

## Welcome to GPI News #3: January, 2001

Dear Friend of GPI,

Welcome to the third newsletter of GPI Atlantic, a non-profit research group that is constructing an index of well-being and sustainable development. This Genuine Progress Index (GPI) consists of 22 social, economic and environmental components that can give a more accurate, comprehensive and humane picture of well-being than current measures based on economic growth statistics.

The GPI includes natural resource accounts, and measures of population health, livelihood security, educational attainment, unpaid work, and environmental quality; and it counts as "costs" some activities that contribute to economic growth -- like, crime, pollution, sickness, accidents and greenhouse gas emissions. For more details on the GPI and why we need a new index, please see *GPI News #1* on the GPI web site at [www.gpiatlantic.org](http://www.gpiatlantic.org).

*Unfortunately, we had a major computer crash that lost all our mailing list contact information. Therefore please send us your phone and fax number and mailing address to [info@gpiatlantic.org](mailto:info@gpiatlantic.org) if you want us to stay in touch. Also let us know if you want us to take you off our mailing list.*

Our first three newsletters are complimentary and are available in PDF format on our web site. We hope they'll encourage you to become subscribers and to help fund the ongoing research required to develop the index, and to apply it to the policy arena. What we count and measure literally reflects our values as a society and determines what makes it onto the policy agenda. By supporting the development of new and better measures of progress, you are helping shape the policy priorities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

- Individual and non-profit organization - annual membership: \$95
- Corporate and government - annual membership: \$190
- Student - annual membership: \$45

Members receive 8 issues of the GPI newsletter, and are also entitled to a 25% discount on all GPI publications (see web site for publications list). You can subscribe on-line at: [www.gpiatlantic.org](http://www.gpiatlantic.org), or by sending a cheque to GPI Atlantic, Box 489, RR#1, Tantallon, N.S. B0J 3J0, Canada. This newsletter will keep members posted on the latest GPI results, research findings and policy applications of the GPI. This issue, which contains our annual report, is the last complimentary issue of GPI News. So send in your membership today to keep posted on the latest GPI results. As we are about to release several major reports, there will be one GPI newsletter each month for the next five months.

As a non-profit group, we depend on member support for our work. We are delighted to send this newsletter your way, and we welcome your suggestions and opinions.

Yours sincerely,  
 Ronald Colman, Ph.D, Director, GPI Atlantic

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## GPI NEWS Vol. 1, No. 3, January 2001

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### ANNUAL REPORT TO MEMBERS:

#### Where Have We Come From and Where We Are Going?

GPI Atlantic is in transition. We are on a new, expanded course of action and we are adjusting to new circumstances. This report summarizes the different aspects of the GPI work -- where we have come from and where we are going. The upcoming issues of the GPI News present results from several new reports to be released this year.

*Please note GPI Atlantic has a new phone number:(902-489-7007)*

#### 1. A Short History

GPI Atlantic was founded as a non-profit society in early 1997 for the purpose of constructing a "Genuine Progress Index" as a measure of wellbeing and sustainable development for Nova Scotia. Many worthy pioneers had seen clearly the flaws of relying on economic growth statistics to assess social wellbeing and had developed excellent methods of accounting for the value of natural resources, unpaid work and quality of life.<sup>1</sup>

GPI Atlantic borrowed from and built on these many outstanding pioneering initiatives both in this country and abroad with the single purpose of *applying* the best available methods in one place at one time so that they could be used as a practical policy-relevant tool. An 18-month literature review convinced GPI researchers in Nova Scotia that there was no obstacle to putting these methods into practice and presenting them to government for actual adoption and use as annual measures of progress.

In other words, we determined not to come up with our own theories and methods of measurement, but simply to apply in practice the best concepts and methods of assessing societal wellbeing that others had developed. We set ourselves a *practical* objective -- to plug in the

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Redefining Progress in the USA developed the first US Genuine Progress Indicator in 1995. Economists Hazel Henderson, Marilyn Waring, William Nordhaus, Andrew Harvey and many others developed measures of time use, wellbeing and quality of life. The World Resources Institute and ecological economists in many countries pioneered new assessments of natural resource values and ecosystem service values, while William Rees and Mathis Wackernagel in British Columbia developed a new measure of the "ecological footprint" of consumption patterns. As well, the "Oregon Benchmarks," "Sustainable Seattle," Hamilton-Wentworth's "Vision 2020," the Ontario Social Development Council, the Edmonton Social Planning Council and many other groups pioneered quality of life assessments in local and regional jurisdictions. Statistics Canada has developed unpaid work valuations and pioneered a new Canadian System of Environmental and Resource Accounts.

