

The Edmonton 2008 Genuine Progress Indicator Report

The State of Economic, Social and
Environmental Wellbeing for the City of
Edmonton

Executive Summary

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EDMONTON 2009 GPI REPORT

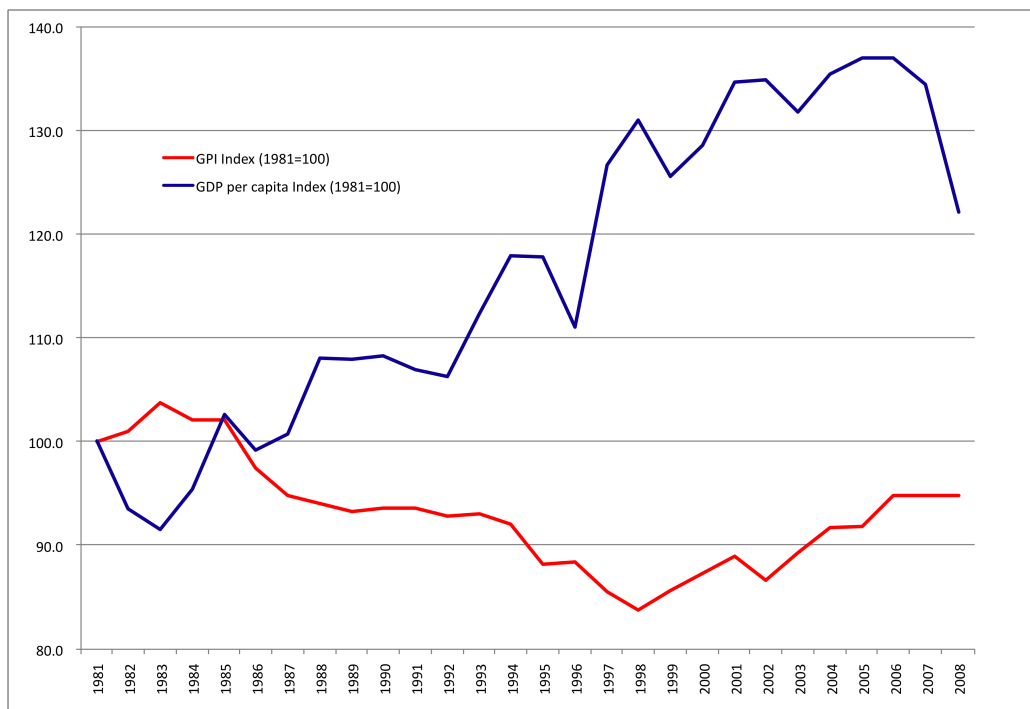
Executive Summary

This report is the second in a series that assesses the conditions and trends of 48 *genuine progress indicators* (GPI) of economic, social and environmental wellbeing for Edmonton over the period 1981 to 2008. The purpose of the study was to answer the question:

Is Edmonton's economic progress sustainable in terms of other quality of life and wellbeing conditions?

To help answer this question, the GPI analysis examines the trends and interrelationships of economic growth (measured in terms of real GDP per capita) with 47 other indicators of wellbeing. The result is a *state of wellbeing* account for the City of Edmonton.

