

CPRN RCRPP

Asking Citizens What Matters for Quality of Life in Canada

A Rural Lens

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 has sought to fill that void. Over an 18 month period ending in March 2001, CPRN worked 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 was 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 is enabling a more balanced discussion on public priorities across social, economic, environmental and other dimensions of quality of life.

The Quality of Life Indicators Project reports to date include six discussion papers, each of which is of interest for different audiences. *Asking Canadians What Matters for Quality of Life: A Rural Lens*, joins this family of discussion papers as one report which considers the results of the project in terms of a specific group of Canadians. In this way the 'clustering approach' adopted in the research design emerges in the reporting of the project, adding to the richness of the qualitative picture. This report will be posted alongside the other project reports on the Quality of Life Indicators site, part of the CPRN web site (www.cprn.org).

I want to thank Rebecca Marland, Volunteer Researcher at CPRN, and Joseph H. Michalski, Department of Sociology, Trent University, who together focused a 'Rural Lens' on the Quality of Life Indicators Project.

As well, I wish to acknowledge the many people who have been involved in the project to date, 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, Human Resources Development Canada, National Round Table on the Environment and on the Economy, Privy Council Office, NOVA Chemicals, and the Canadian Rural Partnership, which was instrumental in helping to realize the rural report.

Judith Maxwell

Executive Summary

The results of a series of public dialogue discussions held across Canada in October 2000 reveal that Canadians agree that tracking the quality of life in Canada is a worthwhile endeavour and identify several common elements that they believe should be monitored. Nearly every group of participants addressed various aspects of democracy/political rights, health, education, the environment, social programs, personal well-being, safe communities, the economy and government as important to the quality of life in Canada. These common themes cut across regions, social backgrounds, and various demographic characteristics of the populace. Indeed, there appears to be widespread agreement among Canadians that the general recipe for a healthy quality of life must include certain key ingredients, even though the recommended “amounts” vary to some degree. This variation is revealed somewhat through a qualitative look at the dialogues in terms of a rural cluster analysis.

The central purpose of the Canadian Policy Research Networks’ (CPRN) Quality of Life Indicators Project was to develop a prototype of national indicators to track Canada’s progress in quality of life through a citizen involvement process. To learn about the issues that citizens view as important to quality of life in Canada and what indicators should be developed to monitor the issues, forty dialogue discussions were conducted in nine provinces across Canada over a two-week period in 2000. To focus a rural lens on quality of life, CPRN purposively selected a rural ‘cluster’ to participate in the public dialogues alongside the other ‘clusters’ of urban, influencers, and hard-to-reach. In total, around one-third (32.7 percent) of the citizens who took part in the dialogue were Canadians living in rural locales. The participants reviewed background materials on quality of life issues and indicators prior to the dialogue sessions, engaged in three-hour dialogue discussions facilitated by trained moderators, and completed questionnaires prior to and following their discussions.

The overall results suggest that there were a number of common national indicator priorities to monitor quality of life in Canada. Differences across groups in their views on quality of life can be observed, however, and can be explained in part by the composition of the group clusters. The rural case illustrates the fact that some group clusters were more likely to highlight certain areas as prominent themes to be included owing at least in part to the direct impact that these issues have in their lives. Thus issues of accessibility to and availability of services resonated particularly well in rural groups, and rural participants were particularly concerned about issues surrounding the agricultural economy.

Regardless of the cluster, the groups emphasized the importance of the following: primary and secondary education, health care access, a healthy environment, clean air and/or water, social programs, responsible taxation, public safety or security, job security, employment opportunities, a living wage, time use or balance, civic participation, and children/youth programs.

Every group discussed political and democratic rights as important to the quality of life in Canada. As well, every group addressed various aspects of health; of particular importance to the rural groups were accessibility and health promotion. In terms of education, the participants suggested that access, quality, and funding levels should be monitored. Rural participants framed access to education in terms of general accessibility to services in rural Canada. The environment figured

prominently in nearly every group's list of priorities, both as an important contributor to quality of life and as an area for which indicators should be developed (e.g., clean air, water, and waste disposal). Rural participants sometimes considered environment questions in the context of the economy, public infrastructure, and the rural way of life. The participants further emphasized "social programs" as important to quality of life; while nearly half the groups discussed children and/or youth programs as a key dimension, rural participants stood out in drawing attention to childcare provision. At the same time, the dialogue participants suggested that responsible taxation should be a priority.

The dialogue groups further stressed the importance of monitoring healthy, safe communities as a key indicator of quality of life. Similarly, civic participation represented another area that participants ranked highly in assessing quality of life in Canada. The idea of community support for families and children found particular resonance in rural locations. Moreover, most groups in various ways considered the health of the economy to be important. Rural participants' economic concerns often seemed to indicate a holistic view of rural quality of life, and they stood out in their concerns for economic growth, support for small business, indicators pertaining to agriculture, improved benefits or compensation, and in their concerns about the distribution of wealth. In the area of government, public trust was a feature of rural discussion. Regarding justice/legal systems, rural participants were just as likely to talk about crime rate as their urban counterparts.

At the individual level, most people expressed at least some satisfaction with a range of different quality of life dimensions, though those who were older tended to have more positive views or expressed higher levels of satisfaction on several issues. Regardless of age or other background characteristics, the majority of participants ranked health care, education, the environment, and social programs as priority areas requiring improvement. As discussed previously, these areas (and sub-themes identified within the broader discussions) were often targeted as key factors that participants believed should be monitored more systematically to help track quality of life in Canada on a regular basis. Participants often felt far less competent, however, in their capacity to suggest what the most helpful or relevant indicators might be; they were often comfortable to rely on other expert opinion in this regard.

The data were more limited in thinking about who should be responsible for developing and reporting on the quality of life in Canada. The general view was that governments should work co-operatively with independent, non-profit organisations to support the development and ongoing monitoring of quality of life indicators. The participants recognised that funding might be necessary from governments and other sources to help sustain such an ambitious project, but believed further that independent reporting should be encouraged especially since government accountability might be incorporated as one of the dimensions monitored.

The participants, while not always optimistic that the process would yield tangible results, were nevertheless energised by their participation in the process. Most important, there was a general consensus that developing a quality of life indicators prototype was feasible and desirable. Canadians expressed a preference to have a more uniform and comprehensive system for evaluating quality of life in Canada than that which currently exists. While most continued to believe in Canada as offering a reasonably high quality of life, the participants voiced a number of concerns that should be addressed and monitored on an ongoing basis to establish priorities, to provide feedback, and assess changes in quality of life in the years ahead.

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 organisations to develop a prototype set of national indicators to track Canada's progress in quality of life, as defined by citizens. The work of the Quality of Life Indicators Project continues to 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.

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 with 346 citizens 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. The draft prototype, organised along nine themes, can be found towards the end of this report.

While CPRN aimed to translate the views of Canadians into a set of indicators applicable nationwide, it was keen to ensure input from a wide diversity of Canadians. For this reason, the project team intentionally developed a cluster approach as part of the research design and carried this through to the analyses and reporting of the Quality of Life Indicators Project. Rural Canada accounts for one third of the Canadian population, over 90 percent of the nation's territory and about 20 percent of the employed Canadian workforce¹. In a reflection of this and to focus a rural lens on quality of life issues, CPRN purposively selected a rural 'cluster' to participate in the public dialogues. This rural cluster supplemented the dialogues which took place in rural settings as a result of quasi-random selection. In total, roughly one-third (32.7 percent) of the citizens who took part in the dialogue were Canadians living in rural locales.

The results from the 40 dialogue discussions suggested that the views of Canadians formed a relatively common vision to enable the prototype. The majority of the nearly 350 Canadians who participated identified the following as priorities that "most need to be worked on or improved":

- the health care system
- education
- social programs
- the environment.

These common themes cut across regions, social backgrounds, and various demographic characteristics of the populace. Indeed, there appears to be widespread agreement among Canadians that the general recipe for a healthy quality of life must include certain key ingredients, even though the recommended "amounts" vary to some degree, sometimes revealed through a qualitative look at the dialogues in terms of a 'cluster' analysis. These ingredients as discussed by

¹ Source: Canadian Rural Restructuring Foundation, cited in 'Think Rural', Third Report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, Chair: Andy Mitchell, March 1997.

http://www.parl.gc.ca/committees352/natu/reports/03_1997-03/reporte.html

rural participants are the focus of this report, in the context of the general response and compared with the response of participants from other clusters.

The general sense across the many groups was that quality of life should be monitored more systematically in Canada. Some of the participants were clearly disillusioned with specific issues or the quality of life in Canada more generally. Yet the dialogues tended to have a distinct moderating effect as well, or one in which the sentiments of others expressed helped to encourage more thoughtful reflection and mutual understanding. Hence, despite some persistent frustrations on the part of some participants, one has a sense of optimism from many of the groups. Most participants clearly expressed their enthusiasm for the dialogue process. Indeed, a majority of participants further appeared to believe in the value (or at least saw some merit) in developing a more systematic, comprehensive approach to tracking quality of life in Canada.

About this report

This report accordingly offers the rural perspective that emerged from CPRN's Quality of Life Indicator Project dialogues. It summarises the main components of the dialogue results, presenting the rural perspective in the light of the thematic analysis of the dialogue groups' discussion, and an analysis of responses to questionnaires completed by participants both before and after the dialogue groups. More specifically, the report considers participants' general views about:

- what constitutes quality of life in Canada
- priority issue areas related to quality of life
- appropriate indicators for measuring quality of life
- satisfaction with quality of life issues

Rather than conflicting with the general set of priority themes and indicators which emerged, the responses of both the rural groups and the individual rural participants via the questionnaire serve to flesh out the general picture in the terms of rural Canada.

I Approach to the Research

In October of 2000, CPRN co-ordinated the conduct of 40 dialogue groups on quality of life in Canada. Following is an overview of the research approach, including the location of the groups, the participant recruitment process, the support materials provided and the analysis of findings. A demographic overview is also provided, comparing the rural constituent with the full sample of participants.

A. Location of groups and recruitment process

In total, 346 Canadians participated in the 40 public dialogue discussions which took place between October 11-26, 2000 in twenty-one different towns and cities from nine provinces (see Appendix A). Twelve of these discussions took place in rural areas, while twenty-eight groups were held in urban settings. The dialogue discussions included 34 English-language and six French-language groups.

Environics recruited participants for half of the discussion groups using quasi-random sampling procedures². In recruiting participants for the other twenty groups, CPRN used purposive sampling procedures in order to capture particular perspectives, which included:

- youth (high-school students)
- “hard-to-reach” citizens (including individuals with low incomes, with disabilities, or in precarious housing situations)
- “influential” citizens (decision-makers, heads of organisations, elected officials)
- participants located in rural locales
- participants in urban settings

For the purposes of focusing a rural lens on the Quality of Life Indicators Project in this report, we have considered the rural constituent and therefore the subjects of this report to be as follows:

- the four groups of rural participants purposively selected by CPRN for the ‘rural cluster’
- the quasi-random groups in rural locations
- those groups purposively selected as part of the other clusters, but which also happened to be in rural locations. All three of these were in fact part of the purposive youth cluster.