Nova Scotia numbers to the best frameworks and measures already developed. We wanted to see these better measures of progress *used* by government and society. If Nova Scotia could become the first jurisdiction to adopt, use and apply a Genuine Progress Index in practice, and if those measures began to influence policy, we were convinced the idea would spread and other jurisdictions would take notice.

**We encountered two major challenges:**

- 1) ***There were no short-cuts.*** To find and analyze vital but hidden statistics, to join the dots so that the numbers made policy-sense, and to make our methods and sources completely transparent, was time consuming. We ended up producing major reports on each component of the Genuine Progress Index -- much longer and more detailed than we had anticipated.

The Nova Scotia *GPI Water Quality Accounts*, the first comprehensive valuation of a province's water resources anywhere in Canada, were 240 pages. The forthcoming *GPI Forest Accounts*, again the first of their kind, are 180 pages. The *Cost of Crime* was 220 pages, and the valuations of unpaid work were also very detailed. The GPI population health reports to date add up to more than 200 pages. We believe that this detail will create a solid ground for future, and much more concise updates, but each component of the GPI is taking many months and, in some cases, years to develop.

- 2) ***Good research requires adequate funding.*** We received \$119,000 start-up funding in 1997 from the Nova Scotia Department of Economic Development and ACOA which got us through the first 18 months of literature review, indicator and methodology development, early research and production of the first four GPI reports. Since then, we have used subsidized internships, summer student programs, and occasional small grants and contracts to carry the work forward.

At present, government is in a belt-tightening phase and it is difficult to acquire continuing public support. As well, the structure of government, each department administering its own specialized budget, makes it awkward to fund a project designed to show the links between social, economic and environmental realities. As a result, probably 70%-75% of the GPI research has been conducted on a voluntary basis. The researchers often do other things to support themselves, and carry on the GPI work in their spare time. This has slowed us down.

Nevertheless, the GPI reports have been remarkably well received. In the last few months alone, GPI Atlantic results have produced several lead front-page newspaper stories in Nova Scotia, interviews on CBC, and numerous requests for information and presentations. Because of the interest it generates, the GPI work has also *spawned* a host of *related* work that does get funding and provide limited income for the core GPI work.

That's why we've had to adapt to circumstances, change the way we operate, and chart a new course. This report will tell you about that change. GPI Atlantic is now engaged in many related activities. Nevertheless, we are still 100% committed to our core mission -- the creation of a provincial Genuine Progress Index for Nova Scotia that can serve as a model for other jurisdictions. Our *other* activities make that core mission possible.

## 2. A New Direction

The best way to describe what GPI Atlantic now does is by dividing our activities into three parts:

- Our core provincial GPI project;
- Community GPI;
- Guest speaking and consulting on a local, provincial and national level.

The community GPI projects are separately funded. Speaking and consulting help to fund the core GPI work. Through these contracts, we have started to become more self-sufficient and self-reliant.

As part of our new direction, we are also concentrating on expanding our membership base to build real support from within. To do this, we have to develop an organization. We are now putting real effort into structuring GPI Atlantic as an organization with capacity to bring in members, communicate effectively, and administer basic tasks like distributing reports.

For the first time ever, we held a full-day strategic planning session on December 15 with 16 GPI researchers, board members, staff and advisers, skillfully facilitated by Rochelle Owen. As a result, we are now implementing several key recommendations from that day-long gathering. Until now, and for the past three years, we have put every ounce of funding, resources and energy into the research itself. But there was a complete consensus at our December 15 meeting that we now need a functioning organization in order to be as effective as we can be, and to support further research properly.

So, for the first time, we have hired an administrator, Ginger Brooks, to create a GPI "organization." We now have a fully functioning web site since last summer, and have begun to work out all the kinks in that. Tom Krausse has just designed our first GPI database for members and subscribers, with an effective system of selling reports and maintaining contact with members. For the first time we also have an active, functioning board of directors.

