

EMBARGOED TILL 12:01 am October 20, 2011

## **New index of wellbeing challenges Canada's GDP as sole measure of progress**

**Waterloo, Ont.** – Canada has become a world leader in measuring wellbeing with the launch of a new comprehensive composite index set to challenge the gross domestic product (GDP) as the sole measure of our country's progress, says the Honourable Roy Romanow, advisory board chair for the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW), located at the University of Waterloo.

The CIW today is releasing a comprehensive composite index designed by an interdisciplinary team of accomplished Canadian and international experts to measure the overall wellbeing of Canada. It shows that Canadians' quality of life hasn't improved at anywhere near the pace of economic growth as measured by GDP.

“Since 1994, the starting point for the CIW, Canada's wellbeing has seen an overall improvement of 11 per cent – palling in comparison to the 31 per cent growth in the country's GDP over that same time frame,” says Romanow.

“The CIW shows us what GDP cannot: our country is not reaping all of the benefits of our economic growth. Our quality of life has actually gone down in areas such as the environment, leisure and culture, and time use, with only modest gains in health. And even in areas where growth has been robust, our research shows that it was the top 20 per cent that received the lion's share of rising income and wealth during the boom years, while the gap down to the bottom 20 per cent grew even larger. That's the Canadian reality.”

Seen as a global leader by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the CIW composite index is based on 64 separate indicators in eight interconnected categories, built to reflect real Canadian life.

“This may well be a defining moment in our new economic reality,” says CIW deputy chair, the Honourable Monique Bégin. “By providing an accurate snapshot of how Canada's wellbeing is faring over time, the CIW gives us the tools we need to hold governments accountable for their actions and decisions – so that our quality of life grows along with GDP.”

Located in Waterloo's faculty of applied health sciences, the CIW provides an opportunity to bring together experts in all aspects of wellbeing. The faculty has been an international leader for over 40 years in research related to promoting health and optimizing quality of life.

“This is an exciting first step toward a better understanding of the complexity of our wellbeing”, says Bryan Smale, professor in the faculty of applied health sciences and director of the CIW. “The reports we will be generating in the coming years will drive the conversation leading to real social change that will enhance Canadian lives.”

Today's release of the CIW puts Canada ahead of France and the UK, countries also on their way to developing a similar index.

**To learn more about the CIW or enjoy a short video and infographic please visit:**

[www.ciw.ca](http://www.ciw.ca)

### **About Waterloo**

In just half a century, the University of Waterloo, located at the heart of Canada's Technology Triangle, has become one of Canada's leading comprehensive universities with 30,000 full- and part-time students in undergraduate and graduate programs. Waterloo, as home to the world's largest post-secondary co-operative education program, embraces its connections to the world and encourages enterprising partnerships in learning, research and discovery. In the next decade, the university is committed to building a better future for Canada and the world by championing innovation and collaboration to create solutions relevant to the needs of today and tomorrow. For further details, visit [www.uwaterloo.ca](http://www.uwaterloo.ca).

– 30 –

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