewable natural resources (5)
5	Social Programs/ Conditions	38	173	General support programs (19)	Basic needs (15)	Housing affordability (15)	Wealth distribution (14)	Daycare (10)
6	Personal Well-Being	36	102	Personal well-being in general (18)	Time use and Balance (16)	Leisure and recreation (12)	Food/diet (7)	Self-respect or dignity (7)
7	Legal or Justice System	35	96	Safe communities/ public safety (28)	Crime rate (10)	Security (9)	Policing (7)	Justice system (5)
8	Economy	34	110	Employment (17)	Living wages (17)	Economic growth (13)	Small business support (9)	Cost of living (6)
9	Work	31	67	Job security (12)	Wages and benefits (10)	Employment opportunities (9)	Meaningful work or job satisfaction (7)	Training and upgrading (7)
10	Community	31	44	Healthy communities (10)	Spirituality (10)	Programs and resources (8)	Volunteer opportunities (7)	Civil society (4)
11	Seniors and Children	30	64	Child and/or youth programs (19)	Eldercare (6)	Healthy child development (5)	Time/attention for children (5)	Access to health care in retirement (4)
12	Government	29	99	Taxes/fiscal policies (14)	Honesty or public trust (12)	Accountability and efficiency (7)	Quality and leadership (5)	Balanced business Policy (5)
13	Family, Friends, and Connections	25	39	Family well-being (11)	Intimate connections (6)	Reduced social isolation (5)	Family economic security (4)	Family coping (4)
14	Information (Media)	23	29	Public education (10)	Technology and Computer access (6)	Research and information (6)	Media access or independent media (6)	Media accuracy (4)
15	Infrastructure and Transport	23	12	Infrastructure (16)	Affordable transportation (5)	Public transit (3)	Paths and trails (1)	
16	Diversity and Multiculturalism	19	17	Cultural diversity (13)	Cultural sharing and exchanges (5)	Obligations to Native peoples (3)	Regional differences (2)	Immigration policies (1)
17	Cultural Pursuits	10	11	Cultural activities (6)	Funding or support for the arts (5)			

Table note: “Total votes” refers to the number of participants (out of 346) who voted for some facet of a theme in identifying their priorities. The numbers in parentheses after each sub-theme refer to the total number of groups (out of 40) that discussed that particular sub-theme.

Source: *Asking Citizens What Matters for Quality of Life in Canada – Results of CPRN’s Public Dialogue Process, October 2000*, J. Michalski, April 2001

II Prototype Set of National Indicators

In mid-December 2000, CPRN held two back-to-back workshops on the project. The first workshop brought together a select group of citizens with indicator practitioners/experts and Steering Committee members, while the second was attended by indicator practitioner/experts only. The focus of both workshops was on reviewing the findings from the 40 dialogue sessions with the goal of developing criteria to select a manageable number of national indicators. By the end of the workshops, participants had developed a large inventory of possible indicators and data sources to be considered for inclusion in the prototype.

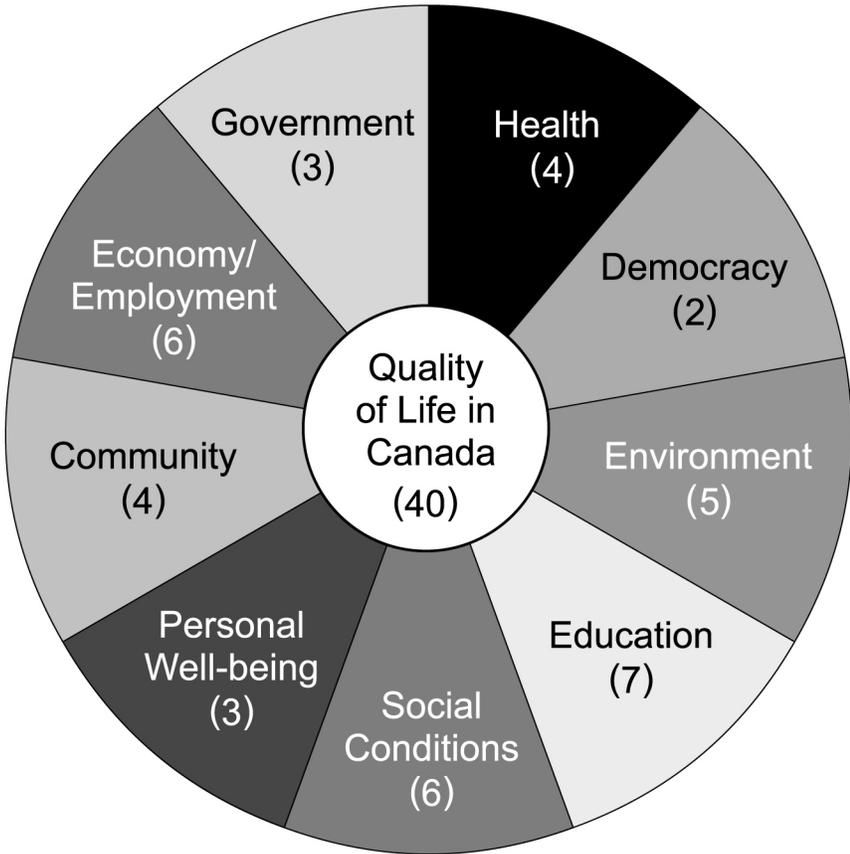
Following the workshops, a smaller group of indicator experts and researchers – all of whom had been involved in the December workshops – finalized selection criteria for choosing a manageable set of indicators and further refined the inventory. A draft prototype was developed based on these criteria and distributed to a cross-section of citizens who participated in the October dialogues, for validation.

