



The Quality of Life in Ontario

Fall 1999

Ontario Social Development Council
in partnership with the
Social Planning Network of Ontario

THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN ONTARIO

FALL 1999

Written by: Malcolm Shookner

For: Ontario Social Development Council

Social Planning Network of Ontario

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We would also like to thank the people who have provided data for this report. Their cooperation is appreciated. We hope they will be interested in looking at their data within a larger context.

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DEDICATION

This report on the quality of life in Ontario is dedicated to the memory of

Peter William Shookner (1909-1999)

who believed, “It is life that has value. The quality of life determines that value.”



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THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN ONTARIO

FALL 1999

The good news is that the quality of life in Ontario, as measured by the Quality of Life Index, is improving and has almost recovered to 1990 levels (100)- reaching **96.9** in the Fall of 1999. The bad news is that the lagging social indicators - the “social deficit” - will undermine progress in other sectors to make this pathway unsustainable.

This report, the fifth in the series on *The Quality of Life in Ontario*, published by the Ontario Social Development Council (OSDC) and the Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO) is the last report of the 1990s. It provides a ten year look at progress we have made, setbacks we have endured, and a set of benchmarks for the beginning of the 21st century.

The **Quality of Life Index (QLI)** is the tool we use to measure and monitor changes in living conditions that affect the quality of life in our communities. There are community partners across Ontario involved in the QLI project, using the Quality of Life Index to measure changes in their local communities (see Appendix 1). Their local QLIs are reported here along with the provincial QLI.

DEFINING “QUALITY OF LIFE”

We have developed this definition of “quality of life”, based on our research into the literature on quality of life, determinants of health, sustainable development, and human and social development. For more information, see the *QLI Literature Review* (See Appendix 2).

Quality of Life

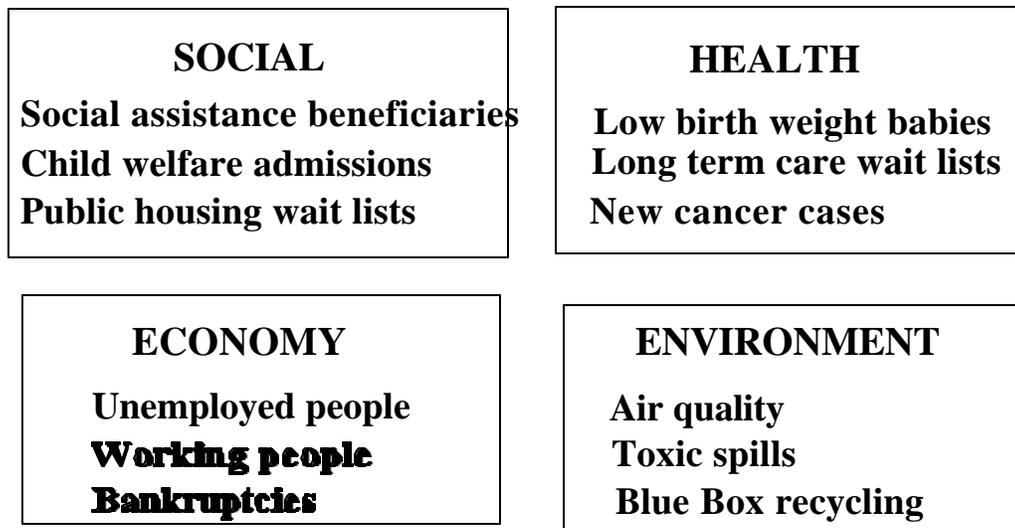
“The product of the interplay among the social, health, economic and environmental conditions which affect human and social development.”

THE QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX (QLI)

The QLI is a composite index which includes twelve indicators, three from each of four sectors - social, health, economic and environment. The QLI is based on the UN's model of "sustainable human development" (UNDP, 1994). It was conceived, designed and developed by OSDC and SPNO as a tool for community development and action to improve the conditions that affect our quality of life. For more information about the criteria used to select these indicators, please refer to the *QLI Methodology Report* (See Appendix 2).

We have collected the latest data available for each of these indicators for inclusion in the QLI. The method of calculating the Index is illustrated in Appendix 3.

QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS



Ontario Social Development Council & Social Planning Network of Ontario

REFINEMENTS TO THE QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX

The Quality of Life Index is a tool for community development. Like any tool, it is being improved as we use it. We have decided to make two refinements to the QLI for this Fall 1999 report - on air quality and low birth weight babies. Suggestions for these refinements were made by the data sources to provide a more accurate picture of the trends we are monitoring.

Air Quality - The measurement of air quality has been affected by the reduction in the number of monitoring sites across the province since 1990. We have been using the total number of hours of moderate to poor air quality as the threshold when health effects come into play. As with all other QLI indicators, we convert this indicator to a rate per 10,000 population to remove population growth from the picture.

For this report, we will be reporting the number of hours of moderate to poor air quality as a percentage of the total number of "valid hours" measured. This will remove the reduction in monitoring sites from the picture. We will then convert this indicator into a rate per 10,000 population to factor out population growth. This means that we are measuring changes in air quality as a result of changes in public policy, rather than population growth.

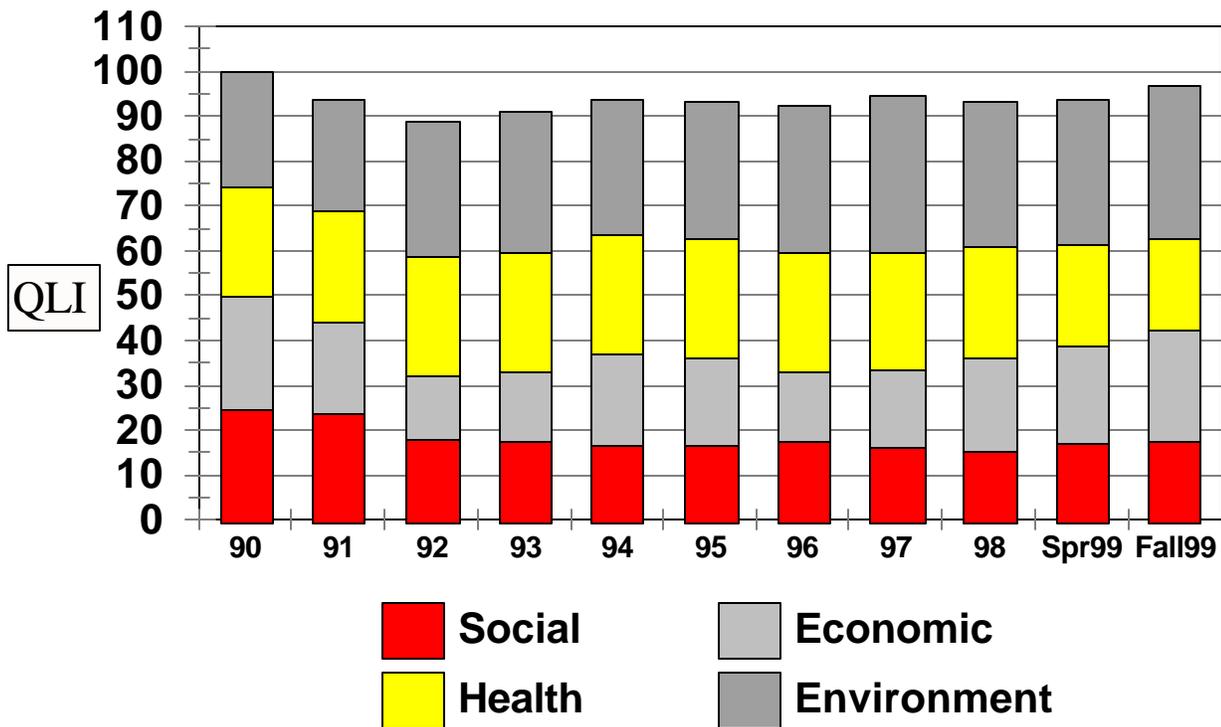
Low Birth Weight Babies - We have been reporting the number of low birth weight babies as a rate per 10,000 population, as with all other QLI indicators. We have decided to change this population variable to rate per 100 live births. This will give a more accurate picture of the number of low birth weight babies being born as a proportion of the total number of babies.