In short, we are developing the infrastructure that can support the GPI work successfully. Our little internal joke for a long time was that the only unsustainable thing about GPI Atlantic's sustainable development project was GPI Atlantic itself.

We are now turning this unsustainable situation around -- focusing on creating the infrastructure and building an effective organization; and doing other work that can support the core GPI.

A few words on each of the three sets of current GPI Atlantic activity will illustrate the work that is now under way, and how it supports the core GPI work.

## 3. Community GPI in Kings County and Glace Bay

In early 1999, the Nova Scotia Citizens for Community Development Society, a non-profit group, approached GPI Atlantic and asked whether it was possible to develop a community-level Genuine Progress Index that would allow a community to assess its own wellbeing and progress.

Later that year, representatives of the National Crime Prevention Centre asked the same question: Could a local community use the GPI to assess whether it was becoming safer, stronger and more secure?

Our answer in both cases was: -- in principle "yes" -- a GPI that links social, economic and environmental wellbeing is theoretically possible at any level. However there is a major practical obstacle. Unlike the provincial GPI, which relies primarily on Statistics Canada and other existing government databases, there are almost no available data at the community level. Statistics Canada labour force surveys, general social surveys, population health surveys and other essential data sources used in the provincial GPI have sample sizes that are too small to provide community-level information.

To develop a community-level GPI, in other words, would require that we go into an entirely new field -- survey administration and data collection. On the one hand, there was a tremendous opportunity to collect exactly the information we needed for a Genuine Progress Index rather than rely on other data not intended for that purpose. On the other hand, this was a daunting task, especially as the GPI consists of many components, and a survey that provided data on a range of social, economic and environmental factors would be very large.

Nevertheless, it *is* at the level of community that the rubber hits the road in terms of quality of life, -- where people actually *experience* whether their communities are becoming stronger or falling apart, whether they feel safer or not, whether their air is clean and their water drinkable, whether they are becoming healthier or not, whether there are jobs available. National and provincial averages that speak of falling unemployment rates don't mean much in industrial Cape Breton, for example.

### ***Collecting Our Own GPI Data***

Community representatives told us time and again that they wanted and needed a way of telling how *they* were doing as a community. So we took up the challenge, and joined with the NS Citizens for Community Development Society and community groups in rural Kings County in the effort to create a community Genuine Progress Index. With some initial funding from HRDC and the Rural Secretariat, we worked with about 150 community members representing 40 different community groups in Kings County over the course of a year to lay the ground.

In a series of meetings, we first identified important indicators of wellbeing -- issues identified by citizens and community groups as having vital importance to them as measures of their quality of life and progress. Then we divided into smaller groups by topic area -- employment issues, peace and security, health and education, community service and volunteerism, soils and agriculture, and environmental sustainability. Each group spent several months identifying vital questions of importance. From that process we constructed a questionnaire and survey designed to get the information we needed for a community GPI.

At that point, too, we ran out of money. In February, 2000, with funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre, we expanded the project to Glace Bay, Cape Breton. The NCPC was

particularly interested in assessing the differences in indicators of community strength and wellbeing between a relatively prosperous and growing rural community (Kings County) and an industrial community with declining industries and very high unemployment.

In Glace Bay we also formed a partnership with HRDC to create some labour market partnership positions, and we forged alliances with community groups, including the Cape Breton Wellness Centre, the local community health board, the community service groups operating under the umbrella of the Glace Bay Citizens Service League, and community development groups. Across the board, there was interest, support and enthusiasm for the project.

We brought on a Glace Bay project director, Ken Macdonald, set up a GPI office in the Citizen Service League's "Town House" in downtown Glace Bay, and employed some local residents as survey administrators. We consulted extensively with Statistics Canada's Social Survey Methods Division, which did three extensive reviews of our questionnaire to ensure that the questions were clear and unambiguous, and that data would be compatible with existing provincial and national data to allow comparisons. We then field-tested the survey in Glace Bay and made extensive revisions.

### ***Partnerships***

Data collection is now under way in Glace Bay, and the NS Citizens for Community Development Society has just received a \$45,000 grant from the Canadian Rural Partnership to administer the survey in Kings County as well. In addition, we have formed an alliance with Dalhousie University's Population Health Research Unit which will store and process the data and produce spreadsheets and results according to the needs and interests of the two communities.

