BRIDGING THE GAP: MEASURING WHAT MATTERS, THE OTTAWA STORY

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GET ENGAGED: Is voting enough?

During Community Health and Wellbeing Week, the Youth Advisory Committee of the Anne Johnston Health Station hosted an event called, “GET ENGAGED: Is voting enough?” What inspired us to bring this event to the community, was a story in the media this summer about a retired man who decided to conduct his own experiment to see people’s reactions if he were to wear a rainbow flag cape, during a political event. The reaction of some members of the crowd made headline news. This was intriguing for us youth because, since we are not of voting age, this was one way we saw someone take ACTION beyond just voting. Hence, the title, “Is Voting Enough?” We met weekly during the summer to plan out this event with Beatrice Raposo, Health Promoter.

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USING THE CANADIAN INDEX OF WELLBEING TO MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

LIVING STANDARDS

ENVIRONMENT

EDUCATION

TIME USE

HEALTHY POPULATIONS

DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY VITALITY

LEISURE AND CULTURE
EXPLORING STRATEGIC APPLICATIONS

Organizations across the province are applying the CIW in a variety of ways:

- To assess community needs in strategic planning
- To evaluate program and service development
- As an intake tool for new clients
- To develop local partnerships around shared priorities
- To release local wellbeing reports
Bridging the gap: Measuring what matters, the Ottawa story

Bryan Smale, Ph.D.
Director, Canadian Index of Wellbeing
University of Waterloo
CIW Mission

The CIW's mission is to:

✓ Conduct rigorous research related to, and regularly and publicly report on, the quality of life of Canadians;

✓ **Encourage** policy shapers and government leaders to make **decisions based on solid evidence**; and

✓ **Empower Canadians to advocate for change** that responds to their needs and values.

Rooted in Canadian Values

Social justice
Social determinants of health…

“What good does it do to treat people’s illnesses ... then send them back to the conditions that made them sick?”  

(Marmot, 2008)
Public Consultations

- Community organisations, special interest groups, general public
- Policy makers, government agencies
- Consultants, academics, researchers

Research Teams

- Domains and indicators selected, reports released

Sharing Results

- First composite index released, permanent home at University of Waterloo

Timeline:
- 1999
- 2002
- 2005 to 2009
- 2010
- 2012

Collaborative development

Public Consultations:
Policy makers, government agencies
Consultants, academics, researchers

Research Teams:
Domains and indicators selected, reports released

Sharing Results:
First composite index released, permanent home at University of Waterloo
Canadian Index of Wellbeing

8 Domains

1. Healthy Population
2. Democratic Engagement
3. Community Vitality
4. Environment
5. Leisure and Culture
6. Time Use
7. Education
8. Living Standards

8 Indicators in each domain

CIW Composite Index
64 Indicators consolidated into a single CIW average
CIW Indicators Approach

Tracking Indicators of Wellbeing in all Domains
How well are Canadians *really* doing?
Trends in domains of wellbeing…

GDP +28.9%

Education
Living Standards
Community Vitality
Democratic Engage.
CIW +5.7%
Healthy Pops.
Time Use
Leisure and Culture
Environment
How are Ontarians Really Doing?

A PROVINCIAL REPORT ON ONTARIO WELLBEING | APRIL 2014

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
FACULTY OF APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

Ontario's overall wellbeing:

Canada GDP | +28.9
Ontario GDP | +24.1
Canada CIW | +7.5
Ontario CIW | +7.3

Since 1994, wellbeing compared to an increase in GDP. However, the pace of improvement has slowed, especially in the last few years. Perhaps more importantly, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow, even recovering relatively more in Ontario as measured by the CIW, compared to GDP (per capita) for Canada and the rest of the country, and in some cases.

Income inequality in Ontario has been almost twice as large as in the rest of the country, and in some cases.

The percentage of people living in poverty in Ontario is the same as in Canada as a whole, down from 35.0% in 2006 and 3.10% in 2010. Employment of 34.5% in Ontario and 33.5% in Canada as a whole, with a 3.7% decline in employment in the past year. This is a 24.8% decrease in Ontario, but it also tracks the rest of Canada.

Ontario's income gap is the same as in Canada as a whole, with a median of 2005. Ontario's income gap surpassed the rest of the country, but has not narrowed significantly since.
Creating more people and community centred services

- How could CIW domains could be used to create more meaningful dialogue with community members creating stronger, more integrated responsive services.

Health & wellbeing in Ontario is taking a backseat to GDP

Report calls for comprehensive network of Community Health Centres

(TORONTO) - APRIL 29, 2014 Ontario’s high level of economic insecurity reported was affecting people’s lives, leading to increased demand for Community Health Centres (AOHC).
POLICY AND ADVOCACY: THE OTTAWA REPORT

BRIDGING THE GAP
Measuring What Matters: The Ottawa Community Wellbeing Report 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"I think the hope from this report is to help elected officials and the general public identify what's important to people. And ultimately, the things that people identify as being the most important to them are the things that support their families, the community they live in, their health and wellbeing. These are things like education, employment, feeling safe, being engaged, having access to quality health and social services when you need them. So this report identifies what's important to people. And then it suggests ways of moving forward to obtain those, so that everyone in this city is able to have a sense of health and wellbeing."