This gives a total of twelve rural groups, detailed below in **Table 1**. The number of participants in rural groups totalled 113, or 32.7 percent of the total number of participants. The average number of participants per rural group was 9.4 (excluding the moderators, recorders and the occasional observer), compared to a figure of 8.7 for the groups in general. The groups in general usually had between 8-10 participants for the discussions, while rural groups usually had 9-10 participants. Only

²An Environics document summarizes their approach as follows: “In general, dialogue participants were contacted by telephone (‘cold calling’) or randomly selected from a database of people who have participated in past telephone or in-home surveys and have agreed to be contacted again if there were future research needs to be met, including participation in focus groups. However, people who had participated in a focus group or discussion group within the past year were excluded from the CPRN dialogue session” (Environics *Dialogue Recruitment Process*, n.d.).
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CPRN’s Quality of Life Indicators Project, November 2001

one rural group had fewer than six participants (compared to three in the full sample) and one had more than ten participants (compared to three in the full sample).

By including all rural groups as a rural constituent in this report we go beyond the rural cluster used for the comparison of cluster group responses in previous Quality of Life Indicators Project work (Asking Citizens What Matters for Quality of Life in Canada. Results of CPRN’s Public Dialogue Process. October 2000; Indicators of Quality of Life in Canada: A Citizens’ Prototype. April 2001). While this report uses the cluster group comparison, we also look at the qualitative responses of those other groups in rural settings which were purposively selected as part of another cluster in order to give depth to the picture of what rural participants said.

Table 1: Breakdown of Rural Groups

GROUP TYPE	CITY/TOWN	PROVINCE	# PARTICIPANTS	LANGUAGE	DATE
Purposive Rural	Peace River	Alberta	9	English	October 26
	Nelson	British Columbia	10	English	October 26
	Port Hawkesbury	Nova Scotia	9	English	October 17
	Outlook	Saskatchewan	10	English	October 25
Random Rural	Brandon	Manitoba	10	English	October 16
	Carberry	Manitoba	9	English	October 19
	Clarenville	Newfoundland	10	English	October 16
	Almonte	Ontario	9	English	October 18
	Joliette	Quebec	5	French	October 17
Purposive Youth	Woodstock	New Brunswick	12	English	October 19
	St Mary’s	Ontario	10	English	October 25
	Trois Rivières	Quebec	10	French	October 26
TOTAL		12	113		

Source: Adapted from 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. April 2001, Table 1: Public Dialogue Locations and Group Descriptions. For full table see **Appendix A, Table 1** of this report.

B. About the participants

The following provides demographic information about the 113 rural participants in the context of the entire group of 346 public dialogue participants.

Gender

The gender split was the same for both the rural participants and participants in general, 51 percent men and 49 percent women.

Age

The age range of both the total group and the rural constituent was from 16 to 86 years. The sample as whole was skewed toward the older end of the age distribution in comparison with the general

population, as nearly four in five participants were aged 30 and older. Three in ten of the rural participants were under the age of 25 and just about 9 percent were seniors aged 65 or older. The average age of the rural participants was lower than that of the full sample, 39.2 years compared to 43 years.

Family and household situations

A lower proportion of rural participants reported being married or in common-law relationships than in the full sample, or 46 percent compared to just over half. More rural participants were single than the general group: 41 percent compared to 31 percent of the participants as a whole.

For the most part, household sizes of the full sample mirrored those of the general Canadian population, with an average size of 2.7. The average household size of rural participants was larger at 3.1 persons. While roughly 21 percent of the general group lived alone, only 15 percent of rural participants lived alone. Living as families with two parents plus children was more common to rural participants (46 percent) than it was to general participants as a whole (38 percent). There were comparatively fewer couples without children in the rural constituent than in the group as a whole (22 percent compared to almost 25 percent, including four same-sex couples). Single parents comprised 8 percent of the general group and 7 percent of the rural constituent.

Language and Ethnic Origin

A higher proportion of the rural participants were born in Canada than in the group of participants as a whole (94 percent compared to 87 percent). The overwhelming majority of rural participants spoke either English (82 percent) or French (15 percent) as their first language, compared to 78 percent English and 13 percent French in the wider group. French was therefore slightly more common amongst the rural participants.

Education and Work

With respect to education and work, the full sample was skewed somewhat toward higher levels of educational attainment and higher-status jobs as a result of the several “influential” groups. Thus the 13 percent of the rural constituent who had done at least some post-graduate work was considerably lower than the more than 25 percent for the sample as a whole. Another 9 percent of the rural participants had attended some university, while 14 percent held university degrees, and nearly 13 percent held a non-university certificate or college diploma. This means that considerably fewer rural participants than the seven in 10 participants in the general sample had at least some college or university experience. Slightly more than half of the rural participants had a high school education, including the 23 percent still enrolled as students in high school.

Three in ten rural participants reported working full-time, compared to just over four in ten for the full sample. A higher proportion of the rural constituent than the sample as a whole was working part time (25 percent compared to 17 percent). Another 25 percent of rural participants were enrolled as students full-time – a much higher figure than the eight percent of the full sample who were full-time students (this reflects the fact that the youth cluster groups, who were high school students, were also in the rural category). Three percent of the rural participants were unemployed

but looking for work compared to a higher figure of six percent of the full sample. The remaining 17 percent of rural participants were not in the labour market (e.g., retired or at-home parents), as compared to nearly one quarter of the general sample.

Housing Status

Similar proportions of the rural sample and the full sample owned their own homes (55 percent). Further, 26 percent of rural participants were younger people living with their parents. The remaining rural participants were renters as compared to 31 percent of the full sample.

The homes in which the rural participants lived were mainly single, detached dwellings (81 percent). Some lived in apartments (9 percent), while others lived in duplexes or townhouses (5 percent) and the remainder lived in other types of homes (e.g., renting a room within a house). One quarter of the rural sample were paying 30 percent or more of their total household income to cover their housing costs, compared to 22 percent of the full sample. However, a substantially higher proportion of the rural sample were paying less than 30 percent of their total household income for their rent or mortgages than the full sample (75 percent compared to 61 percent).

Health Status of Rural Participants

Lastly, some 19 percent of the rural participants reported their health status as excellent, a lower proportion than the nearly 23 percent of the full sample who reported their health status as excellent. However, a higher proportion of the rural participants than the sample as whole identified their health as very good (51 percent compared to around 42 percent). Another 22 percent of the rural participants and around 27 percent of the full sample reported that their health was good, while 8 percent of rural participants and 9 percent of the participants in general identified their health as either fair or poor. Thus the self-reported health of rural participants was slightly higher than that of the general sample (but the difference was not statistically significant).

C. The Dialogue Process

Prior to their participation, most of the participants received CPRN's Quality of Life Indicators Project information package, which contained a *Participant Handbook* describing the basic organisation of the sessions and providing some background material designed to stimulate thought and discussion about various aspects of quality of life. Other background materials included a set of indicator cards, which provided participants with a broad sampling of some of the issue areas and indicators previously identified as relating to quality of life.

Professionally trained moderators facilitated each of the sessions. Lasting approximately three hours, the sessions commenced with a review of the background information, a project overview, introductions and instructions from the moderator. Participants were also asked to complete pre-dialogue questionnaires on various aspects of quality of life (which they then filled out again in modified form at the end of each session). The actual dialogue discussions were broken down into four main parts: 1) building collective portraits of quality of life; 2) setting priorities for national

quality of life indicators by having individuals vote for their top five priorities and then the groups choosing one from the most frequently mentioned to explore more fully; 3) establishing responsibility for reporting on quality of life; and 4) reviewing the session and planning for follow-up activities. In the first two parts of the dialogue sessions, moderators used the quality of life indicator cards as an impetus for discussion and as a tool for achieving session objectives.

Independent recorders used laptop computers in most instances to capture the content of the dialogue discussions. To further ensure the accuracy of the recording procedures, the discussions were tape-recorded.

D. Analysing the Findings

The content of the dialogue sessions was analysed inductively based on participants' written and verbal input. The researchers coded the input from the session transcripts and the cards that each group generated to summarise key elements of their collective portraits. Where the themes overlapped with those used in the open-ended questionnaire, identical codes were used. The analyses of the transcripts, however, produced many new and more complex ideas that extended beyond the initial set of codes. As well, the identical codes were used to code the themes participants voted for as among their five priorities for developing quality of life indicators. Once the codes were applied to each transcript and the corresponding indicator priority cards, the data were then subjected to a systematic thematic analysis in a descriptive fashion to determine how often themes were discussed, as well as to capture the context within which the themes were discussed.

The pre- and post-dialogue questionnaires were coded using standard data coding, entry, and cleaning procedures in conjunction with a statistical software package. The demographic information and the scales used to rank various dimensions of quality of life were coded numerically for each participant, thereby permitting a range of different descriptive and multivariate analyses to examine the data for possible trends and patterns. As noted above, the open-ended codes mirrored those that were later used for the qualitative analysis of the transcripts. Three sets of questions were coded in this fashion: those that asked participants to rank the five most important factors contributing to the quality of life in Canada, the five most important factors contributing to quality of life in their personal lives, and the five priority areas that they believed needed improvement.

It should be noted that, because of time limitations for the dialogue sessions, the issue of who should assume responsibility for reporting on quality of life received far less discussion. The analysis, which again relied upon the typed transcripts, therefore yielded relatively sparse information on the question of responsibility for reporting.

II Dialogue Group Discussion Results

The 40 groups provided enormously rich and varied discussions of quality of life issues in Canada. While each group received the same background materials, the participants were free to pursue whatever issues they considered to be worthy of discussion or to create whatever “collective portrait” of quality of life that they preferred. The multitude of themes that emerged encompassed literally hundreds of specific ideas about what contributes to the quality of life. The discussions were intended to be as free-flowing as possible, with each participant able to weigh in with his or her own particular perspective to help build the collective portraits. Consequently, no two portraits were identical.

Yet despite the latitude granted to the groups, a number of common themes emerged across a majority of the discussion groups – and across clusters. There were several common national indicator priorities to monitor quality of life across the five group clusters. The groups for the most part emphasized the importance of the following:

- primary and secondary education
- health care access
- a healthy environment
- clean air and/or water
- responsible taxation
- public safety or security
- job security
- employment opportunities
- a living wage
- social programs
- time use or balance
- civic participation
- children/youth programs.

The fact that this 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 underscores the fact that a broad spectrum of Canadians shares a common vision of what constitutes quality of life in their country.

