

# **Measuring what matters for sustainable growth and improved wellbeing of communities**

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## **Abstract:**

This paper argues that identifying and measuring social, health, economic and environmental perspectives of fast growing communities are crucial for responsible, equitable and sustainable growth and overall community wellbeing.

The paper also shares a broad vision of collaboration of key stakeholders that especially includes local governments, because their presence throughout the process is strategic to the prioritization and acceptance of measurements and policy recommendations.

The paper presents the work of a collaborative that used the Canadian Index of Wellbeing for Vaughan/York Region – one of the fastest growing City and Region in Canada. A year-long study was carried out and successfully advocated for multiple policy recommendations including social economy for sustainable growth and improved community wellbeing.

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### **Abbreviations**

ANSER	Association for Nonprofits and Social Economy Research
AOHC	Association of Ontario Health Centres
CHCs	Community Health Centres
CIW	Canadian Index of Wellbeing
EPIC	Enterprise Promotion and Innovation Centre (A Social Economy Incubator)
HOPE	Healthy Outcomes of Preventive Engagements
VCHC	Vaughan Community Health Centre
VCWC	Vaughan Community Wellbeing Coalition
YR	Municipality of the York Region

## **Section 1**

### **Introduction**

The paper presents a project that was envisioned at a provincial conference of the Association of Ontario Health Centres (AOHC) in 2008 when the Honorable Roy Romanow spoke about the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW), the need to have an alternative to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a measure of societal progress and that Community Health Centres (CHCs) would rally behind this work because of their broader philosophy of health & wellness based on social determinants of health.

The GDP is one of the main indicators used to gauge the health of a country's economy and its prosperity. It represents the total dollar value of all goods and services produced over a specific time period; hence it gives the size of the economy.

Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) measures the overall quality of life enjoyed by Canadians by measuring economic, health, social and environmental wellbeing. The CIW acts as a companion measure of societal progress to the GDP, which is based solely upon economic productivity. “The work to develop CIW started in 1999; during the 2006-2008 CIW was developed with three rounds of major public consultations. In 2009, 2010 and 2011 eight domains and associated indicators of wellbeing measurement were released. In 2011, Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo was chosen as the new home of CIW network and research.<sup>1</sup>”

“Community Health Centres (CHCs) deliver primary care services in combination with health promotion and illness prevention services. In addition to promoting the health of individuals and

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<sup>1</sup> This information was summarized from <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/about-canadian-index-wellbeing/history>

families, CHCs mount initiatives that address social, economic and environmental problems negatively impacting people's health. CHCs are governed by community members, and working hand in hand with those they serve, CHCs also prioritize improving the health and wellbeing of populations who've traditionally faced barriers accessing health services.<sup>2</sup>”

Ontario has a total of 74 CHCs serving approximately 500,000 people with 250,000 of these accessing primary care services.

“The Association of Ontario's Health Centres (AOHC) is Ontario's voice for community-governed primary health care. AOHC represent 108 community-governed primary health care organizations. Its membership includes Ontario's CHCs, Aboriginal Health Access Centres, Community Family Health Teams and Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics.

AOHC, as well as its members, believe good health is much more than something you get in a medical clinic. It believes that better health begins in our homes, in our schools, in our workplaces, and in the communities where we live. AOHC's goal is therefore to work towards a complete state of wellbeing for individuals, families and entire communities.<sup>3</sup>”

The 2008 presentation by Honorable Roy Romanow led to the considerable interest not just amongst other CHCs, but other stakeholders as well. AOHC convened a meeting involving interested CHCs. A decision was made to apply for an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant.

Shortly thereafter, AOHC prepared a concept paper that identified the ways CHCs could use the CIW to add value to what they were already doing. A decision was made to go with six early adopters based on criteria. Vaughan was one of the original group of six as was Ottawa.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aohc.org/community-health-centres>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aohc.org/who-we-are>

Human Endeavour an innovative organization strongly that believes in evidence based practices and their use in making a meaningful and measureable difference in its client's lives as well as in the societal progress. Since its inception, Human Endeavour has placed a strong focus on measuring the impact of its programs through regular broad base surveys, studies and research. These assessments were both quantitative and qualitative, analyzed by SSPS tools and validated by Six Sigma tools and techniques.

