



Appendix IV

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: MAY/JUNE 2007 PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

Introduction

One of the cornerstones of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) is a commitment to involve stakeholders in shaping the Index. Since 2005, the CIW has consulted in an ongoing and iterative way with numerous stakeholder groups. Our goal is to ensure that the CIW reflects public opinion on what matters most to Canadian wellbeing. In 2005 and 2006, with the help of United Way of Canada/Centraide Canada agencies and CIW partners, EKOS Research Associates conducted 19 stakeholder focus groups in 14 communities from Whitehorse, Yukon to St. Johns, Newfoundland. The purpose of this first round of consultations was to pilot-test the concept of the CIW, to engage key stakeholders, and to seed a community of users. This process was developed with the expert advice of a Public Consultation Stakeholder Committee and with a specific set of criteria to ensure that all sectors of society were represented.

Overall, the key findings of this round of consultations confirmed that the concept of a comprehensive pan-Canadian index was seen as useful and powerful for changing public discourse about genuine progress and helping to shape public policy. There was significant response and interest in 'spreading the word' about the CIW, helping to build it, and ultimately using it across Canada. There was also high regard for the CIW team as leaders and experts in indicator work. Roy J. Romanow was particularly regarded as a strong Canadian leader and his role as champion of the CIW was seen as a major asset. And there was a great deal of interest among participants in 'staying in the loop' to help build the CIW across Canada.

Round Two Consultations

In May and June 2007, the CIW followed up with a second round of Pan-Canadian consultations facilitated by John Burrett of Capacity Strategic Networks Inc. All together, 13 roundtables were conducted in Prince George, Vancouver, Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Chatham-Kent, Toronto, Ottawa (one with government, one with NGOs and one with community groups), Halifax, and St. John's.

The goal for Round Two was to update local stakeholders on progress in developing the CIW, to receive feedback on the specific composite model that had been developed, and to continue building a network of local champions. Some participants at these roundtables had participated in the 2005–2006 consultations while others were new. Again the same set of criteria was used to ensure that all sectors of society were represented.

More specifically, some of the key issues addressed in the Round Two consultations included:

- perceived opportunities and challenges offered by the CIW;
- validation of key aspects of the CIW work completed to date;
- identification of gaps; and
- suggestions for promoting/marketing the CIW and communicating with various audiences.

The report that follows is a summary of the input and advice that we received during this round. The focus is on recurrent issues that were raised across the country. The report also includes some general information on how the CIW management team will respond to key issues, and an addendum of answers to questions raised during the consultations.

Perceived Benefits of the CIW

Overall, the overwhelming support and enthusiasm that was expressed for the CIW in Round One consultations was reflected again in Round Two. Participants were excited about the potential of the CIW as:

- a knowledge base;
- a means of getting Canadians to think about what makes a society successful for all its citizens, and how that success can be measured;
- a spotlight on issues that often go unreported or underreported;
- a lever to encourage various organizations/institutions to gather important data that is not currently being collected;
- a catalyst for citizen debate and engagement on issues and progressive policy development; and
- a means of generating government will to act on issues.

Participants were also pleased that the CIW data will be publicly available, free of charge.

Key Issues

A number of key issues emerged throughout the consultations:

- The most frequently expressed concern was that the focus on national trends may mask, overshadow or simply lead to the omission of differing results for important population groups. The specific population groups mentioned were: Aboriginals, cultural and linguistic groups, new immigrants and refugees, regions, northern communities, rural communities, women and marginalized people. There was also some desire to see headline indicators reviewed to ensure that they are free of bias by race, gender, or an overly urban perspective.
- A second issue raised by most groups was the need to enable people to see what is happening in their own communities. There was a strong desire to have the national data disaggregated to a community level, with some organizing and communication activities focused at that level. If this is not possible, there was significant interest in the CIW helping to build local capacity for analysis, organization and communication.

- Communicating with the public in a plain and simple, yet inspirational and motivational way was seen as critical to the long-term success of the CIW. While much of the research carried out by the CIW experts is technical and complex in nature, there is a strong need to translate this work into information and stories that can be easily understood and then utilized locally.

Additional Advice and Comments

Beyond the big-picture issues described above, a number of very helpful and more specific points and concerns were put forward by participants at the roundtables:

Role of the CIW

- Be more explicit about why and how the CIW is being created and the values that underlie it. Be clear about the role of the CIW vis-à-vis other national and community-level indicators.
- Be clearer about whether the CIW will simply release observations about the current situation or whether it will analyze and recommend policy changes for improving wellbeing in Canada.
- Don't position the CIW as a replacement for the GDP – which is already a “fixture in society” – but rather as a more complete picture of overall progress and wellbeing.
- Set appropriate expectations, the CIW will not move or change as quickly as the GDP.
- Involve business people more directly in the initiative. Their support will help broaden the partnership and build credibility, or at the very least, provide a window on how this sector may challenge the CIW.
- It is important to connect the CIW to “on-the-ground” capacity to ensure that the CIW will become a true catalyst for change.