Differences across groups in their views on quality of life can be observed, however, and can be explained in part by the composition of the group clusters. Clearly some group clusters were more likely to highlight certain areas as prominent themes to be included owing at least in part to the direct impact that these issues have in their lives. In the rural case this may be particularly illustrated by some groups’ emphasis on issues of accessibility to services, and issues surrounding the agricultural economy.

From an urban/rural perspective it may be particularly reassuring to note this shared vision as we cope with rapid change on many dimensions. On the other hand, the key elements clearly identified and valued by the rural cluster, supported by discussion in rural dialogues, may be useful in drawing attention to the particular impact on ‘quality of life’ for rural Canada and rural Canadians of various social and economic shifts.

These dialogue discussions form the basis of the analysis in the following section. The analysis attempts to provide a summary of the collective portraits developed and the priorities that participants selected for national indicators, as well as some of the reasoning that underlies the different choices. It also discusses four over-arching or cross-cutting themes that participants identified, summarises findings related to various group clusters and presents participants’ suggestions for specific, measurable national indicators.

A. Introduction to collective portraits and priority themes

Each of the dialogue discussions followed the same general format, with a trained moderator leading participants through the main topic areas. The participants first discussed freely the factors that they believed contributed to quality of life, clustered these factors into groups (or themes), and then selected up to five factors each that they believed should be the priorities for a prototype of national indicators to monitor quality of life in Canada.

The vast majority of the themes captured on the cards were coded into 17 thematic categories as summarised in the accompanying table (entitled Table 2: Total groups discussing selected quality of life issues and prevalence of sub-themes across 40 groups). The end result of the process was a classification scheme with 17 major categories, each of which contained several sub-themes that captured various quality of life dimensions. This section introduces the public dialogue groups’ discussion of the many different themes.

How to interpret Table 2

A further explanation will help clarify how to interpret the results summarised in Table 2. The second column identifies the 17 major themes generated from the analysis of the participant questionnaires. The third column, labelled “groups,” reports the total number of groups that identified at least one or more issues related to that particular theme in developing their collective portraits and the cards generated from those discussions. In other words, if a group discussed education as part of their collective portrait (and all but one group did), then that group typically produced a card corresponding to the discussion and received credit for having discussed education – regardless of the aspects of education on which the group focused.

The fourth column tabulates the total number of votes that participants across all groups registered on their cards related to that particular theme, i.e., when choosing the five factors that they believed to be national priorities for establishing quality of life indicators. In the case of education, for example, a total of 39 groups discussed aspects of the theme in building their collective portraits of

quality of life. While education includes several possible sub-themes (e.g., accessibility, quality, primary/secondary, post-secondary, lifelong learning, funding, literacy, teaching), participants across all groups voted for some aspect of education as a priority area for developing national indicators in 177 cases. The figure does not represent literally 177 different participants since an individual could have voted for more than one sub-theme within the general category of education. The evidence suggests, though, that in most cases the participants only cast one vote per major theme area. In short, roughly half of the participants across all 40 public dialogue groups selected some aspect of education as a national priority for monitoring the quality of life in Canada.

The final five columns then establish the sub-themes most often highlighted across the dialogue group discussions. The numbers in parentheses reflect the total number of groups that developed a card dealing with each particular sub-theme. Continuing with the example of education, the chart reveals that 22 groups emphasized accessibility or universality of public education as an important issue for measuring quality of life. A total of 17 groups expressed concerns about the quality of the education system. Another 14 groups discussed primary and secondary schools, while 12 groups developed cards specifically for post-secondary education. Finally, 11 groups talked about lifelong learning or continuing education as a pertinent quality of life issue. To varying degrees, then, the participants highlighted several dimensions of education that they believed should be monitored to provide an accurate description of the quality of life in Canada.³

As Table 2 indicates, in general, nearly every group addressed various aspects of the following as important to the quality of life in Canada⁴:

- political rights
- education
- health
- the environment
- social programs
- personal well-being
- safe communities
- the economy.

³ The reader should be aware that the actual discussions of issues and the language used by the participants did not always clearly differentiate between what were often perceived to be “social problems,” the need to improve certain conditions, and the importance of monitoring these issues to assess quality of life.

⁴ In fact, the table captures a total of 1641 of a theoretical limit of 1730 votes (346 participants with five votes each), or 95 percent of the possible votes cast for national priorities. The remaining five percent includes mainly a diverse range of categories or sub-themes that received votes, but did not crack the top five for a particular factor.

Table 2: 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)			

Source: Quality of Life Indicators Project. 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

B. Introduction to group cluster similarities and differences

The differences observed across groups in their views on quality of life can be explained in part by noting the composition of different types of groups or “group clusters”. In the Quality of Life Indicators Project, these clusters included: 17 quasi-random groups of citizens from urban settings, nine quasi-random groups in rural settings, seven groups of influencers, five hard-to-reach groups, and three youth groups, all in rural locations. This section introduces the analysis by cluster groups of the public dialogue discussions.

In comparing the priorities that the group clusters advocated, the evidence suggests both a pattern of convergence around several core themes *and* some important differences. Table 3 summarises the similarities and differences observed across group clusters, where the same themes appearing in one or more clusters are identified within the same boxes and on the same line. In order to be included in the table, at least one-third of the groups within a cluster discussed the particular theme. Those themes that are identified regularly across at least four of the five clusters are identified in **bold-faced text**. The *italicised text* indicates that a substantial majority of the groups within a particular cluster (generally about two-thirds) viewed the issue as especially important.

Table 3: Quality of Life Priorities Identified by Different Group Clusters

URBAN	RURAL	INFLUENCERS	HARD-TO-REACH	YOUTH
Education access Education quality Primary/secondary	Primary/secondary	Education access Post-secondary Primary/secondary Lifelong learning	<i>Education access</i> Primary/secondary	Primary/secondary
Physical health Health care system Health care access	<i>Health care access</i> Health promotion	Physical health <i>Health care access</i>	Health care access Mental health Alternative health	<i>Health care access</i> <i>Mental health</i>
Taxation Public trust	Taxation	Quality governance Public trust	Taxation	Taxation
Crime rate Public safety/security	Crime rate Public safety/security	Public safety/security	Policing Public safety/security	Legal/justice system Public safety/security
Healthy environment Toxic waste <i>Clean air/water</i>	Healthy environment <i>Clean air/water</i>	<i>Healthy environment</i> <i>Clean air/water</i>	Healthy environment Environ protection <i>Clean air/water</i>	Healthy environment <i>Clean air/water</i>
Job security Employment Living wage	Job security Employment Economic growth Benefits/compensation Agriculture Small business Living wage	Meaningful work Job security <i>Economic growth</i> Living wage Business responsibility	Job security Training/upgrading Employment Economic growth Cost of living <i>Living wage</i>	Meaningful work Job security Fair wages/min wage Youth discrimination Employment Cost of living Small business Living wage
Affordable Housing <i>Social programs</i> Basic needs	Affordable housing Social programs Poverty rates Wealth distribution Childcare/daycare Quality food	<i>Basic needs</i> <i>Wealth distribution</i> Family supports Women's issues/equity	<i>Affordable housing</i> Social programs <i>Basic needs</i> Poverty rates <i>Childcare/daycare</i> Handicap access Women's issues/equity Dental care Quality food	Social programs Wealth distribution
Time use/balance Personal well-being	Time use/balance <i>Personal well-being</i>	<i>Time use/balance</i>	Time use/balance Personal well-being Reduce stress	Time use/balance
Civic participation Community resources Healthy communities	Civic participation Democracy Cultural diversity	<i>Civic participation</i> <i>Democracy</i> Healthy communities Civil society <i>Cultural diversity</i>	Animal rights Civic participation Attitudes to disabled Community resources	<i>Equal treatment</i> Civic participation Democracy Cultural diversity
Children programs	Children programs	Children programs Child development	Children programs	<i>Children programs</i> <i>Respect youth</i> Child development

C. The rural perspective

The following discussion emphasises some of the more salient comments and reasoning that flesh out rural participants' thinking on a number of issues, both in the context of the general picture created by participants as a whole and in the context of a comparison with the other cluster groups⁵. Some summary statistics describing the prevalence of certain themes across groups are occasionally discussed. Bearing in mind that each participant had a fixed number of votes to cast, the degree to which sub-themes consistently received support provides a strong indication of their perceived importance as key factors affecting the quality of life and the preference to measure these dimensions.

1. Political Rights and General Values

Every group who participated in a public dialogue 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. Other values discussed as important to quality of life included: equality of opportunity, respect for or acceptance of individuals, compassion or a caring attitude toward others, a just society, and "family values." Some of the value statements associated with these concepts figure more prominently in subsequent discussions of other quality of life themes.

A majority of the groups identified civic involvement and democratic participation as a cornerstone to a healthier quality of life, and the theme was identified regularly across the five clusters. The content of the dialogue discussions, however, suggested that participants were concerned about a perceived growing apathy among the citizenry.

In the area of political rights and general values, particular concerns for the rural cluster were cultural diversity and democracy, concerns that were shared with the influencers and youth clusters.

2. Health

The dialogue sessions provided powerful testimony to the value that Canadians place on their health and the health care system. Health issues were identified as priorities for quality of life indicators more than any other thematic area. 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. Some participants expressed the opinion that the health care system had already moved too far along a path toward a two-tiered system. The general sense from the dialogue discussions groups was that health care accessibility should be monitored, including measures of the universal nature of the system and the

⁵ The results discussed in this section draw in particular on the analysis of results from 'Collective Portraits and Priority Themes' and 'Group cluster similarities and differences', in 'Asking Citizens What Matters for Quality of Life in Canada: Results of CPRN's Public Dialogue Process'. Illustrations from the dialogue transcripts are given where appropriate.

capacity of the system to accommodate the diverse populations seeking health services across Canada. Most groups discussed the importance of developing or using standardised measures of physical and mental health, while others stressed the importance of health prevention and promotion.

Health care access or universality was discussed by the majority of the cluster groups, and by the majority of rural, influencer and youth groups. Some rural participants raised the issue of access to specialists and surgery procedures in rural areas, complementing a concern common across a variety of groups - the wait lists for certain procedures or access to more timely interventions. Others saw the problem in rural areas as access to health care in general. A participant in Peace River, Alberta, linked the distance from certain health care services to lost time and therefore lost wages. Participants here responded to this perceived problem by suggesting that decision makers should recognise the increased cost involved in accessing health care rurally, and make accommodation for this kind of funding. Peace River participants explicitly asserted community health as the basis of quality of life, and linked community health facilities to the economic health of a community: “communities that lose their health facilities deteriorate”.