In 2010, Human Endeavour won the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care & Ontario Hospitals Association's Provincial Innovation Award in Evidence Based Practice category for its initiative HOPE - Healthy Outcomes of Preventive Engagements.

In 2014, Human Endeavour used CIW as a base framework to measure the overall well-being of immigrant seniors and presented a research on the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Positive Aging Feb. 9-12, 2014 in Florida. USA.

This paper has six sections. **First** being this introduction, the **second** section talks about why measurements are necessary. The **third** section describes what to measure for community wellbeing. The **fourth** section shares high level details of CIW. The **fifth** section shares some details of Vaughan Wellbeing study, its partners and its relevance to social economy. The **last section** presents recommendations from the report and to the social economy sector.

## Section 2:

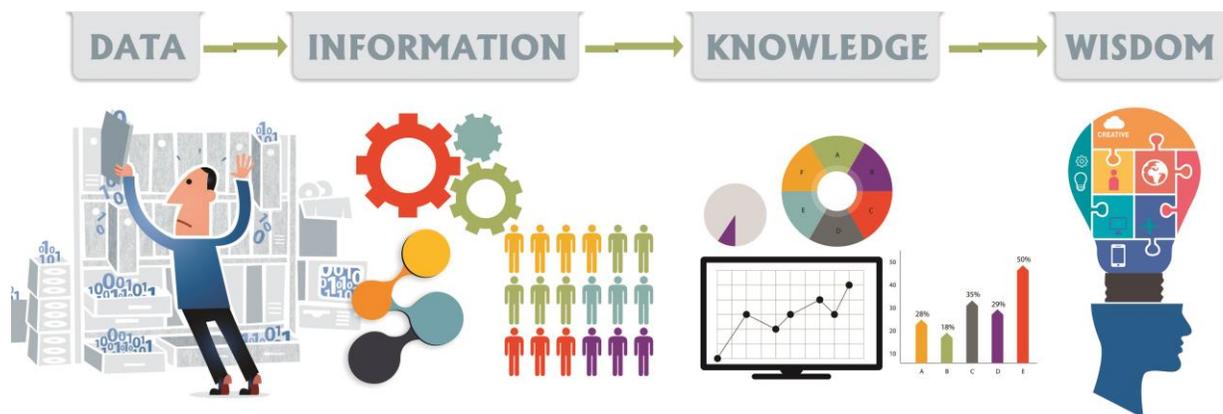
### Importance of measurements and evidence

Every entity has to measure the results of its activities to know the progress it is making to fulfill its mission and comparing input to outputs/outcomes to make appropriate use of its resources.

However, what should be measured and how an entity makes use of the data and measurements depends on its ability to see the bigger picture. For data and evidence driven organizations appropriate measurements and data provides valuable insight that is used to maximize their efficiency and reduce waste and ensure resources are spent on the right areas.

Typically non-profits organizations measure their performance by funds raised, number of clients served, level of community engagement, training sessions etc. These are important indicators but they don't tell the real difference made to clients' lives nor show how the clients are better off as a result of their participation in these activities.

Human Endeavours focuses on intelligent data management that has four stages. Below is an illustration;



Where

- **Data** is comprised of the basic, scattered, unrefined, and generally unfiltered information
- **Information** is organized data
- **Knowledge** is information with meaning
- **Wisdom** is knowledge with personal experiences

Organizations can use this knowledge to improve their focus, efficiency, cost effectiveness and resource allocation and allow the staff to use their personal experiences to use this knowledge to make wise and intelligent decisions.

