



Toronto's Vital Signs® Report 2014 message from John Barford and Rahul K. Bhardwaj

It's about time.

Toronto, it's about time we stopped asking ourselves whether we're a world-class city; we're near the top of the class.

The Economist has declared Toronto the fourth most livable city in the world for the sixth year in a row. We were named the 2014 Intelligent Community of the Year by the Intelligent Community Forum, recognized as the Youthful City of the Year by the YouthfulCities Index, and we continue to rank highly on many leading international indices.

What does it take to be world class?

It helps to be recognized as a good place to do business. Toronto is the most tax competitive of 51 international cities, one of the least expensive places in the world to do business, and we've been ranked third among 422 metro areas in the Americas for attractiveness in business investment.

Construction, considered a key indicator of economic vitality, is strong. This spring, 147 high- and mid-rise buildings were under construction in Toronto, more than in any other North American city.

The Toronto Region's importance in the national jobs landscape has been growing since the financial crisis of 2008. Almost one in three jobs created in Canada between 2010 and 2013 was in the Region.

Our cultural economy is booming, too. Toronto's creative workforce has grown 34 per cent since 2001, more than twice the rate of the overall labour force. Arts and culture contribute \$11.3 billion annually to the city's GDP; in 2013, film, television, and other screen-based media production spending exceeded \$1 billion for the third year in a row.

And, we're safe. For the seventh straight year, the Toronto Region had the lowest rate of police-reported crime of Canadian cities. It dropped by 7 per cent in 2013 over 2012, 42 per cent since 2003, and is the lowest rate of any of the 33 metropolitan areas.

Our commitment to education is paying dividends. Students are now graduating at a rate higher than ever before. In 2013, 83 per cent of TDSB students completed high school. That's up 3 per cent from 2012 and 20.3 per cent higher than 2000.

And let's not forget what else makes our city a great place to live.

Like our healthy environment. For the fourth straight year, eight of Toronto's 11 beaches were designated "Blue Flag." Toronto has 1,600 parks, our air is cleaner than it was 10 years ago, and this summer did not have one smog alert day, for the first time in decades. It helps that over 150,000 Torontonians cycle daily. (During rush hour, there are often as many cyclists as cars on College Street.)

Like our vibrant cultural life. Toronto is home to 66 per cent more artists than any other Canadian city and at \$22 per capita investment in the arts, our city is getting closer to its long-time target of \$25 per capita. With 99 branches, Toronto Public Library continues to be among the world's largest and busiest urban public library systems.

Like our neighbourhoods. Our city is the third-most walkable of Canada's 10 largest cities, and close to seven in 10 Torontonians, and nearly eight in 10 youth, report a strong sense of belonging to their local community.

The Toronto Region is a great place to visit, too. In 2013, new records were set for overseas visitors and hotel room nights sold. The combined

spending of these guests brought \$6.5 billion to the local economy. This was up from \$4.7 billion in 2012.

And we attract highly-skilled people from around the world. We have grown to the point where 51 per cent of Toronto's residents are foreign born. Diversity really is this city's strength.

We have so much going for us, Toronto. It's no wonder we've become recognized as a global city of the highest order. As we embrace this recognition, it's about time we also grappled with the issues that come with being a rapidly growing and increasingly dense metropolis.

Like traffic. It's about lost time. The Toronto Region ranked 15th out of 22 global metros for commuting time. Our average commute is longer than anywhere in North America except New York City. And further, traffic fatalities (63 in our city in 2013) were 43 per cent higher than in 2012, and 60 per cent of those deaths were seniors.

Like unaffordable housing. The Toronto Region ranked as "severely" unaffordable, according to an annual, international housing affordability survey of 360 markets worldwide. The Region remains the second most unaffordable housing market in Canada (behind Vancouver) – 65 per cent of pre-tax household income is required to cover the average costs of home ownership. At the end of 2013, more than 77,000 households in our city were on wait lists for affordable housing.

On the health front, 648,000 Torontonians experience high stress almost all of the time. More than one third of high school students report uncomfortable levels of stress. Last year, more than 6 per cent of residents were diagnosed with diabetes and over 46 per cent of adults reported being overweight or obese.

After a six-year decline, Toronto's child poverty rates are on the rise. In 2012, 29 per cent of children were living in poverty. In 14 Toronto neighbourhoods, the rate was over 40 per cent.

It's about time to face these challenges before they become chronic and crippling. In fact, youth unemployment tells us we're already there: it's been at 15 per cent or higher for a decade. Transit progress has been painfully slow. And exorbitant housing costs mean too many people can't afford food. For the fifth year in a row, there were over one million visits to foodbanks in the GTA (Foodbank visits in the inner suburbs have increased by 38 per cent since 2008).

It's about time more residents were able to experience Toronto as the fourth most livable city in the world.

As you pause for a moment to consider Toronto's vital signs, consider this: Toronto is a spectacular city and we have many reasons to revel in that fact and feel optimistic about what's to come.

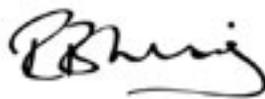
But we cannot stop there. We need to be thinking hard about the future of this most livable city. In the global economy, talent is critical to a city's competitiveness. We're already attracting the best and brightest from Canada and around the world, and diversity comes with new ideas and innovation. But to continue to attract, as well as retain, human capital, we need to offer the best opportunities and a shared quality of life.

Where will the vision and energy needed to propel Toronto into the future come from?

From people like you. At the Toronto Foundation, we encourage you, and your friends and neighbours, to become informed about and get engaged with your city. It's the best investment you'll ever make. And, it's about time!



John Bardford
Chair, Board of Directors



Rahul K. Bhardwaj
President & CEO

Toronto's Vital Signs Report 2014 is available on the Toronto Foundation website: www.torontofoundation.ca