The rural cluster also stood out in stressing the importance of health promotion and prevention as relevant to maintaining a high quality of life. The *reactive* nature of the health care system came up on several occasions, highlighted in the concerns of rural participants in Peace River, Alberta, that funding for health care continued to be concentrated in the traditional disease model: “We’re getting into health services delivery, (but) I’m talking health promotion, (or) the number of dollars in a percent of health budgets spent on health promotion. Right now we probably spend 90 or 95 percent of our health dollars on hospitals and doctors and we don’t spend on health promotion. As people become more aware that our lifestyles impact on whether or not we get sick, then they begin to be able to make choices.” A participant in the group agreed by stating that “when you have public health care you should have public health promotion underneath it.”

3. Education

Nearly everyone agreed that “quality of education equals quality of life”, and most groups expressed the view that public education at the primary and secondary levels should be part of the quality of life indicators prototype. The rural cluster in common with all clusters emphasised primary/secondary education as a theme.

The groups generally emphasized accessibility, quality and funding as issues to be monitored. Regarding quality education, one parent in rural Brandon, Manitoba, talked about the current situation in the following terms: “I worry about my kids in school, and having quality education. Having enough teachers for them like if there was more help for kids that were struggling... The classroom sizes are too big, the kids are stressed, (and it) makes their mothers stressed.” Concerns regarding access were expressed more often in regard to post-secondary education. Another sub-theme involved the growing significance of life-long learning, which many participants regarded as essential in light of a changing economy.

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. The rural participants did not mention education access frequently compared to the other clusters. However, when they did talk about it, their discussion was often framed by their wider concern with access to services in general. For instance, a participant in Peace River, Alberta, noted that while there were some local colleges there was a lack of choice for people in rural areas. Participants in Outlook, Saskatchewan, broadened the question of access beyond formal education, highlighting the importance of extending access to new technologies such as the Internet to rural areas as an aspect of 'public infrastructure' and quality education for children.

4. Environment

In almost all the groups, the environment was seen as an indispensable feature of "quality of life", with most supporting the idea of maintaining a clean, healthy environment as a national indicator priority. More than any other single issue, the vast majority of group members discussed the environment as an indispensable feature of, or nearly synonymous with, the notion of "quality of life." In common with all clusters, 'healthy environment' was identified regularly within the rural cluster and a substantial majority of groups discussed clean air/water. A rural participant from Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia, stated that "right now there is a problem (with water) right across Canada, and we have that problem in our own area." Participants also emphasised the importance of monitoring other aspects of the environment such as toxic waste disposal and waste management or recycling practices in general, and access to the outdoors.

A holistic view of rural quality of life, linking the environment to the agricultural basis of the economy and way of life, seemed implicit to the discussion of rural participants in Nelson, British Columbia, and in Outlook, Saskatchewan. One rural participant in Nelson, BC, commented that 'The environment is such an integral part of being Canada because it's the basis for our whole economy, our reason for being'.

Rural participants sometimes identified tradeoffs involved between a healthy environment and support for business, such as in the following comment from a participant in Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia: "(It's) unfortunate that businesses create toxic waste, but we also need business." Several participants in Almonte, Ontario, also rural, discussed the problem in terms of the failure of industry to police themselves and lax enforcement of environmental regulations. As one participant suggested, "industry has a role. They have to govern themselves with the environment. No one is enforcing the law that could force them to take their responsibilities. They need to be held accountable and there should be incentives." Another participant responded: "There is no policing. We have the best legislation in the world but it's not enforced."

'Public infrastructure' was considered by participants in Peace River, Alberta, as a key aspect of 'our environment', which impacts on other areas of quality of life. This is reflected in discussions in other rural settings. For instance, participants in Outlook, Saskatchewan, linked poor quality rural roads and rail to job availability and access.

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 and the issue of personal responsibility surfaced occasionally. For instance, participants in one rural Alberta group emphasized the importance of having expectations of or additional requirements for social welfare recipients:

In Peace River:

- Participant A: Food banks are wonderful, but they're a band-aid. (We) need programs to draw the people to work with them so that they can become responsible.
- Participant B: Make work projects with welfare (because of the) possibility of dependency if there's nothing attached.
- Participant C: Some essential element of being independent...
- Participant B: Level of responsibility; some families can't help themselves.
- Participant D: Decrease that pyramid that we see happening. Mom and Dad got that free cheque, so that I might as well be on it. It's attitude. (We should) enhance the attitude all across the country because we do live in one of the better countries of the world.
- Participant B: Link a certain level of expectation around a welfare program so that you have employment skills program. If you get a welfare cheque, you have to seek an employment counsellor. Sitting down to assist that individual. The underlying factor is motivation and attitude. If people are being coached. You have no choice; need to work towards independence.
- Participant A: The key to fostering the self-esteem (is) helping people to succeed. The more they succeed, the more self-confidence that they build.

However, as in other rural dialogues, in Peace River the conversational thread followed a link from personal responsibility and well-being, to family and community responsibility.

Many discussion groups identified the availability, affordability, and quality of daycare or childcare programs as a social program issue or priority. Comparing cluster groups, the rural cluster's emphasis on childcare/daycare was shared with the hard-to-reach cluster. As in some of the other thematic areas, the discussion of childcare by rural participants reflected a wider concern with accessibility of services in general. Participants in Outlook, Saskatchewan noted the lack of options for rural Canadians for subsidised childcare in particular, although they also suggested that rural areas benefited from informal support in the community for family and children. A rural group from Nelson, British Columbia, along with a Toronto group, argued that a national daycare program or "universal child care access" would be one of the most important "investments" that Canadians could make.

Within the area of social programs and conditions, the rural cluster also shared other concerns with the hard-to-reach cluster, including affordable housing, poverty rates, and quality food. The rural cluster's particular concern with the growing gap in the distribution of wealth in Canada was shared with influencers and youth, and this reflected the considerable discussion which both wealth distribution and/or social housing received among the groups in general (more than half of the groups in total).

6. Personal Well-being

Nearly half of all of the groups offered at least some direct support for including personal well being as a national indicator priority. While personal well-being was discussed by the urban, influencers and hard-to-reach clusters, a clear majority of rural groups talked about personal well-being as a national indicator priority. The groups believed that other indicators should be developed related to time use, the ability to establish balance in one's life, diet or nutrition, and leisure and recreation opportunities.

In common with all of the cluster groups, the rural cluster was concerned with time use/balance. Some participants suggested that the failure to achieve a healthy balance between work and domestic responsibilities has undermined the quality of many relationships. A teenager in rural Woodstock, for example, talked about how "most people are so busy with work, or with just different responsibilities that they don't take time to enjoy other people, family, and friends. We all have friends that we care about, but we don't give them the time that we should." In Outlook, Saskatchewan, another rural participant commented on "people working harder and longer hours to make a buck, (with) fewer hours at home with families," while another talked about the pressures associated with "getting ahead in (one's) career, moving up the ladder."

The participants often viewed the family in particular as a key potential support to provide a sense of security, stability, morality, and self-esteem. Another rural participant, in Almonte, Ontario, argued further that "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."

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. Two of the dominant sub-themes, however, linked healthy communities to the notions of: 1) safety within the community or public safety in general; and 2) a sense of social cohesion, mutuality, or connectivity to others at the neighbourhood or local level, a sub-theme that generated considerable discussion.

Participants often identified linkages between certain issue areas and the plight of particular groups (e.g., health care for seniors), and many of these linkages occurred in the context of discussing healthy communities, which often included statements about the importance of looking after one or more particular groups such as children. The participants in roughly one in five dialogue groups discussed the importance of community centres and opportunities for children, occasionally linking these issues to healthy child development and lower crime. Looking at the rural picture, three different dialogue groups from small-town locations specifically quoted the idea that “it takes a village to raise a child”, while several other dialogues (including those from large urban areas) conveyed the same idea but with different language. While rural participants in Outlook, Saskatchewan, noted that rural areas benefited from community support for family and children, two rural participants in Peace River, Alberta, talked about parents not having adequate skills or support from the community to help with children. They concluded that “we as a community have a responsibility to help them in any way we can.”

Beyond the focus on children, some participants spoke of the importance of “connectedness,” friendship, and volunteer opportunities as central features of healthy communities. Many participants talked about the level of volunteerism and civic engagement at the community level. In a rural dialogue in Woodstock, New Brunswick, one of the teen participants stated that “participation in the community... especially for Woodstock, can be improved...People don’t get together and do things as a group, aren’t really well knit.” In a rural cluster group in Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia, some mention was given to smaller towns which were seen to have strong social networks of this kind. However, the discussion noted a general tendency for communities to ‘wash their hands’ of social problems instead of asking how they can help.

8. Economy and Employment

Most groups addressed the economy and paid work during their discussions, and participants often acknowledged a healthy economy as important to quality of life. Their rationales often embodied subtle differences in philosophies, but a common thread involved the notion that a healthy economy served as the fuel necessary to operate the broader engine of government and society at large. 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. Economic security was another key quality of life issue raised. Like all of the cluster groups, the rural cluster regularly identified job security, employment and a living wage in this area. Participants in rural Brandon, Manitoba were among the number of participants who expressed concerns about the adequacy of compensation rates or the issue of minimum wage:

In Brandon:

Participant A: (There are) poor job opportunities...

Participant B: That is certainly the case in some areas, but (there’s a) lack of people to work in restaurants, computer programmers; you can’t find enough of them. The areas in the middle are having trouble. But we are reading in the paper about the help wanted index. You can see there are jobs out there, but there is an area in the middle. I don’t blame people.

Participant C: It would be pretty hard to support a family working in McDonalds. That is where affordable education makes a big difference.

Participant A: That is why I think it is different now. My father did not have to work at McDonalds to pay for school.

In common with the influencers and the hard to reach, the rural cluster particularly discussed economic growth. While nearly one in four groups recognised the importance of providing support for small business, in a comparison of cluster groups, the rural groups along with youth more often stressed the need to have quality of life indicators pertaining to this. Those participants who discussed the issue generally viewed a healthy business community as vital to providing jobs, security, and contributing to the overall community in a variety of different ways. The rural cluster also more often than the others emphasised the need for indicators pertaining to agriculture, and improved benefits or compensation. Participants from Outlook, Saskatchewan and Nelson, BC linked agriculture to environment, and to the basis of the economy and the way of life for people in rural areas (in the case of Outlook) and for Canadians in general (in the case of Nelson). A participant in Almonte, Ontario pointed out the rural way of life was faced with a declining number of jobs in agriculture. These apparently ‘holistic’ sentiments were echoed in rural Carberry, Manitoba, where participants used the language of a “healthy and sustainable economy”.