The resulting prototype set of national indicators for quality of life in Canada is presented in graphic format and described briefly below. While the prototype reflects the broad direction provided by the citizen dialogue groups, some elements have been adapted to take into account existing knowledge in the area and to facilitate further research.

Quality of Life Indicators Project (QOLIP)

Prototype Set of National Indicators

CPRN's prototype of national quality of life indicators includes 40 indicators, organized under nine themes. The number of indicators associated with each theme is indicated in brackets.



Adapted from: Calvert-Henderson, *Quality of Life Indicators: A New Tool for Assessing National Trends*, Hazel Henderson, Jon Lickerman and Patricia Flynn (editors), 2000.

The prototype set of national indicators consists of nine elements:

- Democracy
- Health
- Education/learning
- Environment
- Social conditions
- Community
- Personal well-being
- Employment/economy
- Government

Interconnected and overlapping, these elements together form a comprehensive picture of what Canadians consider important to their quality of life. As shown below, each of the elements is further defined by a set of specific indicators.

I. Political/Democratic Participation and Rights (2 indicators)

1. Exercising democratic rights
2. Tolerance of diversity

II. Health (4 indicators)

3. Quality of health care system
4. Status of physical health
5. Status of mental health
6. Lifestyle

III. Education/learning (7 indicators)

7. Access to universal primary/secondary education system
8. Access to post-secondary education
9. Participation rates and enrolment
10. Access to lifelong learning
11. Adult literacy rates
12. Child/youth literacy rates
13. Quality of education

IV. Environment (5 indicators)

14. Water (drinking) quality
15. Air quality
16. Waste management
17. Resources devoted to developing renewable energy sources
18. Access to clean, healthy public outdoor spaces

V. Social programs/conditions (6 indicators)

- 19. Availability and affordability of child care
- 20. Adequacy of income supports in meeting basic needs
- 21. Poverty and child poverty rates
- 22. Living wages
- 23. Food bank usage
- 24. Housing affordability

VI. Personal well-being (3 indicators)

- 25. Personal time stress or control over time
- 26. Degree of social interaction, intimate connections, and social isolation
- 27. Sense of personal security

VII. Community (4 indicators)

- 28. Satisfaction with police, courts, probation
- 29. Sense of personal safety and changes in crime rate
- 30. Level of civic involvement
- 31. Availability of programs and services

VIII. Economy and Employment (6 indicators)

- 32. Unemployment and labour force participation rates
- 33. Percentage of involuntary part-time workers
- 34. Job security, satisfaction and working conditions
- 35. Bankruptcies (personal and business)
- 36. Income/wealth distribution
- 37. Consumer debt levels

IX. Government (3 indicators)

- 38. Level of public trust
- 39. Accountability/stewardship of public values and funds
- 40. Public governance

III Next Steps

The next step in satisfying citizens' need to know if their quality of life is getting better, worse or staying the same is to gather data for the prototype. In time, this "report card" will also give Canadians the means to hold their leaders accountable for policy and program decisions that may have an impact on quality of life in Canada.

CPRN will be working with independent partners to fit this new piece into the quality of life "puzzle." Once the first report card is in the public domain, citizens and public policy leaders alike will have a solid foundation for determining whether Canada should undertake a regular accounting of its quality of life.

Another step to be taken is enhancing the collaboration among the various initiatives purporting to monitor elements of quality of life such as standard of living, sustainable development, population health, community health, personal well being, economic status. The effectiveness of ongoing tracking and reporting of 'quality of life' in Canada may ultimately be best served through the integration of existing quality of life indicator models (or models purporting to deal with elements of quality of life). Moreover, efficiencies could be realized by pooling some of the financial and human resources dedicated to the research and application of the individual models in the search for a single generic model, which by design would permit local adaptation. This single model would by mandate link jurisdictions (community through city and province to a national perspective), geography (coast to coast to coast), and disciplines.

In effect, this would lead not only to the creation, but also, more importantly, to the use of a common language, framework and set of indicators by all those interested in quality of life in Canada – including citizens, all levels of government, non-governmental organizations, researchers, academics and the media.

CPRN Funding Sources

CORE FUNDERS

Canadian International Development Agency
Citizenship and Immigration
Fisheries and Oceans
Health Canada
Human Resources Development Canada
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Transport Canada

CORPORATE SUPPORT

BCT. Telus Communications
Canadian Pacific Charitable Foundation
Clarica
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- Canadian Rural Partnership
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