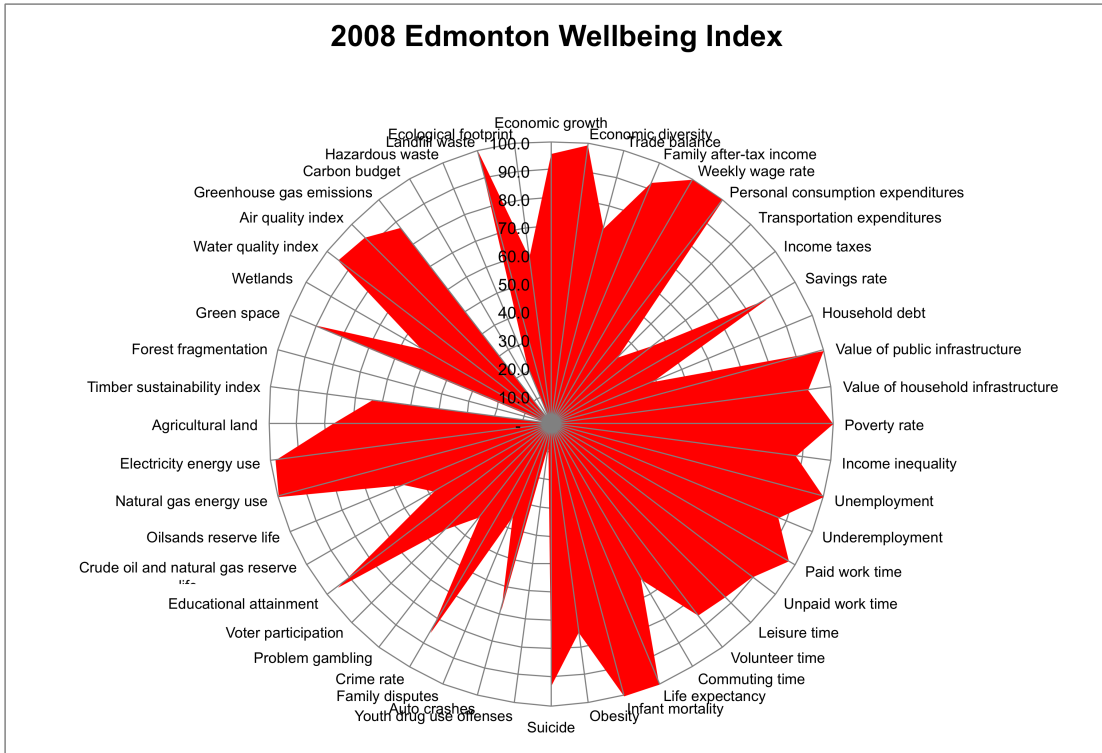
The 2009 Edmonton GPI accounts of wellbeing shows a mixture of both positive and negative trends in Edmonton's economic, social and environmental wellbeing.



The above figure summarizes the overall results contrasting Edmonton's real GDP per capita with a composite Edmonton Wellbeing Index – comprising all 48 economic, social and environmental indicators. The results show that between 1981 and 2008, Edmonton's real GDP per capita has risen, albeit irregularly, and declined sharply between 2007 and 2008 due to the affects of significant economic inflation in the Alberta economy.

In contrast to economic growth, the Edmonton Wellbeing Index rose slightly in the early mid-1980s above the 1981 benchmark year, peaked in 1983 then declined steadily hitting a low in

1998. Since 1998, the overall Edmonton Wellbeing Index has been steadily increasing though has not yet reached the 1981 benchmark-year level.



The results suggest that while the economy has grown steadily on a per capita basis between 1981-2008, the overall conditions of wellbeing were declining until 1998 when a recovery in overall wellbeing has been underway.

The next figure shows the respective wellbeing conditions of all 48 economic (12 indicators), social (20 indicators) and environmental (16) wellbeing indicators for the year 2008, displayed in consolidated radial graphic creating a flower shape with each indicator representing a discrete petal. The healthier the condition of wellbeing the higher the index score for that indicator (e.g. 100 is the maximum score or optimum wellbeing).

Of the 12 economic wellbeing indicators, 9 are in a positive or improving wellbeing condition and three (transportation expenditures, income taxes, and household debt) are in poor or declining condition of wellbeing. Overall, the Edmonton Economic Wellbeing Index has been improving since reaching a low in 1998.

Of the 20 social wellbeing indicators 7 are in a positive or improving condition of wellbeing, including life expectancy, infant mortality, unemployment, crime rates, 11 are in negative or declining condition, including family disputes, commuting time, youth drug crimes, problem gambling, and voter participation, and two (paid work time and unpaid work time) are mostly unchanged. Overall, the Edmonton Social Wellbeing Index has been improving since reaching a low in 2003.

Of the 16 environmental wellbeing indicators, 7 are in positive or improving condition (river water quality, air quality index, natural gas and electricity consumption, and residential waste) to landfills, 8 are in negative or declining condition (oil and gas reserve life, greenhouse gas

emissions per capita, carbon budget deficit, green space per capita, hazardous waste and ecological footprint) and one remains relatively unchanged (oilsands reserve life). Overall, the Edmonton Environmental Wellbeing Index has been improving since reaching a low in 1998. Forecasts of the Edmonton Wellbeing Index, based on the previous five-year average trends, suggest that by 2014 the conditions of wellbeing will continue to improve and the Index will have exceeded all-time highs in the early 1980s.

Overall, the results of the wellbeing assessment shows that Edmonton's overall state of wellbeing is in a healthy and improving condition, though there are some economic, social and environmental conditions that need attention. For example, rising income inequality, rising levels of family disputes, loss of urban agricultural land, rising numbers of auto crashes, and a growing ecological footprint.

The results of this assessment of wellbeing represents a first step in developing an even more comprehensive portrait of wellbeing for Edmonton. The results can be used to provide important context to Edmonton's long-range strategic plan and in helping to shape public policies.