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Gap between rich and poor widening, youth report lower quality of life

Preliminary results for the Canadian Index of Wellbeing “concerning”

While the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) is scheduled for full release in 2008, preliminary results for two domains show a concerning trend for Canadians and their well-being, according to Lynne Slotek, national project director for the CIW. Preliminary outcomes for the living standards and healthy populations domains are based on 1994 to 2003 data.

In the living standards domain these outcomes show the gap between the rich and poor is widening with a downward trend in economic security and longer-term unemployment

“That’s a very concerning trend,” says Slotek. “If you look at the economy booming and then know that the number of people living in poverty and staying in poverty continues to grow, it doesn’t bode well for quality of life for anyone.”

Preliminary results in the healthy population domain show a decline in Canadians’ self-rated health status and a downward trend in health outcomes for Canada’s youth, ages 12 to 19 years. This is despite a decline in tobacco use and an increase in physical activity for all Canadians.

“It is too premature to speculate on these trends but it does raise questions about the quality of life for young people who are struggling to pay off student debt and find permanent stable employment,” says Slotek.

Again, this is despite a booming economy.

The CIW is a new initiative to report on quality of life of all Canadians. It is being built by the CIW Network, a partnership of national leaders, organizations, and the

general public in consultation with international experts.

By “honestly and accurately” accounting for how social, health, environmental and economic factors impact the well-being of Canadians for better or worse, the goal of the Network is to refocus political discourse in Canada, reshape the direction of public policy, and pinpoint policy options and solutions that will “genuinely improve the quality of life of Canadians.”

In addition to living standards and healthy populations the CIW is tracking changes in six other quality-of-life categories including community vitality, ecosystem health, educated populace, use of time, arts and culture, and civic engagement.

For more information, see www.ciw.ca.

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