Support for small business was linked to the vitality of rural areas amongst participants in the rural cluster. For instance, participants in Outlook, Saskatchewan, linked outward migration and a ‘brain drain’ from rural areas to the trend towards larger centres rather than local business, and the consequent disappearance of smaller towns. This dialogue pointed out conflicting ‘pulls’/tension between the ‘quality of life’ of which people in rural areas are proud and which they compare favourably with their urban counterparts, and the disincentives to actually stay there. The list of disincentives included a lack of jobs and the inability of small business to afford to give employees the benefits provided by big business. One dialogue participant consequently described rural areas as a ‘stepping block’ to a more secure lifestyle – in the city.

The point was raised in Outlook, Saskatchewan, that Canadians in general should be more aware of how reliant we are as a country on the agricultural economy, for instance when thinking about subsidies to farmers. Perceived lack of information about rural Canada led to a discussion of the urban/rural – and East/West – division in Canada: ‘Larger centres don’t understand’, or city-dwellers have their own job security issues instead of worrying about farmers’ insecurity. Some interest was given to the possibility of diversification for farming, and farmers, in the face of suffering agriculture – but again, in Outlook as in Almonte, agricultural jobs were linked to a rural ‘quality of life’. A participant in Peace River, Alberta, reflected this view when noting the lack of choice of jobs in rural areas and asked “how do we create jobs that traditionally haven’t been here?”

The 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 the country. Roughly one-third of the groups then actually developed thematic cards as a measure of the importance of the issue. In a comparison of cluster groups the rural cluster, along with the influencers and youth, particularly mentioned this growing gap. Typically, a certain degree of incredulity was expressed in regard to the distribution of wealth, as from this participant in the rural Joliette dialogue:

– répartition des richesses – je considère que tous les humains ont des besoins minimums. Je ne vois pas pourquoi les quatre plus grandes fortunes ont l'équivalent d'un revenu décent pour 600 millions de personnes. C'est inacceptable – qu'est-ce qu'ils font avec tout cet argent là? Ils peuvent être généreux, oui, mais c'est quand même disproportionné.

The issue of 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. One rural participant in Joliette, for example, talked about the need for

“logement adéquat et salubre et qui est en proportion du salaire de la personne qui l'habite – on dit que le logement ça devrait être seulement entre et 25-30 percent de ton revenu – et puis on ne parle pas seulement du loyer. Si tu dois payer des centaines de dollars pour chauffer, c'est pas mieux.”

9. Government

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. The most prominent issue regarding government was fair, equitable and effective fiscal policies. Certain groups had extensive discussions about the role of government and the concept of “governance.” While the rural cluster was more likely to talk about quality governance, certain rural and urban clusters viewed public trust as a priority quality of life issue. Some participants held out a certain degree of optimism that governments could provide vision and leadership, though many were less sanguine in their assessments and a comparable number stressed the importance of having a more balanced and equitable approach to policies in support of business. Across cluster groups, taxation was a common theme.

The importance of safety and security, whether discussed in terms of the general public, communities, or at the personal level, stood out as an issue in the realm of government and the justice or legal systems. It is perhaps notable that both urban and rural clusters alike talked about the crime rate as an important quality of life indicator, which was not as common a point of discussion in other clusters.

Summary

To summarise, the dialogue participants stressed a variety of overarching themes and sub-themes that should be captured in any proposed quality of life indicator prototype. The current section has shown that rather than expressing distinct priorities relative to other groups, the rural groups may be seen to have ‘added value’ to overall themes, while offering some different emphases in certain cases. For instance:

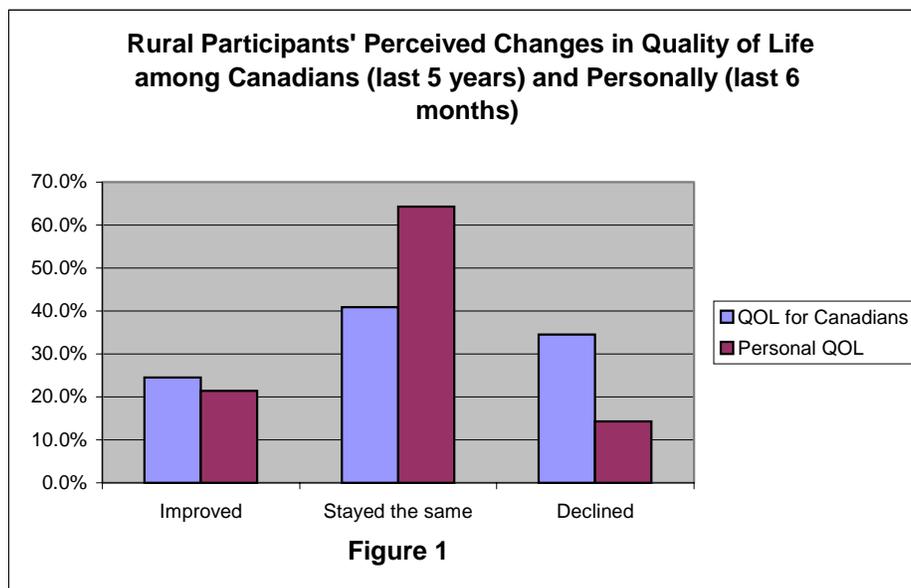
- The cross-cutting issue of accessibility, or more appropriately availability, seemed to find special resonance with the rural participants, who had particular concerns about access to health, education and childcare services by virtue of their rural locales.
- As regards themes, rural participants stood out from the sample as a whole in the area of ‘the economy’, attaching special priority to agriculture, support for small business (particularly in the light of urban-rural migration), and improved benefits or compensation.
- It might be suggested that rural participants embraced a particularly holistic view of quality of life. From a rural vantage-point the links between environment, economy, and way of life may be more easily identified and illustrated.
- Rural participants drew attention to the ‘particular’ quality of life enjoyed in rural areas and the specific risks or potential threats therein, such as the problems unique to the rural economy.
- The rural dialogues may suggest the importance of dissemination of information about rural Canada to aid understanding and ease the apparent urban/rural divide.

III Individual Questionnaire Responses

Nearly all of the public dialogue participants, including the rural participants, completed questionnaires prior to and following the discussions to assess their individual views of quality of life in Canada. In addition to providing a demographic overview of the participants, the questionnaires helped to establish a baseline in regard to participants' views of quality of life upon entering into the dialogue discussions. While no one expected that the dialogue discussions would produce fundamental shifts in the core beliefs that individuals had about quality of life issues, the questionnaires helped to provide additional contextual information to help evaluate different responses. These results are reported on in the current section. The responses of rural participants are discussed in the context of the responses of the full sample. The picture created by questionnaire responses reflects the dialogue results, in that the priorities of rural participants generally match those of the general sample, though with some difference in the 'weightings' attached. These differences are perhaps more apparent in a comparison of pre- and post- dialogue questionnaires.

A. Views on Quality of Life in Canada

About the same proportion of rural participants as among the full sample (one in four) believed that the quality of life in Canada had improved in the last five years. About 41 percent of the rural sample suggested that things had not really changed (See **Figure 1**), compared to 36 percent of the full sample. The rural participants were a bit more optimistic than the participants in general in that just under 35 percent felt that the quality of life for Canadians had declined in the last five years, compared to 40 percent of the general sample. Ekos' 1998 national poll data found that 34 percent believed that the quality of life in Canada had declined *compared to residents of other countries* (Mendelsohn, 2000).



In contrast, both the rural participants and the full sample generally expressed more favourable views about recent changes in their own quality of life. While only 21 percent of rural participants and about 25 percent of all participants suggested that their overall quality of life had improved in the past six months, a much higher percentage of both rural participants, 64 percent, and all participants, 59 percent, agreed that their quality of life had “stayed the same.” A similar proportion of both (14 percent of rural participants, 16 percent of the full sample) reported a decline in the past six months. For both the rural constituent and the full sample, those who reported a recent decline in their quality of life were more likely than others in the sample to also report a somewhat lower level of overall health, a higher level of educational achievement, or to be working part-time.

B Satisfaction with Quality of Life Issues

Prior to their participation, the dialogue members were asked a series of 18 questions about the degree to which they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their lives and the quality of life in the country. The full results are summarised in **Appendix B, Table 4**, and are discussed in this section. **Tables 4 and 5 below** summarise the top five sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction for rural participants and participants in general.

Table 4: Top 5 Sources of Satisfaction

	Rural Sample	Full Sample
1.	Friends	Friends
2.	Family Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family • Housing
3.	Life as a whole	Life as a whole
4.	Standard of living	Job/main activity
5.	Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard of living • Quality of life in Canada

Table 5: Top 5 Sources of Dissatisfaction

	Rural Sample	Full Sample
1.	Public/government services	Public/government services
2.	Personal finances	Quality of environment
3.	Quality of environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal finances • Personal job security
4.	Current level of stress	Free time
5.	Personal job security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance in your life • Quality of life in your province

Both rural participants and the participants in general expressed generally high levels of satisfaction with several facets of their lives: friends, family, health, work or main activity. In addition, rural participants expressed generally high levels of satisfaction with housing and standard of living. In fact, 88 percent of rural participants claimed to be at least somewhat satisfied with their lives as a whole, slightly more than the figure of around 83 percent for the full sample. Further, eighty percent of rural participants expressed satisfaction with the quality of life in Canada, again slightly lower than the figure of 77 percent for the full sample.

The highest level of dissatisfaction in both the rural constituent and the full sample was registered in response to public or government services in Canada. At least one in three rural participants expressed at least some dissatisfaction with their personal finances, the quality of the environment in Canada, the current level of stress that they were experiencing in their lives, and personal job security. Finally, roughly one quarter of the rural sample were at least somewhat dissatisfied with their free time, schools in their area, balance in their lives, and the quality of life within their province and their community.

For participants in general, the next most important sources of dissatisfaction were the quality of the environment in Canada and their current level of stress. Furthermore, one in three participants were at least somewhat dissatisfied with their finances, their free time, and the balance in their life. Finally, some three in ten of the participants in general were either somewhat or very dissatisfied with the quality of life in their province or in their community.

Differences by gender

Separate analyses revealed that there were no significant differences between men and women on most of the issues examined for both rural participants and the general sample. However, the exception among rural participants was that women expressed greater satisfaction with their friends than the men; among the participants in general, the exception was that women expressed higher dissatisfaction with the quality of the environment in Canada. In the full sample women generally tallied a few percentage points behind men in most categories in terms of their overall satisfaction, but the differences were not large enough to be of statistical significance.

Differences by age

A more compelling factor, however, was the age of the participant, in both the rural constituent and the full sample. Those who were 55 years of age and older tended to express significantly higher levels of satisfaction with most of the specific dimensions measured. For example, the oldest group members looking at both samples were more satisfied on average with their job or main activity, well as with their current levels of stress and lives as a whole. The older group of rural participants expressed more satisfaction with their family and friends, while the older group in the full sample expressed more satisfaction with their finances, and free time, and with the quality of life in their communities.