CIW Content and Methodology

- Don't make the Index more complicated than necessary to give the public a good snapshot. Keep the measurements relatively simple.

- Clearly explain the significance of movement in the Index and what constitutes success, e.g. if the Index goes up five points, is that good (because it went up) or bad (because it didn't go up enough).
- In the educated populace domain, include both measures of formal and informal learning.
- Develop measures that take into account the “informal economy”, e.g. the underground economy where earned income goes unreported.
- LICO may not be a good measure of households in poverty – its threshold is often seen as too low, thereby understating the reality.
- Include some measurement of the extent to which people have control over their lives and are able to alter their conditions.
- The Arts and Culture domain will be challenging to develop. While “Arts” has a relatively narrow definition, “Culture” can be very widely interpreted and may mean different things to different population groups.
- Create an on-line system that allows people to do their own analysis of CIW data, e.g. weight the individual domains differently according to their own priorities and calculate their own composite index.
- It would be desirable to have the CIW align, or in some way be comparable to other national and international benchmarks. We need to see how the wellbeing of Canadians measures up against that of people in other countries.
- Don't worry about the CIW being perfect at the outset as long as you are honest and transparent in its presentation.
- The issue of equal weighting of the domains and the indicators was raised without a consensus emerging. Some roundtable participants believed that weighting was necessary to reflect the greater importance of some domains and indicators. Others were concerned that weighting would be highly subjective and might overly politicize the index.

Communications and Launch Strategy

- Tell stories in a textual way, not just a statistical way, explain what the numbers mean and what is driving them. Provide context to the results.

- Notify project partners and key stakeholders before releasing results so that they can be prepared to support and to respond to the CIW findings and develop strategies for local coverage.
- Make a special effort to reach out to children and youth via the Internet.
- The launch should include a “call for action” – let people know what they can do if they’re concerned about the wellbeing results.
- Make sure that governments and political leaders are aware of the CIW findings and their implication for future policy development.
- Be clear about the fact that more/different domains and indicators may be added over time, i.e. since our concept of wellbeing and the data for measuring it will change, the CIW needs to evolve to meet this changing reality.
- Think through how the CIW may be (deliberately) misinterpreted or distorted by those with other agendas. Consider how the CIW can preempt, prevent and respond to misrepresentations and potential criticisms of what is essentially pioneering work.
- Make all background data available and easily accessible.

Going Forward

The CIW leadership was extremely pleased with the feedback received during the Round Two consultations. The CIW continues to be recognized as a vital initiative that can have a major impact on the wellbeing of Canadians.

Going forward, the CIW leadership will examine how it can best respond to the important issues that were raised at the discussions and clarify questions and concerns. At the same time, we recognize the need to be more transparent about the limitations of the CIW and the activities that are beyond the scope and capability of this project, i.e. clarity about what the CIW is and what it isn’t.

Following up on the feedback, we will be looking very closely at what kind of role the CIW can play in building local capacity. In the short-term, it is only within our capacity to collect and report on data at the national level. Once the CIW is up and running, we may be able to revisit – both from an affordability and a data availability perspective – the issue of regional and provincial disaggregations.

We recognize the value of local data in helping tell the story of what is happening at the community level. Local data is also important in letting communities see

how they measure up against national trends. But we believe that this data and communication is best pursued through local initiatives and community-based groups such as the Community Foundations of Canada's *Vital Signs*, *Vibrant Communities*, FCM's *Quality of Life Reporting* and the United Way of Canada/Centraide Canada's *Action for Neighbourhood Change*,

The CIW leadership will also look at ways it may be able to help communities align their local data collection with CIW data but it is beyond the project's resources to provide "on-the-ground" local support.

The CIW has always been very conscious of the need to ensure that progress in some domains does not mask stagnation or backward steps in others. This is one of the reasons why, in addition to an "overall CIW report", we will also be issuing individual reports on each domain. Similarly, we want to make sure that progress for some groups doesn't cover up hardship for others.

The CIW has always recognized that communicating our findings is as important as finding our findings. The CIW is not an academic exercise in coming up with the best possible index. Our goal is to be a catalyst for positive change and progress in improving the wellbeing of Canadians. We have had communications experts involved in shaping the project literally from Day 1. We have developed an extensive public outreach strategy. That having been said, we should re-emphasize that the CIW will conform to the highest international standards of methodology and use the best available data. We are currently in the process of setting up an independent Validation Team of Experts to act as an important layer of quality control on the CIW.

Our guiding philosophy is to communicate with people at their own level of understanding and expertise. The general public will receive information that is very user-friendly and easy to understand. We are working right now on creating a user-friendly website. Reporters and other media will be given CIW results in a way that tells the CIW story in an interesting and colourful way that encourages coverage. And researchers and policy analysts will be provided with the technical data that they need to carry out their detailed work.

