

CASCADIA SCORECARD 2007

Sightline Institute

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S 2007 SCORE

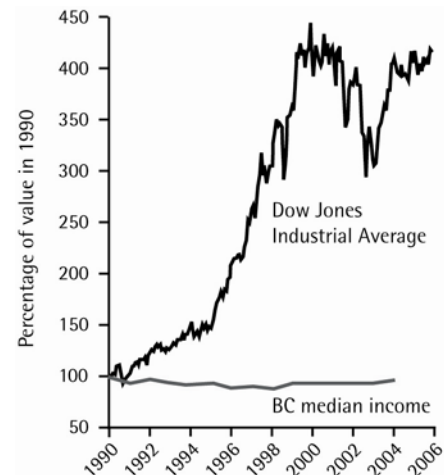
According to the 2007 Cascadia Scorecard, BC leads the Pacific Northwest states in many key trends, including health, energy use, and sprawl, and has made important policy strides just in the past year, especially on climate solutions. But the province still lags behind world leaders in some areas, and has a poor track record in economic security. BC can accelerate its progress through a combination of smart solutions outlined below.

Health: British Columbia leads the Northwest

- With an average lifespan of 81.1 years, British Columbians outlive residents of the Northwest states by two years, on average. If the province were an independent nation, it would have the second longest lifespan in the world, trailing only Japan.
- BC's policies to curb sprawl—such as channeling new growth into already-urban areas—likely improve residents' health by reducing car accidents, reducing vehicle emissions, and encouraging walking.

Economy: Struggling to make ends meet

- Economic security for lower- and middle-income residents in British Columbia remains lower than it was in 1990.
- In 2005, the most recent year that complete data were available, British Columbia's rates of poverty (17.6 percent) and child poverty (20.9 percent) were higher than in the early 1990s, even while Canada's poverty level has declined.
- Despite recent gains, the median income for British Columbians (\$40,400) is slightly below 1990's level and far below the highs of the 1980s, after adjusting for inflation.
- A first step is to improve measures of economic security; key data on trends affecting ordinary and low-income British Columbians are years out of date, with 2005 figures released only this May.



Energy: “Fuel efficiency gap” between BC and Northwest states closing; energy use high

- British Columbia residents consume the equivalent of 10.9 gallons of gasoline per person in highway fuels and electricity for homes and businesses every week, about one third less per person than residents of the US Northwest, although more than residents of many European nations.
- Though British Columbians use about 35 percent less gasoline per person than residents of the Northwest states (19.3 liters weekly compared to 29.9 liters, respectively, in 2006), the “fuel efficiency gap” is closing. The province's per capita gasoline use has not decreased overall since 1990, while residents of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho have cut back their gasoline consumption by about a tenth, on average, since that time.
- Per capita consumption of diesel in BC continued its decades-long rise last year, while electricity use ticked upwards.

- Key steps to make British Columbia's energy system more secure and efficient include climate initiatives aimed at jumpstarting energy efficiency, such as Premier Gordon Campbell's ambitious plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to pre-Kyoto levels by 2020, among other goals. British Columbians should also pay close attention to big transportation proposals that will determine the region's energy efficiency and climate emissions for decades to come.

Sprawl: Progress for healthy communities in BC

- British Columbia is the region's leader at curbing sprawl. Roughly 62 percent of greater Vancouver residents, and 34 percent of Victoria residents, live in compact communities that foster walking and biking, compared to roughly 25 percent in Seattle and Portland.
- BC's leadership in promoting walkable communities—through policies such as the Agricultural Land Reserve—has paid off in a variety of ways. Compared to residents of the Northwest states, British Columbians drive less, use less energy per person, and are less vulnerable to leading health risks such as obesity and car accidents.

Population: Small family size, lowest teen birthrate in the Northwest

- British Columbia's family size, 1.4 children on average, is the lowest level in the region. Family size (also called the total fertility rate) is a sensitive indicator of educational and economic opportunities for women.
- BC's teen birthrate fell again in 2006, to 10.1 births per thousand women under 20, by far the lowest rate in the Northwest. The province's universalized access to emergency contraception at pharmacies may have helped bring down rates of teen births and unintended pregnancies.

Wildlife: Orcas struggle; caribou hold their ground

- The "southern resident" orcas, whose range includes the Georgia Basin, suffered a setback in 2006. Even as new orca calves were welcomed into the pods, four older whales apparently died. By the end of the year, only 86 orcas remained in the southern resident population, roughly one-third of their historical abundance.
- The Selkirk caribou herd, whose range includes parts of southeast British Columbia, still number only about 12 percent of their historical abundance. The caribou need strict protection and restoration of old-growth forests in the Selkirks.

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