The data from both the rural and full sample reveal in many instances a curvilinear or U-shaped relationship or pattern: higher satisfaction at either end of the age spectrum, with a greater proportion expressing dissatisfaction with their quality of life during the primary family and career development years. In the general sample the pattern held for such issues as satisfaction with the amount of free time at their disposal, the balance in their lives, standards of living, job security, public or government services, and even the quality of life in one's province. In the rural constituent the pattern was evident in attitudes towards public or government services, the quality of the environment, and the quality of life in Canada, their particular provinces, and within their communities. The young participants, like the oldest group, tended to be more positive with respect to their free time, balance in their lives, and regarding their friendships.

C. Factors contributing to Quality of Life

Ranking factors important to Quality of Life

Another set of questions dealt with participants' assessments of what factors they considered to be more or less important in contributing to the overall quality of life in Canada as a whole. Participants ranked 22 factors using 7-point scales, where "1" indicated "not important" to a maximum of "7," which indicated "extremely important." The rankings were done prior to and following the public dialogue discussions, which thus presented an interesting opportunity to compare whether the dialogues had an immediate impact on individual assessments. The full results with mean importance scores are presented in **Appendix B, Table 3 (rural participants) and Table 4 (participants in general)**.

'Tier 1' Factors

Both the rural participants and the participants in general consistently rated several core factors well above an average value of six on the 7-point scale both pre- and post-dialogue:

- a clean environment
- the education system
- health programs.

These dimensions appeared to have broader appeal (and less variation, as measured by the smaller standard deviations) than any other specific issues as universally important factors that contribute to the quality of life in Canada.

Several other factors enjoyed widespread recognition as important quality of life issues for both samples, including:

- secure employment
- low poverty and unemployment rates
- low crime rates. The sample as whole added social programs to this list.

‘Tier 2’ Factors

A second tier of factors garnered somewhat more muted average levels of support, or between 5.5 and 6.0 on the scales. These issues included:

- economic growth
- social programs
- housing programs
- parks and recreation facilities
- governments.

‘Tier 3’ Factors

In contrast, both rural participants and participants in general expressed less enthusiasm for several specific factors, such as:

- religious organisations
- lower corporate tax rates
- the media, arts and music programs
- private companies.

Moreover, even lower personal income tax rates were not deemed quite as important, by either rural participants or the participants in general, when framed in the context of the overall quality of life in Canada, (ranking 16th in importance out of 22 possible contributing factors for rural participants and 17th for the general sample)

The overall rankings of different factors contributing to quality of life did not change appreciably in comparing the pre-dialogue and post-dialogue scores, for either sample. For rural participants, lower poverty rates lost some support as a top-ranking factor contributing to quality of life, while the majority of the factors registered negligible declines in average scores. These differences in pre- and post-dialogue results were not statistically significant.

Responses to open-ended questions

In completing the questionnaires, the participants responded as well to selected open-ended questions, such as the following: “In thinking about quality of life issues, what are the five most important items or factors that you think contribute to a better quality of life in Canada as a whole? And what are the five most important factors that you think contribute to your personal quality of life? (You may list *anything* that you think is important in *any* order.)” Most participants answered these questions both before and after the dialogue discussions. In addition, nearly all rural and general participants further responded to the following question at the conclusion of the sessions: “Imagine that you have a limited, fixed amount of funding or resources to work on quality of life issues. What would be your five biggest priorities? In other words, what are the five areas relating to quality of life in Canada that you think most need to be worked on or improved?” The responses to these open-ended questions, organised by major themes, are summarised in **Appendix B, Table 5.**

The five most important factors contributing to the quality of life in Canada were the same for both rural and general participants, as measured by the percentage of who identified the general theme in some fashion or another, these were:

- the health care system
- the environment
- education
- the economy
- social programs.

These five items appeared on participant lists with greater regularity than any others. In fact, about 60 percent of the rural participants and a slightly higher proportion of the full sample selected at least three of these five as important factors affecting the quality of life in Canada both before and following the dialogue sessions. In identifying “the five areas relating to quality of life in Canada that you think most need to be worked on or improved,” the results reflected similarly consistent priorities. For both the rural constituent and the general sample, nearly one in three participants (31 percent) selected either four or all five of the above five factors as areas that needed improvement. Roughly two-thirds identified at least three of the five factors in varying combinations.

1. Health and the health care system

More than any other specific theme, the rural participants and the full sample mentioned health and the health care system as important to their quality of life in response to the open-ended survey questions. Two out of every three rural participants identified that theme (slightly less than the 70 percent of the participants in general who identified it), with the majority simply citing the health care system in general. Other rural participants wrote about more specific aspects of the system, such as the importance of maintaining universality or access (10 percent). As with the full range of dialogue participants, however, health received more attention as a contributing factor to quality of life either for Canada as a whole and in terms of factors affecting one’s personal quality of life.

In terms of improvements, roughly 15 percent indicated that health care access required attention. Unlike their urban counterparts, only two of the 113 rural participants voiced concerns about the quality of the health care system. Two others mentioned health promotion and prevention as key areas for improvements, while about 5 percent talked about the need for improvements in personal health. No other specific health issues received mention.

2. Education

After health care, the issue of education (66 percent of rural, 62 percent of the full sample) emerged as the second most important priority area that both rural participants and general participants thought needed to be worked on or improved. As within all of these general categories, rural participants identified a variety of sub-themes within education. For example, while most participants talked about the education system or schools in general, a few highlighted in particular the importance of access, the quality of schools, and the affordability of additional schooling.

3. The environment

Almost three in five participants, both rural (60 percent) and in the full sample (59 percent), described the environment as an area requiring work to improve the quality of life in Canada. The majority of those who cited the environment as a key area to be worked on identified the importance of a “clean” environment in general, while nearly 9 percent of rural participants and 10 percent of the sample in general framed the issue more directly in terms of air quality and water pollution. Some rural participants (roughly 8 percent) in addition cited the importance of reducing the use of herbicides and pesticides as important.

4. Social programs

A slight majority of rural participants (51 percent) and a bigger proportion of the full sample (58 percent) cited social programs as a priority to be worked on or improved. The sub-themes, however, were somewhat more varied than appeared within the themes of education and environment. For example, more than one-fourth of rural participants and one-fifth of participants in general discussed social programs or social assistance as areas that required attention. Many individuals (roughly 14 percent) discussed the importance of improving the standard of living and meeting basic needs, which were common in the top five priorities of the sample as a whole. The rural participants discussed housing as well, though less frequently than their urban counterparts. The only other issue to receive at least three mentions among rural participants was access to daycare or childcare programs. Access to childcare was slightly more common amongst the sample as a whole, as around 5 percent listed it among their five biggest priorities.

5. The economy

Although roughly half of both the rural participants and the general sample listed some aspect of the economy as important to the quality of life in Canada, the figure drops somewhat to 41 percent of rural participants, and 35 percent of the full sample, who identified the economy as a priority area to be worked on or improved. More than one in four rural participants cited employment opportunities as the priority, a similar proportion to that of the full sample. Rural participants more often identified the need to have a healthy or growing economy as an area for improvement (16 percent compared to just 8 percent of the full sample).

6. General values

Finally, rural participants in keeping with the participants as a whole discussed the importance of a variety of different general values as important to quality of life, especially in the aftermath of the dialogues. The value statements most often mentioned included such issues as responsible parenting, honesty or integrity, a just or equitable society, the need to balance work and family life, unity or nationalism, and equality of opportunity. However, the one value statement most often suggested by both the rural participants and the participants in general was the importance of personal freedoms, which was mentioned by more than 16 percent of the rural participants, and more than 10 percent of the participants in general. Smaller numbers in both cases identified democratic participation or civil activism, as well as human rights protection as important to quality of life in Canada. Rural participants also identified equality of opportunity as important to the quality of life in Canada.

Only rarely, however, did rural participants discuss the need for improvements with respect to general values. The areas that received multiple mentions (but not more than three out of the 112 rural participants) included democratic participation or civic engagement, democracy or representative government, and equality issues. The mention of democratic participation or civic engagement was reflected in the full sample, as the only general value with significant number of mentions as an area to be improved.

Several categories received relatively few responses, meaning that these were identified by less than ten percent of the participants overall, and these were the same in both the rural and the general case. Seniors and children, not to mention family and friends, were rarely identified as crucial categories to define quality of life in Canada or as areas in need of improvement. By the same token, other broad age groupings or specific family relationships rarely received mention (e.g., parents). Information systems or the media, the infrastructure, transportation systems, cultural pursuits, and diversity or multiculturalism appeared only infrequently as factors contributing to quality of life in Canada or among the priority areas for improvement that participants expressed.

The results presented in **Appendix B, Table 5**, further highlight the fact that those areas that participants, both rural and in general, considered to be important contributors to quality of life were not always the same as those that were ranked highest as areas in need of improvement. For example, higher proportions of both rural and general participants considered general values, the economy, government, the legal or justice systems, and work as important factors contributing to quality of life in Canada as a whole.

Moreover, several issues ranked by the rural participants and by the full sample as among the five most important factors contributing to *personal* quality of life were mentioned far less often in thinking about Canada as a whole or as areas in need of improvement. The factors ranked as most important to quality of life at the personal level included the following:

- health care
- the environment
- family and friends
- education
- work
- general values
- personal well-being.

Three of these factors (work, personal well-being, and family and friends) were only infrequently cited as contributing to quality of life in Canada as a whole or as priority areas in need of improvement. The picture is similar for the full sample.

Summary

The questionnaires that the rural participants completed offer a glimpse into how these Canadians view various aspects of quality of life. The questionnaires tapped into the participants' general satisfaction with quality of life in Canada, their sense of factors contributing to quality of life, and identified areas that they felt should be worked on or improved. In most cases, the evidence revealed that their views about which factors contributed most to quality of life did not change, either in terms of those receiving the highest rankings across participants or the level of support for specific issues. In technical terms, there were no statistically significant differences in average rankings for the factors examined.

The open-ended questions regarding which five factors participants considered to be most important to quality of life in Canada and personal quality of life displayed a high degree of consistency as well. In general, the trends of importance attached to factors, pre- and post- dialogue, were similar for rural participants and the participants in general. Some interesting shifts in priorities following the discussions, reflected in both samples, were as follows:

- Most important, a significantly higher percentage of both rural participants and participants in general identified political rights or other general values as important factors contributing to quality of life after the discussions as compared with their responses before the discussions.
- The pre-dialogue questionnaire results further indicated that participants regarded economy and work as important to quality of life. These factors were cited less often, by both rural participants and the full sample, in the post-dialogue questionnaires as one of the five most important factors affecting quality of life in Canada.
- Health care and the legal or justice system were both somewhat more likely to be cited as important to one's personal quality of life following the discussions.