Of course, all information pertaining to the CIW will be available to anyone who wants it via the Internet. Those who are first exposed to the CIW via the "view at 40,000 feet" will be able to "drill down" as far as their interest takes them. Similarly, those whose are introduced to the CIW through one specific domain, will be able "drill up" to discover the complete picture.

*For further information about the CIW please visit our website at www.ciw.ca
To provide further comments on the CIW please write to info@ciw.ca*

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Questions and Answers About the CIW

- Q. There are already a number of existing indicator systems and others are being built. Why do we need yet another new index?**

There are no existing indices that measure wellbeing in Canada nationally across a wide spectrum of issues. There are indicators that operate at the community/neighbourhood, municipal and/or provincial level, and others that look at only one dimension of wellbeing such as economic performance. The CIW will look at wellbeing across eight “domains” that Canadians tell us matter most to them. The CIW will also connect the dots among the domains such as, for example, how living standards affect health, and how the environment affects community vitality.

- Q. How will you ensure that the Canadian Index of wellbeing doesn't duplicate work already being done?**

The CIW is working with many groups/organizations, e.g. the United Way of Canada/Centraide Canada and the Community Foundations of Canada's Vital Signs that are active in this area. We have built links to a pan-Canadian network of researchers, practitioners and groups involved in wellbeing measurement. We have, for example, developed a partnership with the Community Foundations of Canada on their *Vital Signs* to strengthen the capacity for local interpretation of CIW results, and the capacity for local measurement and reporting of community wellbeing. Similarly, the CIW is developing a partnership with the United Way's *Action for Neighbourhood Change* initiative, which looks to improve local capacity to revitalize neighbourhoods and build and sustain strong, healthy communities. These partnerships will increase collaboration on measurement and reporting, facilitate shared learning and permit collaboration on purchase of data.

- Q. Will the CIW align with international benchmarks or indicator work in other countries so that comparisons can be made with the rest of the world?**

The CIW has built links to researchers in Australia and New Zealand. The CIW Network is viewed internationally as a global pioneer in developing a holistic, integrated approach to measuring wellbeing. Because of this position of leadership, we are often invited to partner with experts in other countries and participate in international conferences to help build this important global movement.

The Network has been working very closely with the OECD and helped plan their agenda for the June 2007 World Forum in Istanbul, Turkey. The Forum, which attracted 1,200 participants from 130 countries, focused on the subject of Measuring and Fostering the Progress of Societies. The Hon. Roy Romanow delivered a very well received keynote speech titled, *“Promoting Progress, Making it Happen”* (see http://www.atkinsonfoundation.ca/publications/OECD_RJR_FINAL.pdf). A video sponsored by The Atkinson Charitable Foundation and based on the Forum, including a clip of Mr. Romanow (see part 2 @ 1:26), is on view on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sh6esxa2e3o>.

CIW leaders are currently working on an international comparability pilot project with the OECD and a number of countries including Australia and New Zealand.

Q Who is the target audience for the CIW?

One of the goals of the CIW is to create transformational change – to contribute to a dialogue and change in policy direction that will truly improve the wellbeing of Canadians. A goal this big can’t be achieved by just speaking to one or two key audiences. The CIW will target a wide variety of opinion leaders, policy shapers, decision makers and potential users, including: all levels of government (both elected officials and civil servants); a wide variety of NGOs such as advocacy and community groups; electronic and print media; corporate and labour audiences; researchers and indicator experts; and the general public.

Q. Who “owns” the Canadian Index of Wellbeing?

Throughout its developmental years, the CIW has been lead and primarily funded by The Atkinson Charitable Foundation (ACF) and a Funders’ Alliance, a group of foundation and corporate funders. The plan is for the index to be eventually housed in an institute outside the ACF with an independent Board of Directors.

Q. How often will CIW reports be issued?

It is difficult to give a definitive answer on this as the CIW is not fully constructed yet. The plan is to report as new data and information on any aspect of the CIW becomes available. Thus said, it will be at least annually.

Q. How are the headline indicators chosen?

The headline indicators are chosen via an eight-step validation process that includes commissioned expert literature reviews and reports, examination of the reviews and reports by peers, and by the Project Management Team, revision of the literature reviews and reports, recommendations from the National Research and Development Working Group on the indicators and headline indicators, selection of the final headline indicators by the Project Management Team, construction of domain-specific indices by the project's Research Directors, review of the headline indicators by focus groups, and continuous validation including a newly forming Validation Team of Experts.

Q. Have all of the headline indicators been finalized or is there still room for discussion?

Only two domains have been finalized – Healthy Populations and Living Standards – and even in those domains there is some room for methodological tweaking. The remaining domains are in various stages of development so there is still considerable room to shape the headline indicators. The Project Management Team and the National Research and Development Working Group will review the comments and suggestions from the Round two consultations.

Q. Will partners be notified in advance before CIW information is publicly released?

Yes, partners will receive an advanced look at CIW findings so that they can prepare to respond to the issues, find local examples of the trends described, and organize local media events.

Q. Will the technical background papers be made available?

Yes, all technical background papers will be posted on the CIW website.