All of the charts in this report have incorporated these changes.

TRENDS IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE - 1990-99

Our quality of life, as measured by the QLI, has regained most of the ground we've lost since 1990, rising to **96.9** in the Fall of 1999. But the lagging social indicators are creating a **“social deficit”**, which exerts a downward effect on the QLI, even while the environmental and economic indicators are pulling it up. This is not a sustainable pattern, because there is growing evidence that persistent social problems will undermine economic prosperity and environmental sustainability in the long term.

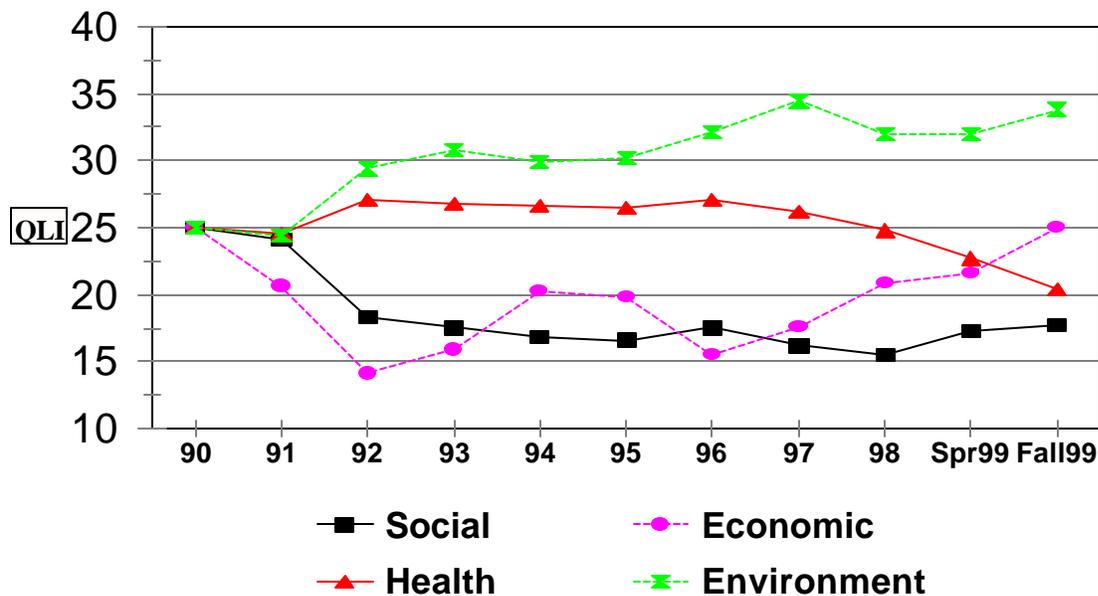
Ontario's Quality of Life Index 1990-99



SECTORAL TRENDS

We plot the sectoral trends within the QLI to see how progress and setbacks are distributed. This sectoral analysis reveals the disturbing trend we call the **social deficit**.

QLI Sectoral Trends 1990-99



The **social** indicators in the QLI are lagging behind the environmental, economic and health indicators, having declined by 29% since 1990. This social deficit is being carried by the poor, who are mainly women and children, and the elderly. The social deficit exerts a downward effect on the QLI, even while the environmental and economic indicators are pulling it up. This is not a sustainable pattern, because persistent social problems will undermine economic prosperity and environmental sustainability in the long term. (See **Context for the QLI**.)

The **health** trends have declined by 18% since 1990. The health trend line holds close to the base value for 1990-96 because data for long term care waiting lists was not available until 1996. The value of this indicator was held constant from 1990-96, neutralizing its effect on the QLI. Serious lag time in availability of data for new cancer cases is a troubling problem.

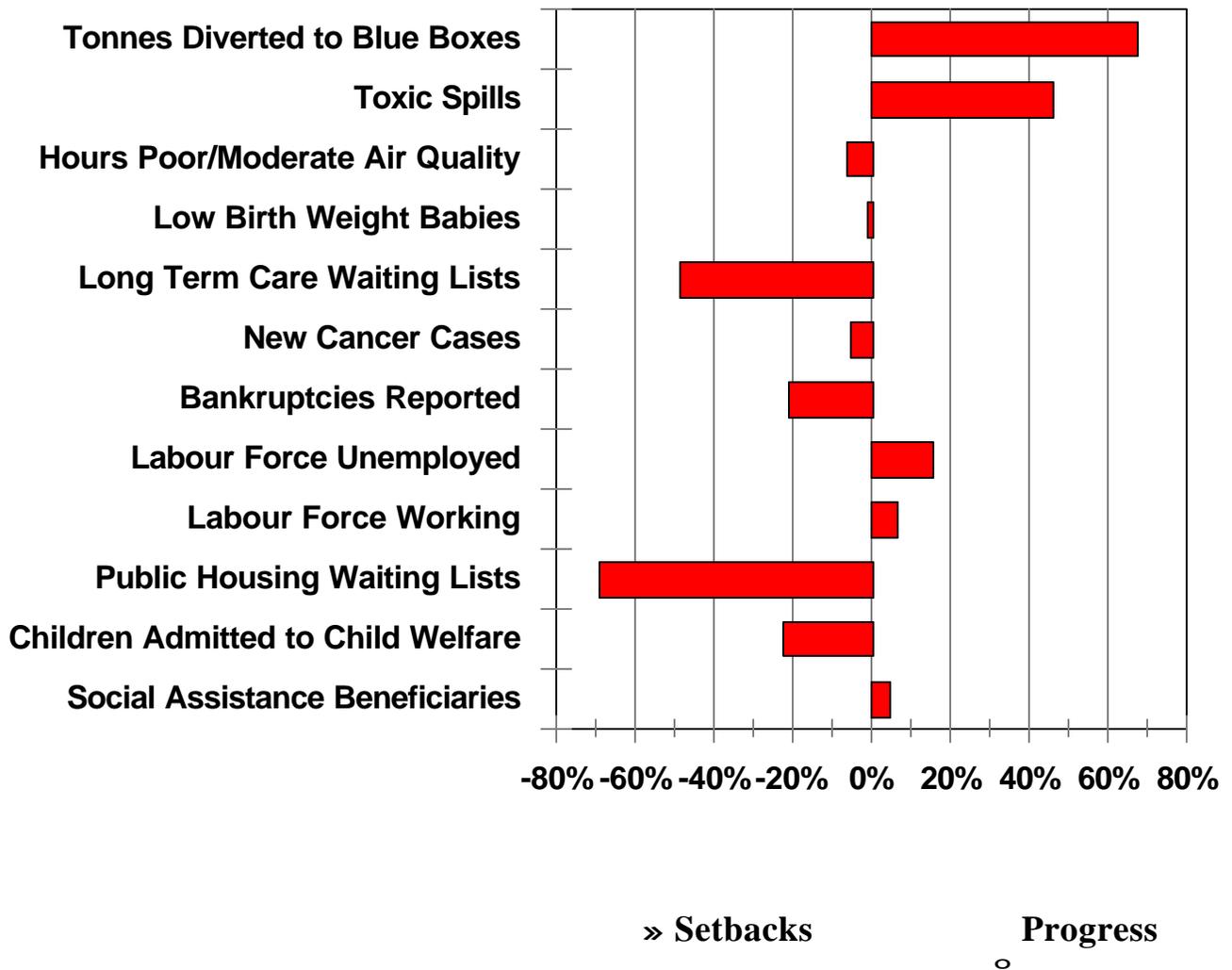
The **economic** indicators are showing a steady recovery since 1997, with the economic “boom” in 1999 bringing the QLI value for the economic indicators back to where it was in 1990. This reflects the overall sense of economic recovery as reported in the media. But the social deficit is a drag on economic growth. Reports of growing poverty, income disparities, hunger and homelessness indicate a polarization of society which will make this economic growth unsustainable.