There were, however, a few key differences between the rural participants' weighting of factors and that of the participants in general:

- Participants in general were somewhat less likely to stress the education factor as an important contributor for Canada as a whole, but more likely to cite education as important to their quality of life personally, post dialogue compared to pre-dialogue. In contrast, rural participants were very much more likely to stress education as an important factor for quality of life in Canada as a whole after the discussions as compared with before, and slightly less likely to cite education as important to their own quality of life.
- While participants in general attached less importance to 'Family and Friends' as a contributor to personal quality of life after the discussions, rural participants attached considerably more.

- Participants in general attached increased importance to community/religion as important to quality of life in Canada after the dialogues than before. In contrast, rural participants attached slightly less importance to this after the dialogues as compared to before. Further, while the views of rural participants did not change as regards the importance of community/religion to personal quality of life, participants in general attached more importance to this after the dialogues.
- Rural participants attached more importance to information media in the aftermath of the dialogues than they did before; the views of the participants in general did not change.
- Participants in general were somewhat less likely to stress the social programs as an important contributor for Canada as a whole, but more likely to cite social programs as important to their quality of life personally, after the discussions as compared with before. While rural participants followed this trend, the importance for personal quality of life of social programs increased somewhat more.

Hence, looking at the overall picture, the deliberative process associated with the dialogue discussions arguably had an impact on what issues tended to resonate more with participants following their participation. The most distinctive pattern was the extent to which participants' values became more openly recognised and acknowledged. Their qualitative feedback, however, provided the strongest indication that the dialogue groups influenced their thinking. While few experienced any fundamental transformation in their thinking, a great many participants wrote that the dialogue experience was positive for a variety of reasons. Indeed, many stated that they had more of an understanding of and respect for different perspectives on the issues.

IV Development of the 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.

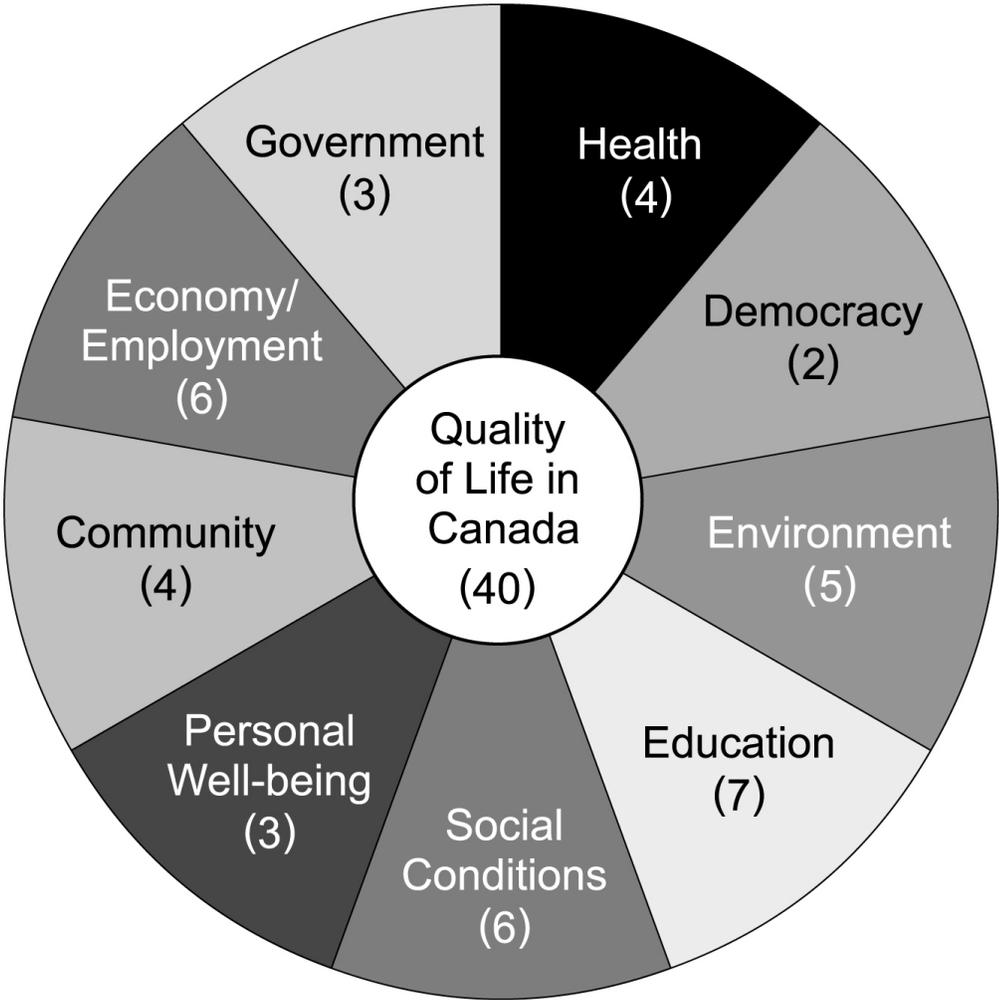
Following the workshops, a smaller group of indicator experts and researchers – all of whom had been involved in the December workshops – finalised selection criteria for choosing a manageable set of indicators and further refined the inventory. A draft prototype was developed based on these criteria 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

V Next Steps for measuring Quality of Life

CPRN is currently fulfilling the next steps in satisfying citizens' need to know if their quality of life is getting better, worse or staying the same, by gathering 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 has been 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. The report card will not be disaggregated to reflect rural distributions because many of the data currently available are not broken down by rural/urban distinctions.

Most of the trends will provide provincial comparisons, while communities are encouraged to adapt the report card approach to their particular circumstances. Thus while the current work builds on the identification of national indicators in support of developing a national system of accounts, data for a rural report card that build on the priorities for rural quality of life as identified by rural Canadians could be gathered if there was sufficient interest and funding.

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 realised 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, and rural, adaptation. This single model could 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 organisations, researchers, academics and the media.

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Appendix A. Public Dialogue Locations and Group Descriptions (Table 1)

PROVINCE	CITY/TOWN	GROUP	LOCALE	SIZE	LANGUAGE	DATE
Alberta	Edmonton	Random	Urban	8	English	October 11
	Edmonton	Influencers*	Urban	10	English	October 12
	Edmonton	Random	Urban	10	English	October 12
	Peace River	Purposive	Rural	9	English	October 26
British Columbia	Nelson	Purposive	Rural	10	English	October 26
Manitoba	Brandon	Random	Rural	10	English	October 16
	Carberry	Random	Rural	9	English	October 19
	Winnipeg	Random	Urban	8	English	October 16
	Winnipeg	Random	Urban	3	French	October 17
	Winnipeg	Hard-to-reach*	Urban	10	English	October 18
	Winnipeg	Random	Urban	5	English	October 19
New Brunswick	Woodstock	Youth*	Rural	12	English	October 19
	Fredericton	Purposive	Urban	10	English	October 25
Newfoundland	St. John's	Influencers*	Urban	13	English	October 12
	Clarenville	Random	Rural	10	English	October 16
	St. John's	Hard-to-reach*	Urban	7	English	October 18
	St. John's	Random	Urban	9	English	October 18
Nova Scotia	Sydney	Random	Urban	8	English	October 12
	Sydney	Hard-to-reach*	Urban	10	English	October 18
	Port Hawkesbury	Purposive	Rural	9	English	October 17
	Halifax	Influencers*	Urban	7	English	October 26
Ontario	Almonte	Random	Rural	9	English	October 18
	Ottawa	Random	Urban	6	French	October 17
	Ottawa	Random	Urban	6	English	October 19
	Ottawa	Influencers*	Urban	9	English	October 20
	Ottawa	Random	Urban	7	English	October 23
	Ottawa	Influencers*	Urban	10	French	October 23
	Ottawa	Hard-to-reach*	Urban	9	English	October 25
	Ottawa	Influencers*	Urban	11	English	October 25
	St. Mary's	Youth*	Rural	10	English	October 25
	Toronto	Random	Urban	8	English	October 11
	Toronto	Influencers*	Urban	9	English	October 17
	Toronto	Random	Urban	8	English	October 18
	Toronto	Random	Urban	8	English	October 19
Toronto	Hard-to-reach*	Urban	8	English	October 24	
Quebec	Joliette	Random	Rural	5	French	October 17
	Trois Rivières	Youth*	Rural	10	French	October 26
	Montreal	Random	Urban	8	English	October 11
	Montreal	Random	Urban	8	French	October 19
Saskatchewan	Outlook	Purposive	Rural	10	English	October 25
Total: 9 Provinces	21 Cities/Towns	40 Groups	12 rural	n = 346	6 French	Oct 11-26

* denotes purposive sample. Source: Quality of Life Indicators Project Team

Appendix B. Pre- and Post- Dialogue Questionnaires

Pre-Dialogue Questionnaire

Demographic Information

1. In what city/town do you live? _____
Province? _____
2. Are you: Female Male
3. In what year were you born? _____
4. In what country were you born? _____
5. What is your first language? _____
6. How long have you lived in Canada? All my life Since (year) _____
7. What is your current marital status?
 Married/partner Divorced Separated Widowed Never married
8. Including yourself, how many people live together in your current household? _____
9. What is the age, sex, and relationship to you of each person in your current household?

Age	Sex	Relationship	
1	_____	_____	5 _____
2	_____	_____	6 _____
3	_____	_____	7 _____
4	_____	_____	8 _____
10. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
 Less than high school High school graduate Non-university certificate College diploma
 Some university Bachelor's degree Some post-graduate Post-graduate degree
11. Which of the following best describes your current employment status (*check all that apply*):
 Full-time Part-time - one job Part-time - 2 or more jobs Student
 Unemployed/looking for work At home mainly Retired Other: _____
12. If you are currently employed in the paid labour market, what is your main job or occupation? Please be specific (e.g., retail sales associate, public high school teacher): _____
13. In thinking about where you currently live, do you own your own home, rent your home, live somewhere for free, or what?
 Own my home Rent my home Live somewhere for free Other: _____
- 13b. Do you currently live in a...
 House Townhouse/duplex Apartment Condominium Other: _____

14. Do you currently spend more than 30 percent of your total household monthly income to pay for your monthly mortgage or rent? Yes No About 30 percent Not sure

15. How would you describe your state of health? In general, would you say it was...

Excellent Very good Good Fair Poor

Quality of Life Issues

Please answer the following questions by placing a check (✓) in one of the boxes provided. Remember, we are interested in your personal views on your quality of life and quality of life in Canada.