An example of intelligent measurement: “**For taking the guesswork out of injury prevention;** Last season’s NFL, NBA, and NCAA football champions all had one thing in common: they monitored their athletes’ health using Catapult. The company makes a variety of devices that turn physicality into data—measuring things like an athlete’s power and movement efficiency—which can be crunched to uncover vitally important information like whether an athlete is developing an injury, or whether certain workouts are overly stressful. That helps teams keep their players safe.<sup>4</sup>”

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<sup>4</sup> The World's Top 10 Most Innovative Companies Of 2015 In Big Data BY FAST COMPANY STAFF

## Section 3:

### What to measure for community wellbeing

The maturity of an organization or a society is demonstrated by what it measures; what data is collected, organized, and interpreted in the context of overall societal wellbeing.

Traditionally, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was designed to measure the progress of the economy. But overtime it became a measure of the prosperity and progress of the country as well.

Following is an excerpt from a speech made by US presidential candidate Robert Kennedy about GDP measuring “everything except that which is worthwhile” at University of Kansas.<sup>5</sup>

“Gross National Product counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for the people who break them. It counts the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl.

Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials.

It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, **it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.**<sup>6</sup>”

This leads us to evaluate the need and importance of Canadian Index of Wellbeing.

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<sup>5</sup> “everything except that which is worthwhile” at University of Kansas. March 18, 1968.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/may/24/robert-kennedy-gdp>

## **Section 4:**

### **Canadian Index of Well-being (CIW), framework and tools**

Mission: “To enable all Canadians to share in the highest wellbeing status by identifying, developing and publicizing statistical measures that offer clear, valid and regular reporting on progress toward wellbeing goals and outcomes Canadians seek as a nation.<sup>7</sup>”

“First and foremost, the CIW is a big idea. It is an idea that regards wellbeing as encompassing a wide variety of aspects of life, beyond economic measures like Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It is a conceptual framework drawing on a broad spectrum of domains of life that has the potential to create an ongoing national dialogue that will influence how Canadians think, feel, and act with regard to their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their communities.

Second, the CIW is a tool that is measuring what matters to Canadians. It tracks wellbeing from year to year in an effort to offer clear, effective, and regular information on the quality of life of all Canadians. It is already providing unique insights into the quality of life of Canadians – overall, and in specific areas that matter: our standard of living, our health, the quality of our environment, our education and skill levels, the way we use our time, the vitality of our communities, our participation in the democratic process, and the state of our leisure and culture.

[These are eight main wellbeing domains and each has eight indicators.]

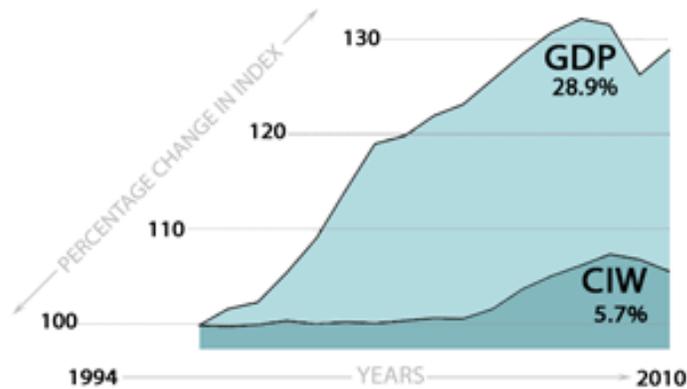
The CIW provides information that policy shapers, decision makers, media, community organizations and the person on the street will be able to use to get the latest trend information in an easily understandable format.<sup>8</sup>”

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<sup>7</sup> <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/about-canadian-index-wellbeing/vision-mission-goals-and-objectives>

<sup>8</sup> <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/our-framework-and-tools>

The value of CIW can be realized by looking at the second release of CIW composite index in October 2012. It shows that from 1994 to 2010 GDP was up by 28.9%, however Canadians' quality of life as measured by CIW was up only by 5.7%<sup>9</sup>.



[2<sup>nd</sup> CIW Composite index Diagram<sup>9</sup>]

A group of organizations lead by Association of Ontario Health Centres and Vaughan Community Health Centre embarked on a study to measure the wellbeing of Vaughan and its residents by using CIW framework and tools.