The **environmental** indicators in the QLI are the best news for our quality of life, showing a 35% improvement since 1990. All three environmental indicators have made gains, though major concerns are being raised by environmental groups as reported in *The Quality of Life - Spring 1999*. The recent decline in air quality raises a red flag for future reports.

A more detailed picture of these trends is presented by the charts on the following pages.

Progress and Setbacks

% Change in QLI 1990-99



PROGRESS

Labour Force Working - The economy is booming, with over 6 million people working in Ontario. The number of people working is now higher than it was in 1990 and also shows a positive change as a rate per 10,000 population. This is good news on the economic front. However, changes in the labour force in the '90s indicate that many new jobs are part-time, low-wage, temporary, and self-employment. How widely will the benefits of this economic boom be shared by Ontarians? Or will poverty and income disparities continue to grow? (See **Context for the QLI**.)

Labour Force Unemployed - There are fewer people unemployed now than at any other time since 1990. This is great news! Statistics Canada reports that the unemployment rate in Canada dropped to 6.9% in November, the lowest level in 18 years. The unemployment rate in Ontario fell below 6%, partly due to the number of people leaving the job market, since Ontario actually lost 7,200 jobs in November. Of those people who are unemployed, less than 30% qualify for Employment Insurance, due to "reforms" made to EI in the '90s.

Low Birth Weight Babies - We have refined this indicator to report LBW babies as a % of total live births (See **Refinements to the QLI**). New data from Ontario's Registrar General has been adjusted from previous reports to reflect the weight of babies as reported by doctors, rather than by mothers. This new measure shows a significant reduction in 1992 from high levels in 1990-91. The trend has been positive throughout the later years of the decade, reflecting the impact of prenatal and early childhood development programs run by health units and community groups. The significant increase in the number of LBW babies as a rate per 100 live births during this first half of 1999 is due to the significant decline in the number of births, rather than an increase in the number of LBW babies. Consequently, we report this trend as progress at this time, due to the tentative nature of the 1999 data. We await the full year data for 1999 for our *Spring 2000* report to give us a more accurate picture.

Social Assistance Beneficiaries - This seems to be a positive trend, especially looking at labour force participation. Surveys show that many people are leaving welfare because they got a job. In our Spring 1999 report, we raised concerns about changes in eligibility requirements and regulations which have resulted in many people being disentitled to welfare. Independent reports show that the decline in the number of welfare poor is matched by the growth in the number of working poor. (See **Context for the QLI**.)

Tonnes Diverted to Blue Boxes - Recycling leads the pack as the most positive trend in the 1990s. The success of the program reflects, in part, the extent of public participation. In our *Spring 1999* report, we raised a caution about the impact of provincial downloading and funding cuts to municipalities on the future of the Blue Box and other recycling programs. Since the data available is for 1998, it does not yet reflect the impact of these changes. We have also been informed by the data source that tonnes diverted means tonnes marketable.

Toxic Spills - This indicator continues a positive trend in the 1990s of fewer toxic spills reported to the Ministry of Environment and Energy. Recent regulatory change is having an effect on what gets reported. This regulation (*Ontario Reg. 675/98*) provides exemption of certain classes of spills from notice requirements under the Environmental Protection Act. Some of the things exempt were not subject in the first place; the exemptions merely remove any basis for argument. For more information, contact your local Ministry of Environment office (if it's still open), or call the Spills Action Centre toll free at 1-800-268-6060.

SETBACKS

Air Quality - We are using a new reporting format for air quality (see **Refinements to the QLI**) to factor out the smaller number of monitoring sites since 1990. This has been a positive trend until 1998, when the number of hours of moderate to poor air quality rose above 1990 levels. This makes air quality a setback. Independent reports about declining air quality (CIELP/OEN 1999) raise concerns about the current situation and our future prospects for cleaner air.

Bankruptcies - Although still a setback, this trend is improving, as bankruptcies declined from record levels in 1996. Though it is reported as a setback, the trend is a positive one. This is a reflection of recent economic growth. Will it continue in the coming year?

Children Admitted to Child Welfare - There is a new reporting cycle for child welfare statistics, based on an agreement between the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. OACAS is collecting the data from local agencies on behalf of the ministry for the fiscal period from April to March. The new numbers are close to those reported for 1998 in our Spring 1999 report. The impact of changes in the Child and Family Services Act made in May, 1999, may be felt in Spring 2000.

Long Term Care Waiting Lists - In our Spring 1999 report, we raised concerns about the growing problem of access to long term care, even as announcements were being made by the provincial government to put more money into the system. There is no new data available at this time. We will have to wait until the Spring of 2000 to find out whether the waiting lists are declining.

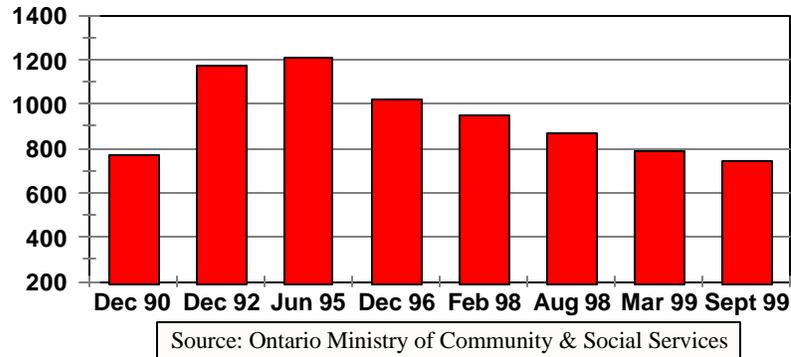
New Cancer Cases There is no new data for cancer cases since 1996. The Ontario Cancer Registry hopes to release 1997 data by the end of 1999. This is a serious problem of lag time in the availability of data about new cancer cases. The delays are attributed to various procedures for cleaning and adjusting the data. It would be in the public interest to speed up the process of reporting on new cancer cases to inform governments and non-government organizations working on the prevention of cancer. Watch for the *Spring 2000* report for an update on this indicator.

Public Housing Waiting Lists - This is still the indicator displaying the biggest setback since 1990. It shows only one aspect of many housing problems in Ontario. Others include the crisis of homelessness,

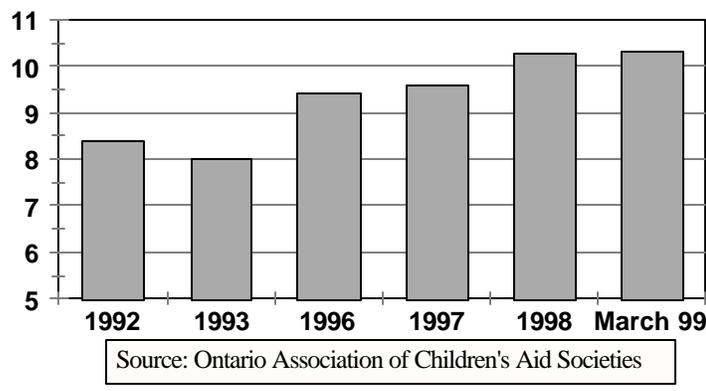
the lack of affordable and adequate housing, the withdrawal of federal and provincial governments from funding for social housing, and the repeal of rent controls. (See **Context for the QLI** .)