Leslie McRae-McRae

By virtue of serving as the nation’s capital, Ottawa holds a special status amongst municipalities. Along with this status are benefits: a vital public service force and strong endowment of world class cultural amenities. However, this privileged position also brings an expectation that people living in Ottawa should experience a relatively high quality of life.

Sure enough, as this report reveals, Ottawa has the highest median income of any other municipality in Canada and enjoys one of the lowest unemployment rates. The percentage of people with postsecondary education is almost double that of the provincial average. And the city is to be commended for its efforts in curbing greenhouse gas emissions.

But other less positive stories also emerge. And one that is far less talked about: the gap between the affluent and ‘everybody else’. Consider for a moment, Ottawa has almost double the amount of top 10 percent earners relative to the rest of Canada. 17% in Ottawa versus 10% for Canada as a whole. And, if one moves higher up the standard of living ladder, 6% of people living in Ottawa fall in the top five percent club versus 4% for the whole of Canada.

The real issue is this juxtaposition, this apparent affluence in contrast to the reality of people struggling to make ends meet. Research shows that these kinds of disparities result in a variety of adverse trends such as are evidenced in this report.
BRIDGING THE GAP: OUR FORMAT

1. Educate people about the CIW
2. Provide statistics for each domain coupled with live interviews
3. Showcase the good work that is happening
4. Conclude with policy recommendations
Getting Started

Assemble a working group of community partners and key stakeholders who share your goals and objectives to work on the report. In determining who to partner with, ask yourself:

• Are there any existing partners that may be interested in leading the charge?

• If not, consider who to collaborate with to assemble a committee. Leverage the report to pull the group together.
HOW TO DEVELOP A COMMUNITY WELLBEING REPORT

Obtain statistics and secondary matching data where possible

• Contract an individual to identify data sources and local secondary data, where possible, that match or emulate the CIW’s 64 indicators. Aim to collect data for 3-4 indicators per domain

• Request a cost estimate to Statistics Canada and develop a budget (custom tabulations cost money and are time consuming)

• Prioritize and obtain data requirements in consultation with the CIW national office

• Prepare notes on each major finding along with observations, i.e. “What is the current data telling us?”
HOW TO DEVELOP A COMMUNITY WELLBEING REPORT

DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

Democratic engagement measures the participation of citizens in public life and in the governance of their communities, the functioning of Canadian governments with respect to openness, transparency, effectiveness, fairness, and equity.

Decreasing voter turnout, especially at municipal level

Much like the rest of Canada, in Ottawa voter turnout is generally trending downwards at all three levels of government. Still, the fact that voter turnout dropped 10% between the municipal election in 2006 and 2010 should be cause for concern, especially given Ottawa’s importance as the epicentre of politics in Canada.

Whether this is a statistical anomaly or part of a trend will become evident after the next municipal election. Regardless, it most certainly underscores the vital importance of exploring ways to revitalize our democratic process and institutions, so that people feel their voices are being heard, and policies enacted accordingly.

Key Highlights

Voter turnout is trending downwards

Voter turnout in Ottawa is generally trending downwards, a decline that is consistent with falling voter turnout rates in the country. Furthermore, this decline is occurring at all three levels: federal, provincial and municipal.

Sharpest drop occurred at the municipal level of 10%

Of all the three levels of government, the sharpest drop occurred at the municipal level. 54% of Ottawa residents voted in the 2006 municipal election compared to 44% in the 2010 municipal election.

Below United Nation’s minimum of female elected officials

Whereas women account for 31% of the population in Ottawa, they represent only 26% of elected officials. This statistic falls short of the 35% minimum identified by the United Nations to have a government that adequately reflects women’s concerns.

Democracy in Canada

Levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction were equally split between those who were either very or somewhat satisfied at 33% in contrast to 33% at the other end of the spectrum who were either very or somewhat dissatisfied. The remaining 34% of Ottawa residents were indifferent.

Figure 1. Ottawa Voter Turnout in Federal, Provincial, and Municipal Elections

Highest levels of dissatisfaction were over public transit

One of the areas that the residents of Ottawa expressed the most dissatisfaction with their municipal government was their public transportation service in which 5% rated public transit as high versus 33% rating it as “poor”.