This study was part of a project that was initiated by AOHC in collaboration with CHCs with the funding from Ontario Trillium Foundations to use CIW index to measure the wellbeing of a community. A similar study was carried out by AOHC for Ottawa in 2014.

The next section covers the approach, key partnerships, research, findings and recommendations of the collaborative to the local governments.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/our-framework-and-tools/composite-index-tool>

## **Section 5:**

### **Vaughan wellbeing study, coalition and social economy**

Vaughan Community Wellbeing Coalition (VCWC) a partnership of local residents, organizations, businesses, educational institutions and municipal council, was designed to act as a catalyst to promote higher levels of individual and community health and foster a culture of wellbeing unique to Vaughan. VCWC consisted of nine major players: Catholic Community Services of York Region, City of Vaughan, Human Endeavour, Social Planning Council of York Region, United Way Toronto and York Region, Vaughan Community Health Centre, Vaughan Public Libraries, York University and York Region District School Board.

[The Regional Municipality of York and AOHC provided valuable input and support for the development of this report.]

“The coalition convened during a period of incredible growth. Vaughan’s population has increased over 187% since it was moved from being a town to a city in 1991 and is now home to 320,530 residents. Vaughan is one of Canada’s fastest growing municipalities. Compared with the twenty largest municipalities across the country, Vaughan ranks second in terms of population growth. In coming years this growth is expected to increase. The coalition recognized that this expansion is driving Vaughan’s economic progress, but development must also be sustainable and equitable.<sup>10</sup>”

To help stakeholders better plan to meet the evolving needs of the community while at the same time considering social, health, economic and environmental perspectives, AOHC and VCHC

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.vaughanhealthcarehc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2015-10-30-Vaughan-Report-Interactive1.pdf>

created a unique coalition with key local stakeholders along with city and regional government's representatives.

The City and Regional participation in the coalition was very significant as group and its leadership wanted to work with these entities throughout the study and have their full support to the final recommendations.

The City of Vaughan and the Regional Municipality of York were very supportive of this study from the beginning and contributed enormously through staff time and providing statistics. Tony Carella, Vaughan City Councilor and VCHC Board Chair was a member of the coalition and facilitated between Vaughan and the coalition activities that resulted in extensive support from Vaughan Council and staff and in securing necessary resources. Coalition made an official deputation to Vaughan Council about the final recommendations and is currently working for their implementation and measuring progress.

Human Endeavour's participation in this coalition, research and study was significant from many perspectives. First, it has always focused on a holistic approach to improve the overall wellbeing. Its emphasis to address the social determinants of health fits with the philosophy of CHCs and CIW. Secondly, Human Endeavour started its operations from Vaughan in 2004. It runs immigrant seniors' health and wellness groups under the umbrella of HOPE – Healthy Outcomes of Preventive Engagements, multi-award winning project, serving more than 700 seniors at seven locations, in York Region. Human Endeavour also runs its successful social economy incubator known as EPIC – Enterprise Promotion and Innovation Centre in Vaughan. It offers many other community building projects that have significantly improved the wellbeing and quality of life of vulnerable community members. Human Endeavours initiatives are innovative, low cost, sustainable, built on a replicable model and supported by concrete quantitative and qualitative

evidences for others to benefit, hence this collaborative study was a way to share Human Endeavour's programs and influence the policy recommendations.

Vaughan wellbeing report “has been developed to guide the growth in the best possible way. It presents evidence that Vaughan has many strengths to build on. A growing number of newcomers add to the city's vibrancy and diversity and, on the whole, Vaughan is prosperous. The average income is higher than the provincial average and the majority of residents have a post-secondary education.

However, important issues need to be addressed to ensure sustainable growth and optimal wellbeing for Vaughan's residents. Lack of affordable housing, long commuting times, as well as the associated need for improved public transportation, are issues of concern. In some neighbourhoods, pockets of hidden poverty present another worry....

Some of these early warning signals about health and wellbeing in Vaughan have been flagged by the city's social service agencies, many of which are supported by the City of Vaughan and the York Region. A number of their innovative initiatives are featured throughout this report.