**SOCIAL
TRENDS**

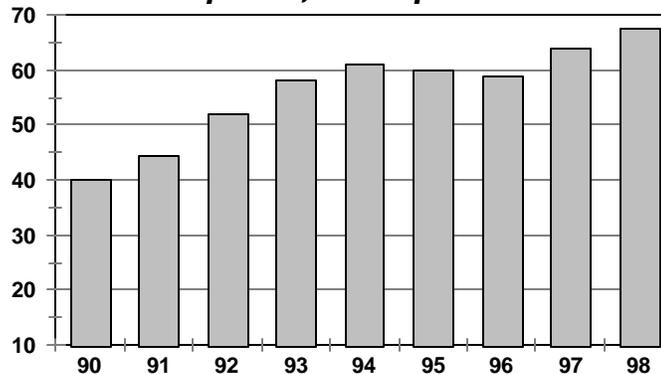
Social Assistance Beneficiaries
Rate per 10,000 Population



Child Welfare Admissions to Care
Rate per 10,000 Population

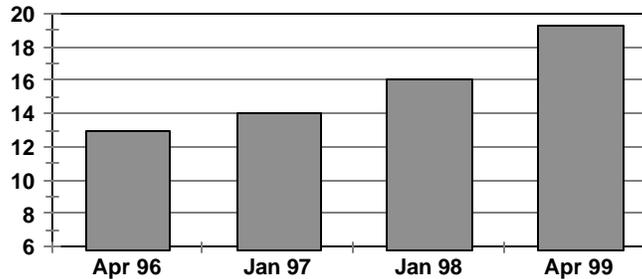


Public Housing Wait Lists
Rate per 10,000 Population



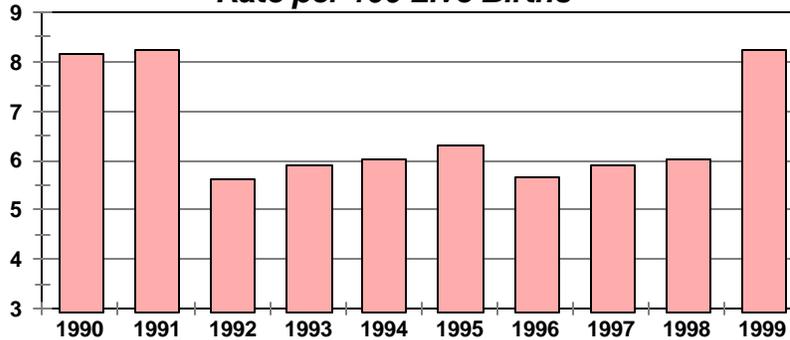
HEALTH TRENDS

Long Term Care Wait Lists Rate per 10,000 Population



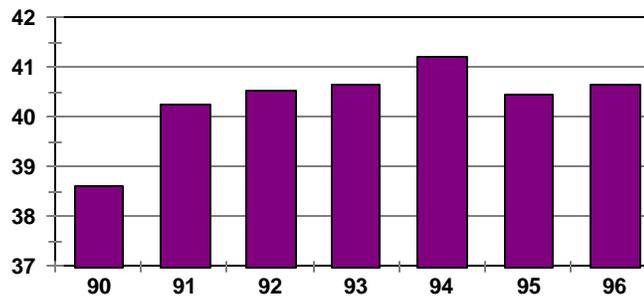
Source: Ontario Ministry of Health

Low Birth Weight Babies Rate per 100 Live Births



Source: Registrar General of Ontario

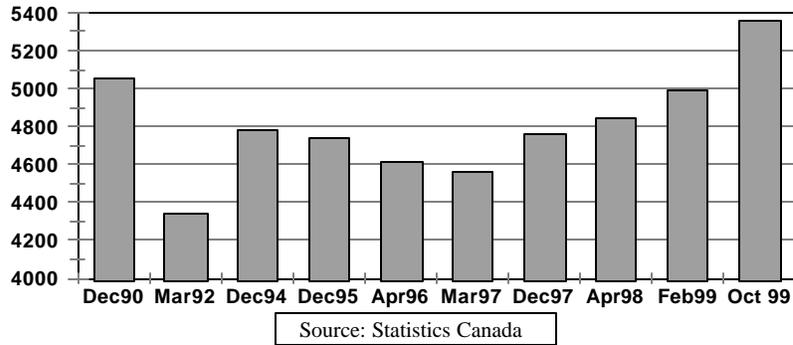
New Cancer Cases Rate per 10,000 Population



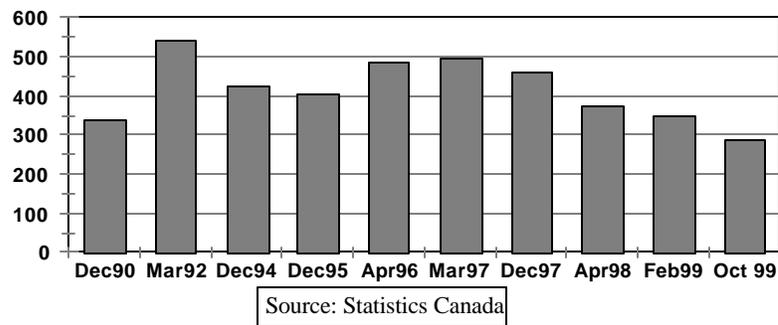
Source: Ontario Cancer Registry

ECONOMIC TRENDS

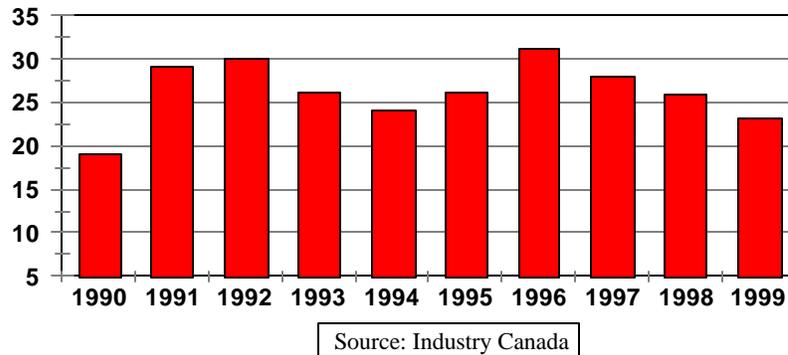
Labour Force Working Rate per 10,000 Population