HOW TO DEVELOP A COMMUNITY WELLBEING REPORT

Prepare the ‘policy asks’ for the report

• Review latest community/city strategic plan re: policy asks
• Arrange meetings with key stakeholders for each policy ask
• Identify ‘champions’ for each policy recommendation
• Write up a one page policy ask per each request

We recommend that the committee thinks about policy asks that are already on regional or municipal Council’s radar or where preliminary work has been started to generate positive momentum for the report
CALL TO ACTION FOR MUNICIPAL LEADERS

1. Affordable Housing
2. Food Security
3. Public Transit
4. Equity and Employment
HOW TO DEVELOP A
COMMUNITY WELLBEING
REPORT

Write one Community Showcase for each domain

• Select one community initiative/program to profile per domain
• Identify the point person for each to obtain information
• Schedule interviews with a participant and/or staff person
• Prepare a write up, take photos, and record video interviews

The committee will select one community initiative or program to profile under each domain of the report. A point person will need to obtain the information for each of the community initiatives. A participant of the community initiative/program will be interviewed for that particular component.
COMMUNITY SHOWCASE:
MAKING VOTES COUNT WHERE WE LIVE

True to its long and storied tradition of civic engagement, the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres of Ottawa (CHRC) and City of All Women Initiative (CAWI) joined together in a three year project. Making Votes Count Where We Live, aimed at increasing voter turnout in low income neighbourhoods.

This is highly meaningful since research has consistently shown that people struggling to make ends meet on low incomes are less likely to vote. Consequently, their interests are not addressed, which, in turn, engenders a lack of trust in the political process thereby leading to lower voter turnout rates. And so, what ensues is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Through the generous support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation and Catherine Donnelly Foundation, those affiliated with Making Votes Count Where We Live are intent to change this pattern.

Another key issue which emerged through an extensive community consultation process revealed that it isn’t necessarily a case of people not wanting to vote as it is an access issue in some cases, or the length of time that new immigrants must wait before they are eligible to vote in others.

"Because when you have so many things in your mind, such as poverty, health issues, income, unemployment it’s hard for individuals to go and think about voting because they’ve already in their minds said, they don’t count... So it’s very hard to get, get up in the morning and say “I’m gonna to vote” because all they see is “I don't care, I don't matter.” So what we are doing is to help, to encourage and to empower people."

Ayan Abdulle, Civic Engagement Ambassador, Making Votes Count Project
HOW TO DEVELOP A COMMUNITY WELLBEING REPORT

Assemble the Community Wellbeing Report

• Determine major theme and prepare executive summary
• Assemble the report using the same format as the Ottawa report
• Go through edits in consultation with partners
• Send out for translations, if necessary
HOW TO DEVELOP A COMMUNITY WELLBEING REPORT

Organize the launch for the Community Wellbeing Report

• Identify a point person to coordinate this launch
• Select a date and venue
• Prepare and circulate media releases
• Arrange a presentation to local council re: major findings and recommendations
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR POLICY CHANGE

Taking the measure of Fat City: Ottawa affluent and troubled, report finds

ELIZABETH PAYNE
More from Elizabeth Payne
Published on: October 7, 2014 | Last Updated: October 7, 2014 10:52 AM EST

Quality of life gap widening in Ottawa, group says

Oct 18, 2014 6:30 PM EDT

Ottawa office a great quality of life for residents — those who are affluent. But according to a new report from the local health and resource centres, the city needs to do a better job investing in people and communities.

The report, called Bridging the Gap, used the Canadian Index of Wellbeing's 41 indicators to assess the divide in the quality of life for Ottawa citizens. The results are telling, according to the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres.

Although Ottawa has the highest median income in the country, the city's poverty rate sits at 11.7 per cent — only marginally lower than the number for Ontario - 13.8 per cent — and Canada as a whole, which has a 14.7 per cent poverty rate.

"When you look at the (Canadian Index of Wellbeing) indicators for Ottawa you find a disturbing chalice," said Jack McCarley, executive director of Somerset West Community Health Centre. "There are some indicators that show a city of great prosperity, but there are many others that reveal the city needs to do a better job improving health and wellbeing."

The report was released during a panel discussion at city hall on Oct. 7. One panelist, Mike Bults, executive director of the Alliance to End Homelessness, said the city needs to draw on the potential and assets of that home educated and high-earning population to find innovative ways to help those in poverty.

A new report out today from The Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres of Ottawa finds a large gap between the affluent and everyone else as it looks at Ottawa's overall wellbeing. This is the first time the Canadian Index of Wellbeing has been used to analyse one city.

Grassroots organizations came together to compile the report that looks at all areas of wellness including living standards, environment, democratic engagement, health, education, community vitality and more.

Human development professor Charles Pascal said on top of the research they have good evidence that the only way to improve one's life is to help those in poverty.

"If we say we're not going to address poverty, then we're saying that we don't believe in health and in wellness," said Pascal.
Measuring what matters is only the start, since at the end of the day what matters is ‘Making Measures Matter’

- Jack McCarthy, Executive Director, Somerset West CHC
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you translate indicators into stories that successfully engage the public into action?

2. How can a measurement framework be used as a civic engagement tool to reframe civil society dialogue about the broad determinants of health?

3. How do you bridge research needs with community interests and priorities?
THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES AT
www.communityhealthandwellbeing.org