We also have a partnership with the Atlantic Population Health Research Council and the Coastal Communities Network which are interested in exploring how communities can use good information and research to influence policy. Many community groups in Cape Breton and Kings County have also joined the effort. Dalhousie University researchers have told us that the survey will yield data never before available in Canada, and will allow correlations between health, work and time use patterns, voluntary work and other social and economic factors that will be of great significance.

Data collection is slow and laborious, and full of challenges, particularly given the size of the survey, and we have limited staff and resources. But we are proceeding, and confident that we can do the job. The real fun will start when the data are available, and the two communities can use the results to learn about themselves, set community goals, and impact policy.

From the results and the baseline 2001 data, the two communities will identify the most meaningful indicators of progress and create a report card on which they can measure their development on an annual basis. One goal of the community GPI project is also to produce a manual that any community in Canada will be able use to construct its own index of wellbeing and progress.

We estimate that it will take two more years to achieve these goals. By early 2003, we feel confident that both Kings County and Glace Bay will have a working Genuine Progress Index in place, and that the two communities can then act as leaders in training other communities to do the same.

From the perspective of GPI Atlantic, which intended only to construct a provincial index, the community GPI is a surprising and unexpected development. It is also challenging and time-consuming. But we are very excited about it, delighted with the partnerships created, and constantly amazed that we are literally creating our own GPI database. We are beginning to think that the GPI will spread from the bottom up rather than from the top down -- a "trickle-up" process that will gradually percolate higher levels of government.

#### **4. National and Contractual Relationships**

As a result of the Nova Scotia GPI work over the last four years, GPI Atlantic is now recognized as being one of the leaders in sustainable development and wellbeing indicator work in Canada. There is an increasing demand for GPI Atlantic presentations throughout the country, and GPI Atlantic is now regularly represented at national gatherings on the subject. As a result of this exposure, we are for the first time being offered some contractual work that can begin to support the further development of the Nova Scotia Genuine Progress Index.

All this has come unexpectedly, and quite frankly, as something of a surprise. First, we spent three years waving the GPI flag and trying to get some funding from outside Nova Scotia. But our "local" project attracted no funding from the various agencies we approached in Ottawa and sustainable development indicator work aroused only passing interest in Upper Canada. Several times we heard that a Nova Scotia project could not possibly have national implications. Now suddenly, sustainable development and quality of life indicator work is very fashionable, so there is a lot of interest.

Secondly, we have remained local and provincial in our focus, in the belief that if we can develop this index well in one place at one time, it will be more effective as a working model for others than if we look too far afield. As well, we believe that the culture and value system of Atlantic Canada are much more amenable and attuned to the indicators we are describing than most places, and so there is a better chance of this index being adopted in practice and actually used by government here than elsewhere.

So this sudden turn-around has taken us by surprise, and necessitated a new approach and organizational strategy. This is basically good news, because it enables us to become more self-reliant and self-supporting, to develop our own organizational structure and integrity, and to pay our researchers more regularly.

Here is a partial list of GPI Atlantic's involvements at the national level, and contractual relationships and fee-paying presentations that support the core GPI work.

### ***National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy***

In February, 2000, Finance Minister Paul Martin announced a three-year \$9 million initiative to develop new environment and sustainable development indicators for Canada, in a way that would better integrate environmental and economic accounting. The money was given to Environment Canada and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE), which were both instructed to work closely with Statistics Canada on this project.

Our initial hope was that a small fraction of that money might be used to support our work and pay our researchers. However Environment Canada decided to keep \$4.5 million for the development of a new Canadian Information System on the Environment. The Round Table decided to use the remaining \$4.5 million to develop the indicators themselves, and it invited GPI Atlantic to join a steering committee for that purpose.

The NRTEE committee, co-chaired by Dr. Stuart Smith, chair of the NRTEE, and Dr. Peter Pearse of the University of British Columbia, includes assistant deputy ministers from Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada and Health Canada, the Assistant Chief Statistician, the General Director of Economic Development and Corporate Finance in Finance Canada, the executive directors of the NRTEE and the Fraser Basin Council, the director of government affairs for Dow Chemical, a vice-president of TD Bank, a senior vice-president of Noranda Inc., and several others.