Called *Measuring What Matters*, the research and subsequent report uses the internationally recognized Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) to create a detailed, data-driven snapshot of Vaughan's quality of life. Its intention is to present evidence of concern, and then move this evidence to action. We are proud to be among the first municipalities using the CIW to gain a comprehensive look at our community.<sup>10»</sup>

Within the context of this study Human Endeavour successfully argued for the inclusion of local economic development as one of the policy recommendation in the action plan to improve the economic wellbeing of newcomers and marginalized communities. Report also stresses the

importance of municipal/regional governments' support in such initiatives to promote the integrated socio-economic projects. EPIC social economy incubator in Vaughan was captured as an example in the report. Through our discussion in the coalition and subsequent outreach through the "Measuring What Matters" report the message of social economy has reached out to a large audience and will help pave the way for its promotion and adoption.

Measuring What Matters report is available at: <http://www.vaughanhealthcarehc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2015-10-30-Vaughan-Report-Interactive1.pdf>

## **Section 6:**

### **Recommendations and the Way Forward**

Measuring What Matters consultations resulted in four policy recommendations for Vaughan.

1. Increase affordable housing by adopting policies that support an increase in the supply of safe and legal secondary suites within existing homes.
2. Increase access to transportation by developing an effective mobility hub to accommodate interconnecting multimodal transportation options. In addition, the existing transit subsidies should be expanded to ensure families of all income levels have access to affordable transit.
3. Improve air quality by connecting the dots between long-term growth, transportation plans and health care costs. As a first step, consider introducing monitoring devices on fleet vehicles.
4. Promote local economic development by helping to foster an entrepreneurial economy with fairer and more equitable integration opportunities for newcomers and other marginalized communities.

In the wake of the learning from this research and study, organizations with broader wellness focus must collaborate and promote their philosophy with local governments as a preferred and more viable way to create an environment that offers complete wellbeing of communities.

CIW's measurement of multiple domains of wellness compared to GDP's single focus on economic output, and AOHC / CHCs' philosophy of wellbeing based on social determinants of health nicely matches with the blended return philosophy offered by social economy. Hence, the paper recommends the social economy sector be part of similar collaborations to raise awareness and speed up its adoption as an enhanced version of the economy focusing on profit, people and planet in comparison to the capital economy that focuses on profits only.

## **Annex - Brief biographies of the Authors**

**Noor Din** migrated to Canada in 1990 and obtained a Master's Degree in Computer Engineering from University of Toronto. After having worked for two decades in technology industry in Pakistan and Canada, he founded Human Endeavour ([www.humanendeavour.org](http://www.humanendeavour.org)) in 2004 to bring much needed innovations in health, economic and social sectors through outside-the-box thinking and community lead programs to make a meaningful change for the marginalized. His initiatives have received many awards for their innovation and evidence based practices. He is the recipient of 3M Health Leadership Award in 2012.

Noor is currently the CEO of Human Endeavour. He is also an affiliated member with CERIS Metropolis Centre at York University and has presented many research papers on social economy, innovations and community based health & wellness models. Email:

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**Isabel Araya** graduated from St. Thomas University in Colombia as a Psychologist. She also attended the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education --University of Toronto, and obtained her Masters degree in Education & Counselling. She has worked in the CHC sector for over 20 years. Isabel is the inaugural Executive Director at Vaughan Community Health Centre. Email:

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**Gary Machan** graduated with a Master in Social Work from Wilfrid Laurier University in 1992. During the course of his career he has spearheaded a number of community initiatives including a community shared agriculture project, non-profit dental clinic, Centre for Inner Freedom, Eco health Initiative, Food Partners Alliance of Simcoe County, and Resilience Collaborative. He is the recipient of several awards such as the Ontario Tobacco Innovation award, Ontario Second Stage of Medicare Award, Food Champion Award. Currently, he is the Policy and Stakeholder Lead for Community Health and Wellbeing for the Association of Ontario Health Centres. In addition, he serves on the Community Research and Advisory Committee for the Canadian Index of Wellbeing. Email: [gary@aohc.org](mailto:gary@aohc.org)