

## Ideas for Positive Change

Canadians believe that the path to a meaningful life is built from, among other things, balanced time use and fulfilling leisure and culture activities. Our quest to improve upon the current situation will require both “remedying the bad” and “enhancing the good”.

Below are a number of ideas that could help bring about positive change. The list is by no means comprehensive, nor is it intended to be. One of the objectives of the CIW is to engage Canadians in a dialogue about the types of policy solutions that would improve our quality of life. The CIW hopes that its research findings and ideas for change will help spark such a dialogue.

1. **Upgrade and effectively enforce employment standards** to ensure all workers have access to basic labour rights, including those in precarious circumstances facing demands for flexible and non-standard employment. As a way to improve enforcement of existing standards, the Workers Action Centre ([www.workersactioncentre.org](http://www.workersactioncentre.org)) has proposed the idea of extending investigations of individual substantiated employment standards violations to cover all employees within a workplace. This would help curb offences while reducing duplication of individual claims against the same employer. Pilot projects within sectors with a history of violations – such as cleaners, business services, temporary employment agencies, small-scale manufacturing – could be a first step in testing this approach across various jurisdictions.
2. **Dig deeper on how time use, leisure and recreation are affecting particular groups** by collecting better and more frequent information. Some groups of Canadians – defined by race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, dis/ability, gender, sexual orientation and language proficiency – experience particular systemic barriers that further compromise time use patterns and limit participation in leisure and health enhancing activities. By looking at the different experiences of Canadians, we can more effectively pinpoint research and policy development.
3. **Reduce the time crunch through family friendly work policies.** As a result of a growing awareness of work-life balance issues and the impact on employees, many companies are addressing the issue by offering parental leave top-ups, onsite daycare, earned time off programs, working from home, job sharing and other initiatives. For examples of good practices in Canada, check out the list of *Canada’s Top 25 Family Friendly Employers* at [www.canadastop100.com/family](http://www.canadastop100.com/family).

4. **Meet the needs of modern families through family friendly social policies** that are balancing caregiving of aging parents and/or younger children. Expanding access to early learning and childcare is one part of the equation. The OECD has identified access to early learning and care support (including out of school hours care services) as a key family friendly policy. Parents in Québec already have access to \$7 per day childcare while Ontario will begin rolling out a full day early learning program for 4 and 5 year olds starting in September 2010. Strengthening eldercare and equitable access to aging at home options is the other side. Polling by the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) shows that Canadians of retirement age would want to bring care services into their home, even at a cost, rather than going to a facility for care. However, seniors also report that not enough quality in-home or in-facility care services are available in most provinces to meet the need – [www.carp.ca](http://www.carp.ca).
5. **Encourage neighbourhood “walkability”** through the urban planning process, to improve infrastructure, aesthetics, traffic safety and closeness to stores. Walkable neighbourhoods offer diverse benefits to the environment, our health, our finances, and our communities. To find out how your home stacks up on “walkability” check out [www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com). It calculates the “walkability” of any address based on the distance from that address to nearby amenities such as stores, parks, restaurants, libraries and other services.
6. **Invest more in school-based health promotion** as a proven strategy to boost young peoples’ physical activity, nutrition, and mental health as well as contributing to moderating how much time young people spend in front of TV and playing video games. FoodShare’s Good Food Café bills itself as “the future of school lunches.” It serves healthy, affordable, and nutritious food to students of the College Français, which shares the same building as the Café in west Toronto. Mindful that students come from across the city, some are from families with limited food budgets, Foodshare is working on ways to make subsidized meals "invisible" through a debit card system. It's also boosting local sourcing, and encouraging farmers/growers to visit the students or vice versa, bringing food into the curriculum – [www.foodshare.net](http://www.foodshare.net).
7. **Read to young children** as a sure way to improve their learning and communication skills and help them get ready for school. To find 'tips for parents' on how to foster early literacy, visit the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) website at <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/LessonsInLearning/LiL-1Feb2006.htm?Language=EN>. To find a good read for a younger person, check out the shortlist of candidates for the annual Book of the Year for Children

Award of The Canadian Association of Children's Librarians available on the Canadian Libraries Association website [www.cla.ca](http://www.cla.ca).

8. **Expand opportunities for lifelong learning, recreation and social interaction for seniors** through age-friendly community planning. Age-friendly spaces reap benefits for urban populations as a whole. Barrier-free buildings and streets enhance the mobility and independence of people living with disabilities, young as well as old. Ensuring affordable and accessible public transit as well as social and community supports for older people ease the stress of families caring and allow for the kind of work and volunteering on the part of older people that helps build strong communities. Ensuring participation also helps the local economy profit from the patronage of older adult consumers.
  
9. **Encourage barrier-free arts and culture activities** through support and promotion of performing artists, productions, festivals and venues. A good example is the annual Luminato festival ([www.luminato.com](http://www.luminato.com)), a ten-day celebration of the arts where Toronto's stages, streets, and public spaces are infused with culturally diverse theatre, dance, classical and contemporary music, film, literature, visual arts, and design. Luminato provides many free, accessible events, 'accidental encounters with art', and incorporates Toronto's cultural diversity in its programming.
  
10. **Promote inclusive environments for physical, leisure and social activities** by ensuring everyone has the opportunity to participate. Inclusion can be enabled through initiatives such as discounted or free programming available for those with limited incomes, as well as tax credits to allow all families to better afford these programs. In the area of sports, True Sport ([www.truesportpur.ca](http://www.truesportpur.ca)) is a growing movement of people across Canada who believe that sport can transform lives and communities – if we commit to organizing community sport activities that are healthy, fair, inclusive, fun and stand against cheating, bullying, aggressive parental behaviour, and 'win at all costs' thinking.
  
11. **Engage volunteers** from diverse backgrounds with various interests by more effectively harnessing the opportunities and knowledge of the community and voluntary sector. Volunteer Canada ([www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca)) is proposing the idea of a Canadian Volunteer Support System for communities across the country. This system would target training, knowledge sharing, innovation and basic volunteer management resources for those at the grass roots level who must deal daily with the challenges of finding willing volunteers and assuring that those volunteers are effective in providing vital services.