Labour Force Unemployed Rate per 10,000 Population



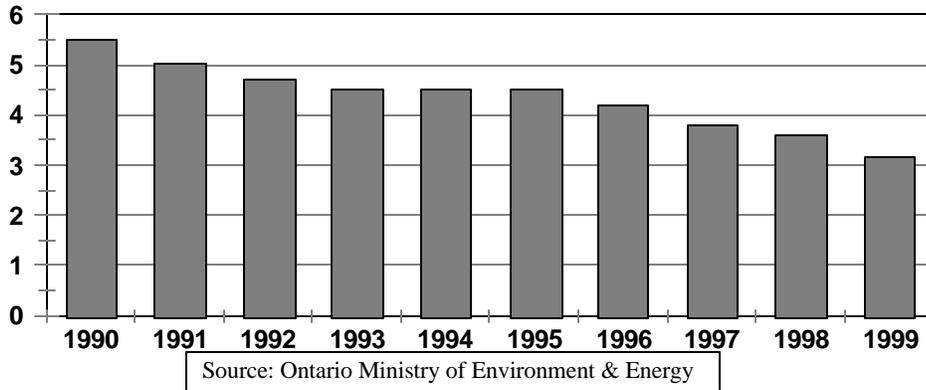
Bankruptcies Rate per 10,000 Population



ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS

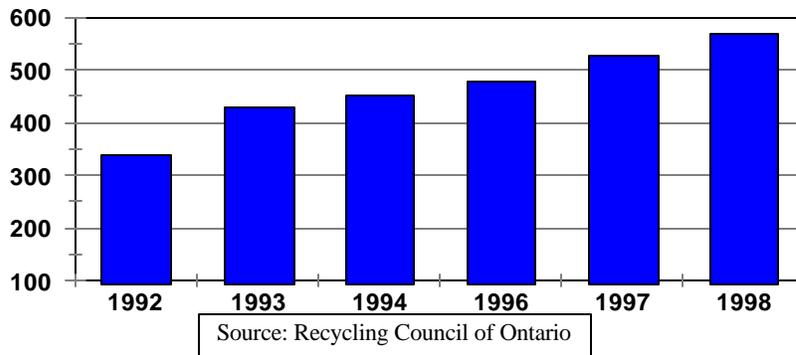
Toxic Spills

Rate per 10,000 Population



Tonnes Recycled to Blue Boxes

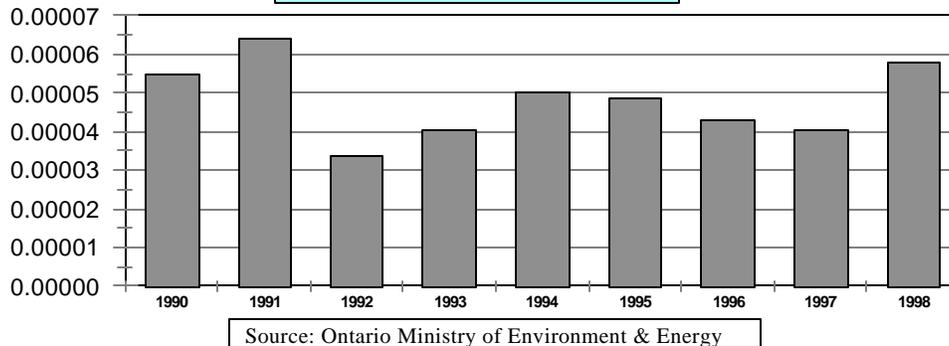
Rate per 10,000 Population



Air Quality *

Rate per 10,000 Population

* Moderate/Poor Hrs as % Total Hrs



CONTEXT FOR THE QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX

News Clips on Quality of Life Issues

Canada's top UN ranking conceals hardship - For the sixth straight year, the U.N. has ranked Canada first among 174 nations in human development. But Canada lags in its efforts to combat poverty, with 12% of Canadians living in poverty it ranks 9th on the Human Poverty Index of 17 developed countries. The U.N. says that (*Toronto Star*, July 13, 1999)

The dominance of markets has produced a grotesque and dangerous polarization between both people and nations .
Human Development Report 1999
United Nations

Fighting poverty: a millennium task -

“While politicians brag about our top ranking on the Human Development Index, they are not facing up to the challenges of poverty, homelessness and inequality, which pose serious threats to our viability as a society,” said Malcolm Shookner, from Ontario Social Development Council, in a letter to the editor of the *Toronto Star*. “Canada could become a world leader in solving social problems, if it chose to invest its public and private wealth in real solutions to these problems. We have the knowledge and the resources. The missing ingredient is political will. That would be the greatest millennium project we could give to Canada.” (*Toronto Star*, August 5, 1999)

Building a Higher Quality of Life for All Canadians - The federal Speech from the Throne delivered on October 12, 1999 used quality of life as its theme. “We will build a higher quality of life for all Canadians - for our children, ourselves and our neighbours.”(*Toronto Star* October 13, 1999)

Ontario Recycling Improves - A new report by the Recycling Council of Ontario and the Ministry of Environment and Energy provides information about recycling and composting by municipalities in 1998. It shows a 9% increase in the amount of waste diverted from landfill sites to recycling in 1998 over the previous year. The average household in Ontario recycled 168 kilograms - or 18 per cent - of its garbage in 1998, up from 159 kilograms recycled the year before. Other highlights of the report: residential paper recovered is up 11%, leaf and yard waste is up by 4%, the number of households covered by recycling programs is up 3%. (*Toronto Star*, October 16, 1999)

Economy booms for first time in decade - Front page headlines proclaim that Ontario's economy is growing at a pace that will “outstrip” the US economy next year. Major banks issued forecasts for strong economic growth through 2001, with the promise of higher real incomes for Canadians, low inflation, stable interest rates and strong job creation. (*Toronto Star*, November 10, 1999)

The dark side of the boom - The good times may be about to roll, but not everybody will be along for the ride, claims author Mel Hurtig (1999). What of the numbers of homeless people that seem to be increasing daily on the streets of Toronto, the food bank users, the single mothers and the welfare

recipients? “The bottom line is that as output and gross domestic product have increased in Canada, real workers’ wages have plunged.” The danger of the new economy is that it is leaving a lot of people eating dust because new jobs are either low paying, part-time or self-employment jobs with no benefits. Andy Mitchell, from the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, says that 17.5% of people live below the poverty line, a figure that has remained almost the same since the early ‘90s. “The intervening period of growth seems to have made little dent in the figures.” (*Toronto Star* November 11, 1999).

Self-employment trap - “Hundreds of thousands of Canadian women are tumbling into a trap of low-paying, home-based self-employment,” according to Canadian Policy Research Networks.”In many cases, self-employed women are struggling,” says Karen Hughes, author of the report. (*Toronto Star*, October 1, 1999)

All work and no play makes Canadians tense - A third of Canadians 25 to 44 say they’re workaholics, and more than half in this age group feel they don’t have enough time for their family and friends, according to Statistics Canada’s 1998 *General Social Survey*. The survey found levels of stress vary with the number of jobs a person has to do, so people working full time with children at home are the most time-stressed. While in the last generation, one breadwinner working 45 hours a week could provide an adequate income for a family, it now takes 65 to 80 hours a week of work to maintain the same standard of living, according to the Vanier Institute for the Family. (*Toronto Star*, November 10, 1999)

Living standards have not recovered - Pierre Fortin, University of Quebec economist, says in a new report that weak employment growth in the 1990s, following a 7% drop in employment from 1989 to 1992, was responsible for 60% of the growing gap in living standards. Even with the pickup in employment that followed, we have recovered only the half the ground we lost. Priority attention to job growth is needed to recoup what we lost in the ‘90s. (*Toronto Star*, October 26, 1999)

More families in crisis - Roberta Jamieson, Ontario’s former Ombudsman, said that “We’ve got more families than ever before in crisis. We’re already seeing homeless people occupying parks. We’re going to see more of that. There will come a breaking point and we will see increasing displays of desperation, anger and hostility among those who feel they are being ignored or silenced. (*Toronto Star* October 29, 1999)

“These last four years have been about cuts. But the government has failed to take into account the effects those cuts would have on the most vulnerable people.”

Roberta Jamieson

Former Ombudsman for Ontario

Child poverty in Toronto - Almost 40 per cent of children in Toronto live in poverty, far above the national average and that of the four neighbouring regions in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), says a new report card on children prepared by the City of Toronto. Councillor Olivia Chow, the city’s child and youth advocate, says the report should be “a wake-up call to City of Toronto Councillors, the

Province of Ontario and the federal government.” Councillor Pam McConnell said that much of the blame for the increasing poverty of Toronto families resulted from the province’s decision in 1995 to reduce welfare rates by more than 21 per cent. (*Toronto Star*, October 15/99)

Welfare rolls drop by 12,000 one month - Another 12,000 people were taken off Ontario’s welfare rolls in September, continuing a 20 month decline in the number of Ontarians depending on social assistance. The ministry claims that 60% of those leaving welfare have left for full time jobs. A study released by the Income Protection Working Group, made up of city volunteers, found that 60% of people in hostels would have qualified for benefits before the criteria were changed. (*Toronto Star* October 12, 1999)

“It’s not much comfort to know that the welfare numbers are dropping when the demand for our most basic social services is skyrocketing.”

