

# CASCADIA SCORECARD 2006

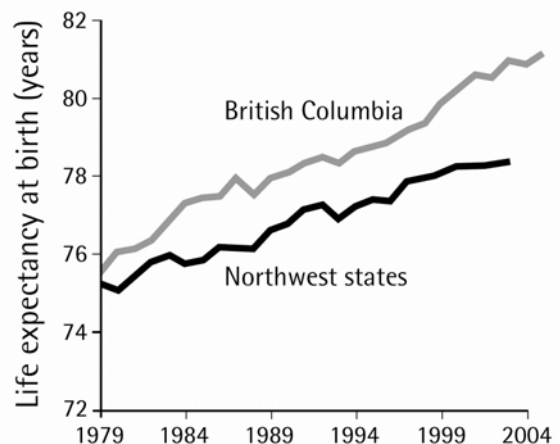
## Sightline Institute

### BRITISH COLUMBIA'S 2006 SCORE

*Cascadia Scorecard 2006* reports Cascadia's progress on seven key trends, with a special focus on the connections between community design and health. Here's how British Columbia "scores."

#### Health and Sprawl: BC's compact cites may contribute to less obesity, longer lifespan

- British Columbia boasts the lowest obesity rate in the Northwest, 12 percent, compared to 21 percent for the Northwest states of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Obesity in British Columbia is rising, but only about one-fourth as fast as the Northwest states.
- BC residents also drive less and die less often in car collisions. BC residents drive about 8,300 kilometers a year, on average, roughly 45 percent less than residents of the Northwest states. Vehicle collisions account for 9.8 deaths per 100,000 residents, the lowest rate in Cascadia. (See map, p. 44.)
- BC's advantage in obesity and vehicle deaths can be attributed in part to smart city planning that favors walkable neighborhoods, which encourage physical activity and discourage car use.
- Of seven Northwest cities, Vancouver and Victoria have the highest percentage of residents in compact neighborhoods (62 percent and 34 percent, respectively, in 2001). Residents of Vancouver's city center face a fatal crash risk one-third as high as the provincewide average.
- BC boasts the longest average lifespan in the Northwest and in Canada, 81.1 years in 2005—an increase of 3 years just since 1990. If BC were a nation, it would have the world's second longest life expectancy, trailing only Japan.
- Keys to improving health throughout BC include policy innovations such as fostering a blend of stores and services in residential areas, creating better street connections, easing parking requirements, and allowing infill development.



#### Energy: Energy use increasing, but BC still consumes the least per person

- In 2005, British Columbians' energy use (including highway fuels and electricity for homes and businesses) increased slightly, to the equivalent of 42 liters of gasoline per person per week of highway fuels and nonindustrial electricity—roughly one-third less than the average resident of the Northwest states (59.4 liters of gasoline equivalent per week).
- Perhaps due to higher prices, BC's per-person gasoline consumption declined in 2005—to an average of just 20.1 liters per week. But the province's consumption of diesel has been rising slightly.
- Steps to make British Columbia's energy system more secure and efficient include market incentives to reward consumers to use less energy, such as pay-by-the-mile car insurance; and feebates, a fee/rebate system that would nudge the industry toward energy-efficient vehicle design.

### **Pollution: PCBs and PBDEs in every mother tested**

- In 2005, Sightline released new results from its 2004 study of contaminants in breastmilk samples donated by 40 Cascadian mothers, including 10 from BC.
- Laboratory tests found PCBs, chemical contaminants that were banned in the 1970s because of harmful health effects, in each of the samples. In BC, the average PCB level was 141 parts per billion, a typical level found in the study.
- PBDEs, toxic flame retardants found in many consumer products, were also found in all the samples at high levels.

### **Economy: BC shows poor record of improvement**

- In 2003, the most recent year for which data are available, British Columbia had persistently high rates of residents below the low-income cut-off (20.1 percent) and children below the low-income cut-off (23.9 percent). Because good data on British Columbia's economic security are not available in timely fashion, decision-makers may lack a true picture of the province's economy.
- Typical residents in BC are struggling to maintain their standard of living: inflation-adjusted median income has stagnated for at least a decade. The Scorecard's economic security index, a gauge of how working families are faring, tracks typical household incomes, the unemployment rate, the poverty rate, and the child poverty rate.

### **Population: Smallest family size; lowest teen birthrate**

- British Columbia's average family size, or total fertility rate, is 1.4 children, the smallest in the Northwest. Family size, or total fertility rate, is a sensitive indicator of educational and economic opportunities for women, especially young or poor women.
- At 10.5 births per 1,000 teenage girls, BC's teen birthrate is by far the lowest in the Northwest—about one-third of the teen birthrate in the Northwest states.

### **Wildlife: Caribou struggle, orcas improve**

- *Cascadia Scorecard 2006* introduces a new measure of ecosystem health: population trends for five emblematic wildlife species found throughout the bioregion. Wildlife tracked in BC includes the Selkirk herd of mountain caribou; and southern resident orcas living in Puget Sound and the Georgia Basin.
- The good news is that orca numbers—which were depressed by live captures and even shooting—are rebounding. Strict protection measures starting in the 1970s helped restore the southern resident orca population from 70 in 1976 to about 90 resident orcas today.
- But the southern resident orca population is still only about one-third of 19th century levels. Cascadians can aid the orcas by restoring salmon runs and cleaning up toxics.
- The future of mountain caribou—a species that is dwindling throughout southern British Columbia—is also precarious. Over the last six years, despite population additions, the population has hovered around 35, roughly one-tenth of their historical numbers. The main chance for Selkirk caribou to recover is through improved and expanded habitat, meaning strict protection and careful restoration of old-growth forests in the Selkirks.

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