1. Over the past five years, do you think the overall quality of life of Canadians in general has...

Improved Stayed the same Declined

2. Over the past six months, would you say that your overall quality of life has...

Improved Stayed the same Declined

How would you rate your feelings about each of the following... Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

<i>How satisfied are you with...</i>	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
3. Your health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Your jobs or main activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Your finances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Your free time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Your standard of living	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Your job security (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Schools in your area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Your friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Your family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Your housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. The quality of the environment in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Public or government services in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. The balance between your jobs or main activity and family or home life (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Your current level of stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Your life as a whole	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. The quality of life in Canada as a whole	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. The quality of life in your province	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. The quality of life in your community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In this next section, please use the following 7-point scales to indicate how important the following items are in contributing to the *overall quality of life in Canada as a whole*. Circle one of the numbers on the scales to the right of each word or phrase. Circling a “1” means that you consider the item to be “not important at all,” a “4” would mean “somewhat important,” and a “7” would mean “extremely important.”

	Not important				Extremely important		
Non-profit and voluntary organizations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Schools/colleges/universities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Clean environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Private companies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Religious organizations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Governments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Low crime rates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Secure employment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Economic growth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Low poverty rates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Social programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The media	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Health programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Welfare programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Housing programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Arts and music programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Low unemployment rate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cultural diversity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lower personal income tax rates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lower corporate tax rates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Childcare or daycare programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Parks and recreational facilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Finally, in thinking about quality of life issues, what are the five most important items or factors that you think contribute to a better quality of life in Canada as a whole? And what are the five most important factors that you think contribute to your personal quality of life? (You may list *anything* that you think is important in *any* order.)

<p>Important to quality of life in <i>Canada as a whole</i>:</p> <p>a. _____</p> <p>b. _____</p> <p>c. _____</p> <p>d. _____</p> <p>e. _____</p>	<p>Important to <i>my personal</i> quality of life:</p> <p>a. _____</p> <p>b. _____</p> <p>c. _____</p> <p>d. _____</p> <p>e. _____</p>
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Post-Dialogue Questionnaires

Now that you have participated in a dialogue discussion, perhaps you have some new thoughts on the issues. Once again, please circle a number to indicate how important the following items are in contributing to the *overall quality of life in Canada as a whole*. Remember that circling a “1” means that you consider the item to be “not important at all,” a “4” would mean “somewhat important,” and a “7” would mean “extremely important.”

		Not important				Extremely important		
Non-profit and voluntary organizations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Schools/colleges/universities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Clean environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Private companies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Religious organizations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Governments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Low crime rates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Secure employment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Economic growth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Low poverty rates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Social programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
The media	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Health programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Welfare programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Housing programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Arts and music programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Low unemployment rate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Cultural diversity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Lower personal income tax rates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Lower corporate tax rates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Childcare or daycare program	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Parks and recreational facilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Finally, in thinking about quality of life issues, what are the five most important items or factors that you think contribute to a better quality of life in Canada as a whole? And what are the five most important factors that you think contribute to your personal quality of life? (You may list *anything* that you think is important in *any* order.)

Important to quality of life in *Canada as a whole*:

a. _____

b. _____

Important to *my personal* quality of life:

a. _____

b. _____

- c. _____ c. _____
- d. _____ d. _____
- e. _____ e. _____

Imagine that you have a limited, fixed amount of funding or resources to work on quality of life issues. What would be your five biggest priorities? In other words, what are the five areas relating to quality of life in Canada that you think most need to be worked on or improved? (Please list in any order; they do not have to be ranked.)

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Finally, do you have any other comments or opinions about quality of life issues in Canada?

Dialogue Feedback

Now we would like to get some feedback about the dialogue. What, if anything, did you learn or what new insights have you come up about quality of life issues as a result of participating in this dialogue?

What did you like most about the session?

What did you like least about the session?

Any other comments about the session?

Appendix C. Individual Questionnaire Responses

Table 2: Percent of Rural Participants Satisfied with Various Dimensions of Quality of Life, Pre-Dialogue Assessments ($n = 112$ for rural participants, $n = 336$ for full sample). *The figures for the full sample are given in parentheses for comparison.*

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH...	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED
Your health	39 (35)	45 (48)	14 (14)	2 (3)
Your job or main activity	36 (37)	46 (45)	16 (12)	2 (6)
Your finances	13 (18)	46 (43)	32 (26)	8 (13)
Your free time	27 (21)	44 (43)	24 (29)	5 (7)
Your standard of living	32 (30)	53 (47)	14 (17)	1 (6)
Your job security	37 (39)	29 (32)	24 (16)	9 (13)
Schools in your area	24 (24)	49 (50)	20 (18)	7 (8)
Your friends	67 (58)	27 (34)	5 (6)	1 (2)
Your family	64 (63)	27 (25)	7 (9)	2 (3)
Your housing	51 (51)	40 (37)	8 (8)	1 (4)
Quality of the environment in Canada	14 (11)	49 (47)	32 (34)	5 (8)
Public or government services in Canada	5 (4)	47 (49)	39 (38)	9 (9)
Balance in your life	18 (17)	55 (50)	24 (25)	3 (8)
Your current level of stress	19 (12)	46 (46)	27 (30)	8 (12)
Your life as a whole	37 (31)	51 (52)	10 (15)	2 (2)
Quality of life in Canada as a whole	19 (16)	61 (61)	18 (22)	2 (1)
Quality of life in your province	17 (13)	55 (54)	24 (27)	4 (6)
Quality of life in your community	23 (21)	50 (52)	23 (23)	4 (4)

Table 3: Importance of Factors Contributing to Quality of Life in Canada, for Rural Participants ($n = 110$). Standard deviations appear in parentheses

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO QUALITY OF LIFE IN CANADA	PRE-DIALOGUE MEAN SCORES (S.D.)	POST-DIALOGUE MEAN SCORES (S.D.)
Clean environment	6.55 (.69)	6.48 (.75)
Schools/colleges/universities	6.39 (1.01)	6.30 (.91)
Low poverty rates	6.17 (1.05)	5.86 (1.25)
Health programs	6.14 (1.17)	6.23 (1.11)
Secure employment	6.05 (1.17)	6.13 (1.07)
Low unemployment rate	6.04 (1.08)	6.00 (1.14)
Low crime rates	6.03 (1.20)	5.88 (1.10)
Economic growth	5.72 (1.38)	5.68 (1.38)
Social programs	5.71 (1.35)	5.80 (1.13)
Parks and recreational facilities	5.59 (1.32)	5.49 (1.16)
Housing programs	5.51 (1.17)	5.51 (1.18)
Governments	5.50 (1.42)	5.43 (1.25)
Non-profit and voluntary organisations	5.46 (1.37)	5.46 (1.38)
Cultural diversity	5.41 (1.40)	5.11 (1.57)
Welfare programs	5.39 (1.38)	5.49 (1.29)
Lower personal income tax rates	5.37 (1.73)	5.31 (1.65)
Childcare or daycare programs	5.36 (1.61)	5.44 (1.37)
Private companies	5.04 (1.22)	4.75 (1.30)
Arts and music programs	4.99 (1.52)	4.95 (1.60)
The media	4.65 (1.41)	4.45 (1.55)
Lower corporate tax rates	4.40 (1.89)	4.45 (1.88)
Religious organisations	4.32 (1.78)	4.26 (1.74)

Table 4: Importance of Factors Contributing to Quality of Life in Canada, Participants in General ($n = 342$). Standard deviations appear in parentheses

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO QUALITY OF LIFE IN CANADA	PRE-DIALOGUE MEAN SCORES (S.D.)	POST-DIALOGUE MEAN SCORES (S.D.)
Clean environment	6.44 (.83)	6.37 (.85)
Health programs	6.41 (.94)	6.42 (.87)
Schools/colleges/universities	6.38 (.92)	6.34 (.87)
Low poverty rates	6.27 (.99)	6.06 (1.10)
Secure employment	6.22 (1.03)	6.19 (1.00)
Low crime rates	6.14 (1.05)	5.94 (1.07)
Low unemployment rate	6.06 (1.05)	5.99 (1.09)
Social programs	6.02 (1.17)	6.01 (1.03)
Economic growth	5.85 (1.22)	5.80 (1.21)
Parks and recreational facilities	5.75 (1.15)	5.58 (1.20)
Housing programs	5.73 (1.26)	5.71 (1.25)
Non-profit and voluntary organisations	5.70 (1.24)	5.67 (1.32)
Childcare or daycare programs	5.67 (1.39)	5.64 (1.26)
Welfare programs	5.65 (1.34)	5.74 (1.19)
Governments	5.62 (1.27)	5.65 (1.25)
Cultural diversity	5.55 (1.35)	5.32 (1.43)
Lower personal income tax rates	5.27 (1.71)	5.10 (1.75)
Arts and music programs	5.18 (1.41)	5.02 (1.50)
Private companies	5.07 (1.25)	4.82 (1.35)
The media	4.79 (1.38)	4.69 (1.50)
Religious organisations	4.42 (1.69)	4.33 (1.68)
Lower corporate tax rates	4.20 (1.93)	4.24 (1.92)

Table 5: Percent of Rural Participants Identifying Highest Priorities for Improvement, Factors Contributing to Quality of Life in Canada, and Factors Contributing to Personal Quality of Life (Pre- and Post-Dialogue). *Note: The figures for the general sample are given in parenthesis for comparison*

#	FACTOR	NEED TO IMPROVE	CANADA (AFTER)	CANADA (BEFORE)	PERSONAL (AFTER)	PERSONAL (BEFORE)
1	Health Care	75 (73)	67 (71)	67 (72)	64 (67)	57 (61)
2	Education	66 (62)	58 (43)	44 (50)	36 (40)	38 (32)
3	Environment	60 (59)	61 (60)	63 (58)	47 (42)	44 (43)
4	Social Programs	51 (58)	46 (46)	49 (51)	28 (30)	19 (27)
5	Economy	41 (35)	51 (45)	47 (52)	15 (12)	16 (13)
6	Government	28 (26)	32 (28)	32 (29)	16 (13)	23 (17)
7	General Values	17 (19)	36 (36)	28 (26)	34 (34)	23 (25)
8	Legal/Justice System	15 (20)	18 (28)	21 (26)	21 (25)	17 (21)
9	Personal Well-being	9 (10)	8 (9)	5 (5)	32 (38)	35 (41)
10	Work	8 (9)	15 (13)	19 (18)	35 (38)	44 (47)
11	Seniors and Children	8 (8)	5 (6)	5 (6)	4 (5)	5 (5)
12	Family and Friends	8 (5)	7 (8)	5 (5)	39 (37)	34 (38)
13	Community/Religion	6 (9)	6 (12)	7 (10)	15 (21)	15 (17)
14	Infrastructure/Transit	5 (5)	3 (3)	2 (1)	5 (3)	3 (2)
15	Information/Media	4 (5)	5 (3)	3 (2)	8 (5)	4 (5)
16	Cultural Pursuits	3 (4)	2 (4)	4 (4)	10 (7)	14 (12)
17	Diversity/Multicultural	3 (3)	9 (6)	9 (9)	3 (4)	6 (6)
18	Quality of Life Generally	1 (1)	0 (1)	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (1)