One city councillor’s observation

Workfare: Is it creating a ‘social disaster’? - “Moms and kids are the big losers,” according to Margaret Little of Queen’s University, who interviewed current and former welfare recipients. “The government may be saving money on welfare, but in the process, it is creating a social disaster.” Mitchell also found that many people have so little money that they eat only once a day. (*Toronto Star*, October 4, 1999)

Rental Housing Crisis in Ontario - A full blown rental housing crisis in Ontario has pushed one in four tenants only a pay cheque away from the street, according to Putting Housing Back on the Public Agenda, an umbrella group for affordable housing advocates across the province. Twenty five per cent of tenants are paying out more than 50 percent of their income on rent. “These are the kinds of people who are on the verge of being homeless,” said John Sweeney, spokesman for the group. “There is only one choice and that is to get the federal and provincial governments working together to create new housing stock. A study recently completed in 21 Ontario communities shows that the problem has gotten steadily worse for these poorly sheltered families. (*Kitchener Record*, November 10, 1999)

“Of the G-7 countries, Canada is the only one that does not have senior levels of government involved in housing.”

John Sweeney

Putting Housing Back on the Public Agenda

New Reports on Quality of Life Issues

Child Poverty is on the Rise in Ontario

The number of poor children in Ontario has more than doubled since 1989, says Campaign 2000 in its *Report Card on Child Poverty in Ontario 1999*. One in five children lives in poverty. Notwithstanding Ontario's economic recovery, the number of poor children more than doubled from 247,000 in 1989 to 538,000 in 1997. Ontario has experienced the highest increase in the child poverty rate among the provinces. Highlights (or is that 'low lights'?) from Report Card 1999:

The number of...

...Poor children	up 118%
...Children in working poor families	up 142%
...Poor children in families with full time, full year employment	up 105%
...Children in families experiencing long-term unemployment	up 81%
...Children in families with total incomes less than \$20,000 per year	up 137%
...Poor children in 2-parent families	up 146%
...Poor children in lone-parent families	up 92%

- < Child poverty levels are disproportionately high among aboriginal and visible minority communities.
- < The child poverty rate among two-parent families has more than doubled.
- < Ontario families are faced with a housing crisis as vacancy rates fall and rents continue to increase.
- < The average non-poor family is four times better off than a poor family.
- < The total poverty gap, the money that it would take to lift all of Ontario's poor children out of poverty, has grown 134% since 1989. The current \$6.2 billion poverty gap is Ontario's troubling "social deficit."

In Ontario, no progress has been made over the past decade in addressing growing inequalities among families. The income gap between poor and non-poor families in Ontario is the biggest in Canada. **Meanwhile, the number of poor children in the rest of Canada outside of Ontario decreased by 11% since 1995!**

Campaign 2000 believes that the discussion about child poverty in Canada is about how to equalize life chances for children by minimizing socio-economic inequalities. The economic situation of families with low incomes has become worse over the past decade.

Good jobs that enable parents to provide adequately for their children are a key component in any strategy to reduce child poverty. However, the labour market offers low income parents jobs that are

largely part-time, low wage, contract or seasonal and offer few or no benefits. In Ontario today, full-time, full-year employment does not guarantee that a family will avoid falling into poverty.

Campaign 2000 proposes that the provincial and federal governments implement policies to reduce child poverty, starting with the year 2000 federal and provincial budgets:

- T Make commitments to a five year social investment plan for Canada's children with national objectives to enhance the well-being of children and their families.
- T Develop an action plan and timetable for a 50% reduction in child poverty by 2005.
- T Invest in early childhood development services, including the universal availability of quality child care.
- T Invest in affordable housing.
- T Raise the National Child Benefit and extend it to all low income families.
- T Lower tuition fees for post-secondary education.

Broken Promises: Welfare Reform in Ontario

Is Ontario Works working? Does it offer people a “hand up” - the training and education they need to get a job? The provincial government has not produced any evidence that the Ontario Works program is helping people to get jobs, says Workfare Watch in its evaluation of welfare reform. Many people who have left social assistance did so because of Ontario’s strong economic growth.

Little, if any, of this is because of Ontario Works (OW) employment programs. For most people the promised “hand up” - meaningful training, employment supports, transportation and childcare - has never materialized. Those who remain on assistance - still a very large number of people - are living in increasingly desperate circumstances. For this group, there is substantial evidence that Ontario Works is hurting, rather than helping their chances of finding work. Most people report difficulty maintaining stable housing, feeding and clothing themselves. Living on such low incomes threatens their health and well-being, their chances of getting a job, and their quality of life.

Workfare placements are supposed to provide people with new skills and job opportunities. But in their research people, who had done a workfare placement did not report learning any new skills and almost no one got a job through their placement. No resources are provided to non-profit organizations that take a placement to ensure that real training occurs. Workfare is not a substitute for an on-the-job training program.

Ontario Works is supposed to provide the education and training people need to get a job. But in fact, the most OW will do is allow someone to complete Grade 12. This limits the jobs that people are eligible for the lowest part of the labour market. The jobs most people will be able to apply for tend to be insecure and pay very low wages. This will not help people stay off social assistance. Most of the people in our research were not given an opportunity for any education or training.

After social assistance benefits were cut in 1995 many more people couldn't afford basics like telephone service or public transportation. Since then, the real value of welfare benefits has continued to fall, thanks to inflation. Today, people on OW are too poor to afford many basic necessities. Many people can no longer afford decent shelter. Nearly 60% of people on social assistance have housing costs above the maximum shelter allowances. Evictions and homelessness are rising. Extreme poverty threatens health and well-being and therefore threatens employability.

Economic Inequality and Health Policy Implications

In his keynote speech to the *Pathways to Health Conference* in Nova Scotia in May, 1999, Dr. Dennis Raphael, Director of the Quality of Life Research Unit at the Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto, says, "Poverty and economic inequality affect the health of individuals, both poor and well-off, communities and societies. Poverty is related to economic inequality. Nations with high economic inequality have higher rates of poverty. When economic inequality increases, poverty increases, and both are on the rise in Canada. While Canada has always been an unequal society, the effects of economic inequality have always been kept in check by the presence of strong social programs that compensated for this."

The increase in poverty as an issue has been a focus of social development organizations with rather less emphasis apparent in public health outside of designating poor people as a risk group.

Poverty is associated with feelings of helplessness, lack of control and uncertainty. Recent research indicates that these are strong predictors of health and well-being. Poverty in Canada is highly gendered. The highest risk group for poverty, and associated health effects, are single parent families, virtually all of which are headed by women. The incidence of poverty among children in lone-female parent families in Canada is 65%.

According to an editorial in the *British Medical Journal*, "What matters in determining mortality and health in a society is less the overall wealth of that society and more how evenly wealth is distributed. The more equally wealth is distributed the better the health of that society."

Economic inequality contributes to the deterioration of social capital, or the degree of social cohesion, in other words the commitment of citizens to society. Government policies are increasingly creating poverty, and at the same time removing supports that make poverty bearable for many.

When governments emphasize tax reduction, economic inequality increases and community supports deteriorate. Government interest in and ability to maintain traditional entitlements decreases. Social cohesion is at risk.

Canada is losing its social cohesion

How can Canada be ranked first in the world in human development by the United Nations Development Programme, while at the same time being condemned by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the way some of our most vulnerable citizens are treated?

Why is Canada allowing more people to fall into poverty during a time of strong economic growth and increasing affluence? These questions are posed by the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology in its report on social cohesion. (Toronto Star, July 8, 1999)

To avoid this possibility, the Committee strongly endorses the recommendation that the federal government begin to focus as much attention on societal health as it has recently and successfully on the fiscal health of the nation. As we enter a new, post-deficit era, governments and business are under increasing pressure to start thinking more about longer-term societal implications of economic policies. There are concerns that the drive toward greater economic performance could be undermined if the sacrifices and societal costs are seen to fall only on the poorest and weakest segments of society and the benefits accrue to a privileged few.

"The most serious challenge for decision-makers is to ensure that economic integration driven by globalizing markets does not lead to domestic social disintegration."

Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology

The fallout has included a rise in poverty and the phenomenon of the polarization of jobs and incomes. In other words, there is a growing gap between those who have reasonably secure, reasonably well-paid jobs with reasonable benefits, and people who are in part-time, contractual, temporary work at low wages with virtually no security and very few benefits. As the gap widens between high earners and average workers, governments will need to work much harder if they wish to fill their traditional role of including the un-included in society. In the era of globalization, it is mistake to treat economic and social policy as separate compartments. Cross-cutting issues like economic growth and social cohesion not only transcend the boundaries between departments, but also the boundaries between different sectors of society and the boundaries between states.

Social cohesion is the ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunities within Canada, based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity.

Social cohesion is also about re-distributional issues. Building social cohesion in the new global era will require that we find ways to provide a more reasonable distribution of benefits generated by trade liberalization and technological change. By doing this we will renew a longstanding Canadian commitment to social justice and sharing.

For too long, we have assumed that short-term social costs could be offset against long-term economic gains. What we forgot to take into account was that social damage could itself frustrate economic objectives.

For the first time in an economic recovery, the poverty rate has not gone down in Canada. The incidence

of poverty has risen in the 1990s and those who are poor are getting poorer. Poverty is increasingly concentrated amongst four groups: female-headed single parent families; families headed by disabled person; recent immigrants and Aboriginals.

“Recent evidence from international research shows that more equal societies are likely to be more prosperous in the long term and to have higher levels of well-being. Equality has a positive impact on investment, both in human capital and physical capital. There really does seem to be a payoff to something that we would call social cohesion or equality,” says Dr. Lars Osberg, Dalhousie University.

Security as a means of protecting Canadians against the risks inherent in the modern world is slowly disappearing. This is particularly evident in the reforms adopted in the area of unemployment and social assistance. And all these changes are happening at a moment where we are increasingly becoming a risk society.

“Globalization is corroding the institutions of civil society, precisely because it undermines community solidarity. Increasing alienation, pervasive personal economic insecurity, growing isolation within communities, and the loss of control over our collective choices are among the symptoms of the dehumanizing impact that globalization has had both in Canada and in other countries.”

Rev. David Pfrimmer

Chairperson for the Commission on Justice and Peace

Canadian Council of Churches

(Past President of the Ontario Social Development Council)

To the extent that new visions and approaches have been articulated, they have often tended to come from outside, rather than inside, governments. The Committee wishes to recognize the active and essential role that the voluntary sector plays in fostering social cohesion and in building bridges across Canadians.

Toward a Healthy Future

This report, prepared for the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health meeting in Charlottetown in September, 1999, summarizes the most current information on the health of Canadians. It is intended to be a tool to alert policy makers, practitioners, and the public to current and future challenges in population health and to identify actions that will improve the health of all Canadians. Highlights from the report:

- < Canada ranks in the top three developed countries in the world in measures of life expectancy, self-rated health and mortality rates. Life expectancy in Canada has reached a new high of 75.7 years for men and 81.4 years for women.
- < The UN ranks Canada first in the world on its Human Development Index. That standing drops to 10th place when the UN Human Poverty Index for industrialized countries is applied.

- < While overall cancer death rates for men have declined, they have remained persistently stubborn among women, mainly due to increases in lung cancer.
- < Only 47% of Canadians in the lowest income bracket rate their health as very good or excellent, compared with 73% of Canadians in the highest income group.
- < Low income Canadians are more likely to die earlier and to suffer more illnesses than Canadians with higher incomes, regardless of age, sex, race and place of residence.
- < At each rung up the income ladder, Canadians have less sickness, longer life expectancies and improved health.
- < The distribution of income in society may be a more important determinant of health than the total amount of income earned by society members. Large gaps in income distribution lead to increasing social problems and poorer health among the population as a whole.
- < Inequities in income distribution remained relatively constant in Canada between 1985 and 1995, largely due to the effect of redistributive taxes and transfer payments, which helped to offset the growing income gap between the 10% of Canadians with the lowest incomes and the 10% with the highest incomes.
- < Canadians are a caring people, reporting high levels of social support, caring for others, voluntarism, and civic participation.
- < Canadians with low literacy skills are more likely to be unemployed and poor, to suffer poorer health and to die earlier than Canadians with high levels of literacy.
- < In 1996, many Canadians faced a housing affordability crisis. As many as 200,000 Canadians were estimated to be homeless, including increasing numbers of women and children, Aboriginal people, adolescents and persons with mental illnesses.

Priorities for Action:

- T Invest in health and well-being of key population groups - early childhood, young people and Aboriginal people.
- T Reduce inequities in literacy, education and the distribution of incomes.

All sectors stand to benefit from improvements in health and the conditions that affect health. Healthy, well-educated, productive citizens who nurture their young people and live in a civic, egalitarian, sustainable society feel in control of their destiny. They are better prepared to address the local,

provincial, territorial, national and global challenges of the new millennium.

"We can give no greater gift to the next generation than a healthy future."
Federal, Provincial and Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health

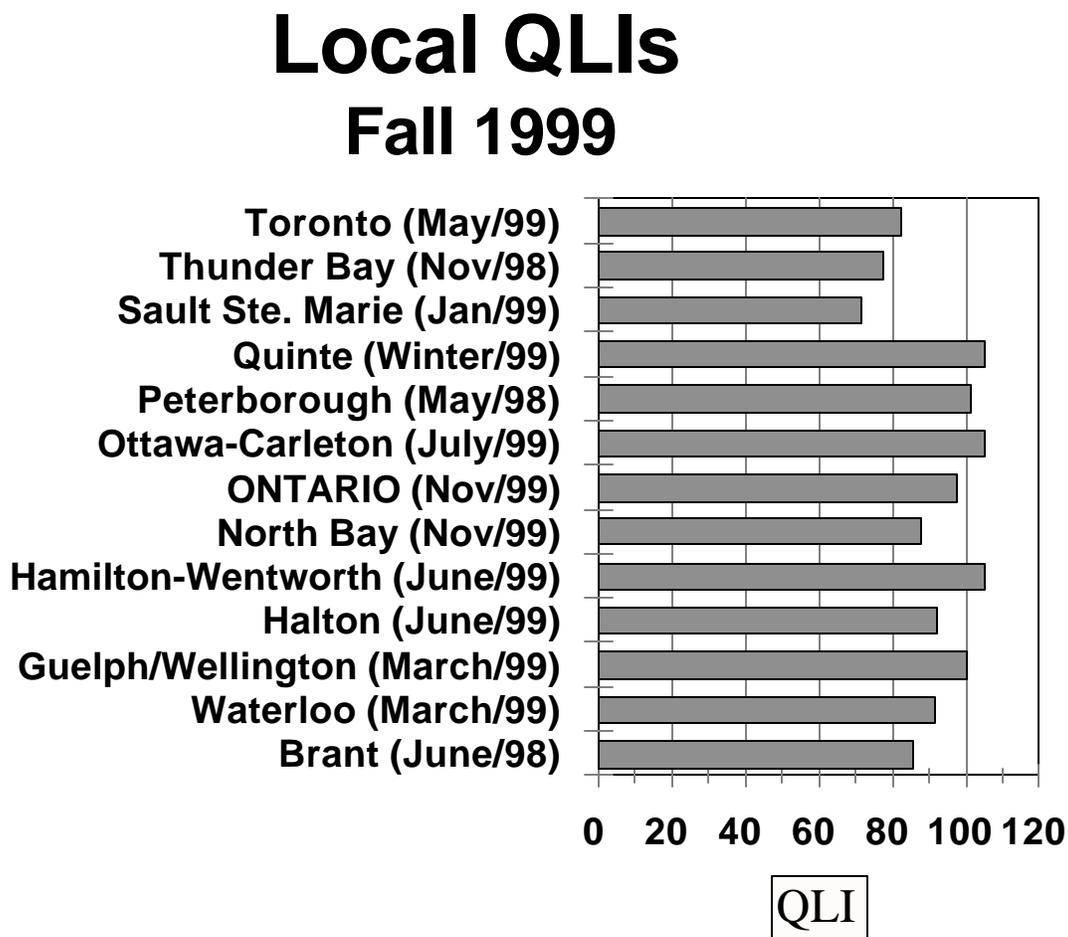
LOCAL QLI REPORTS

The Quality of Life Index is being used by OSDC's community partners to monitor and measure changes in local living conditions. The same methodology and indicators are used by the provincial and local QLI reports so that comparisons can be made and trends monitored. This is one of the greatest benefits of the QLI, its comparative framework based on a common set of indicators. It allows communities to compare their progress on improving the quality of life in these ways:

- < Over time in their own community
- < With the provincial QLI

The QLI is not intended to be a ranking system which pits one community against another for a better rank.

The following charts shows local QLIs, based on reports done by our community partners. While the provincial QLI is updated twice yearly, local QLIs are updated once a year due to resource limitations.



See Appendix 4 for the Bibliography of Local QLI Reports.

TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The good news is that the quality of life in Ontario, as measured by the Quality of Life Index, is improving and has almost recovered to 1990 levels. The bad news is that the social deficit will undermine progress in other sectors to make this pathway unsustainable. A growing chorus of voices is saying that growing poverty and inequality will lead to a lower quality of life for all. Societies that have the most equitable distribution of wealth and resources have the greatest economic prosperity and health (Raphael, 1999).

How will ordinary people be affected? With growing income disparities, we are seeing a further erosion of the middle class. Public services - health, education and social services - are being cut back and their quality reduced, while privatized services will be available for those who can pay. This will further polarize the haves and have-nots in Canadian society, leading to social disintegration and a loss of a sense of solidarity or community with others. This path leads to the breakdown of society as we know it.

How can we turn these trends around toward a quality of life that is sustainable for future generations? Fortunately, much work has already been done to show us the way.

The **United Nations** has identified its agenda for the 21st century to foster “people-centred, sustainable development.” (UN 1997). The Copenhagen Commitments (UN 1995) from the World Summit for Social Development created an intersectoral and holistic approach to the eradication of poverty. Clear policy priorities have been identified for national governments, working in partnership with civil society, to implement these commitments:

- , Creating an enabling economic, and social environment for people-centred development;
- , Empowering all people for self-reliance;
- , Promoting broad-based and equitable growth;
- , Enhancing household food security;
- , Improving access to basic infrastructure and social services;
- , Promoting job creation and sustainable livelihoods;
- , Ensuring equitable access to credit and productive assets;
- , Expanding social protection for vulnerable people;
- , Promoting gender equity and the full participation of women in development;
- , Preserving, maintaining and regenerating the natural resource base;
- , Preserving people’s security in the context of rapid and sometimes disruptive globalization.

The **Global Scenario Group**, an independent, international and inter-disciplinary body of development professionals, is committed to examining the long-term requirements for sustainability.

Sustainable development is about harmonizing human development with the environmental constraints of the planet. It is also about reconciling the needs of present generations with the needs of future generations. To assess the implications of current trends and to guide policies to change those trends, a set of goals for long range sustainability are presented. (GSG 1998)

- ' Eradication of absolute poverty, malnutrition and famine, and universal entitlement to basic social services such as health and education;
- ' Improving quality of life everywhere and expanding possibilities for fulfillment;
- ' Declining economic and social disparities;
- ' Increasing environmental quality, with critical biological resources recovering, pollution under control, and climate stability in sight;
- ' Infrequent violence and armed conflict;
- ' Stable global population.

In **Ontario**, the pathway to a sustainable future means that we must reverse the current trends and work toward:

- L reduction of poverty and disparities
- L more equitable distribution of wealth
- L national standards to protect social programs
- L investments in community capacity building
- L investments in human services systems
- L sustainable use of natural and human resources
- L public participation in planning and policy development

This path will lead us to a time and place where:

- i vibrant communities have a strong sense of local identity and culture
- i fewer people are living in poverty
- i more people live longer and healthier lives
- i the economy is healthy and prosperous, with its benefits equitably distributed
- i public, private and voluntary sector partnerships are effective in reducing poverty
- i major investments in human services and community development lead to greater community capacity and social infrastructure
- i the air and water are clean
- i there is improved quality of life for everyone
- i a record high Quality of Life Index (QLI) rating over 200 is reached!

As we come to the close of the second millennium and ponder our future in the 21st century, which path will we take?

Report by: Malcolm Shookner
 Ontario Social Development Council
 November, 1999

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Appendix 2 QLI Background Papers

The Quality of Life in Ontario - 1997 (disposible en francais)

The Quality of Life in Ontario - Spring 1998

The Quality of Life in Ontario - Fall 1998 (disposible en francais)

The Quality of Life in Ontario - Spring 1999

Annotated Bibliography

Literature Review

Methodology Report (disposible en francais)

Summary of Indicators

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Appendix 3

Calculating the QLI - Fall 1999

INDICATORS	Base Year	Base Rate/10,000	BASE QLI	Fall99 Rate/10,000	%CHANGE	QLI IMPACT	Fall99 QLI
Social Indicators							
Social Assistance Beneficiaries	1990	780	8.3	747.0	-4.2%	POS	8.7
Children Admitted to CAS	1992	8.4	8.3	10.3	22.6%	NEG	6.4
Public Housing Waiting Lists	1990	40	8.3	67.7	69.3%	NEG	2.6
Social Sub-total			25.0				17.7
Economic Indicators							
Labour Force Working	1990	5,053	8.3	5,352.0	5.9%	POS	8.8
Labour Force Unemployed	1990	339	8.3	287.0	-15.3%	POS	9.6
Bankruptcies Reported	1990	19	8.3	23.0	21.1%	NEG	6.6
Economic Sub-total			25.0				25.0
Health Indicators							
New Cancer Cases	1990	38.6	8.3	40.7	5.4%	NEG	7.9
Elderly Long Term Care Waiting List	1996	13	8.3	19.3	48.5%	NEG	4.3
Low Birth Weight Babies per 100 Live Births	1990	8.14	8.3	8.23	1.1%	NEG	8.2
Health Sub-total			25.0				20.4
Environmental Indicators							
Hrs Poor/Moderate Air Quality as % Total Hrs	1990	0.0000547	8.3	0.0000581	6.2%	NEG	7.8
Spills	1990	5.5	8.3	3.0	-45.5%	POS	12.1
Tonnes Diverted to Blue Box	1992	340	8.3	567.8	67.0%	POS	13.9
Environmental Sub-total			25.0				33.8
QLI COMPOSITE INDEX			100.0				96.9

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