That steering committee has now met twice, most recently on January 17, 2001. GPI Atlantic has made formal presentations at both meetings and participated actively in the discussions. We will also make a workshop presentation at a stakeholder conference on the sustainable development indicators to be held March 27-28, to be attended by about 200 potential "users" of the new indicators.

So far, some of our GPI suggestions are being adopted, such as the need to measure forest age and species composition, and the inclusion of greenhouse gas emissions in the first stage indicator development. Others are not being adopted, such as the need to include indicators of income distribution on the grounds that wealthy groups have a disproportionate impact on the environment because of their greater resource consumption and waste production. While the GPI links social, economic and environmental factors, the NRTEE is not as comfortable including social components.

### ***Health Canada Commonwealth Secretariat Indicators Working Group***

GPI Atlantic participates in a small working group assembled by Health Canada to construct a new model of health indicators for the British Commonwealth countries. Several meetings in Ottawa have produced a concept, and the challenge now is to make the model practical and workable. The model is being presented February 15 to Health Canada's Policy Forum.

### ***Obesity Report Replications***

Our main source of current income is a 3-month contract with Hoffman-La Roche to replicate the GPI report on the *Cost of Obesity for Nova Scotia* for other Canadian provinces. These reports will be in our web site bookstore shortly, and summaries will be posted in the "Articles and Press Releases" section of the web site. The income from this project has enabled us to hire our first administrator.

### ***Working with Newfoundland***

A splendid working partnership has been struck with the Government of Newfoundland Statistics Agency, which is very interested in working with GPI Atlantic to expand its own community accounts to include some GPI indicators. Newfoundland's Strategic Social Plan, its Social Audit, and its Community Accounts are naturally aligned with GPI Atlantic objectives, so this is an exciting and enjoyable mutual working relationship. Newfoundland has gone further than any other province in the country in developing community indicators of wellbeing, and Nova Scotia is now looking to adopt that framework here.

Four days of meetings in Halifax on October 27-30, 2000 and another two days in St. Johns January 24-25, 2001 explored the areas of cooperation and began some concrete number-crunching exercises. Our Newfoundland venture is what we like to do most -- search the data, correlate specific social, health and economic data, analyze the results, and seek answers to pressing social questions. The Newfoundland folk understand intuitively that the purpose and best use of statistics is to help people, build and strengthen community, and create social benefit.

### ***Reality Check: The Canadian Review of Wellbeing***

GPI Atlantic is working closely with the Atkinson Charitable Foundation in Toronto to produce a prototype of a new Canadian Review of Wellbeing entitled *Reality Check*, which will work towards the development of a new Canadian index of wellbeing. The review will describe existing quality of life and wellbeing indicator projects in Canada, and will present concrete results from around the country that show the difference between the new measures and conventional measures of progress.

GPI Atlantic will perform the chief editorial function. Articles have already been written and submitted, and the prototype is currently in the design stage in Toronto. In February, the prototype for the first issue will be reviewed by experts and journalists, and then submitted to the Atkinson board of directors for a decision to proceed with production.

The good news is that GPI members and subscribers will now receive *both* the GPI News *and* the prototype of the new national Review of Wellbeing at no extra charge.

### ***Canadian Policy Research Networks Quality of Life Indicators Project***

GPI Atlantic worked as an adviser and consultant to the Canadian Policy Research Networks in its Quality of Life Indicators Project, and reviewed project results with a panel of experts in Ottawa on December 12-13, 2000. The CPRN conducted 40 nationwide workshops in which citizens were asked what quality of life issues mattered to them, and what indicators of wellbeing they would like to see. The top issues for Canadians were health, education, the environment, and social programs, all ahead of the economy in their lists of priorities.

### ***Environment Canada***

GPI Atlantic presented its work and participated in a full-day sustainable development indicators workshop sponsored by Environment Canada in Toronto January 23, 2001. Also present were Mathis Wackernagel, co-author of the Ecological Footprint; the US Environmental Protection Agency and Environment Canada SOLEC indicator directors for the Great Lakes; Ann Kerr, director of the Environment Canada indicators division in Ottawa; Orié Loucks of the University of Miami in Cincinnati; and representatives of Statistics Canada, Environment Canada and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy

### ***NS Voluntary Planning Agency***

GPI Atlantic is working on an ongoing basis with the Nova Scotia Voluntary Planning Agency, developing proposals to the NS government on a vision statement for the province and on a life-long learning project. The Voluntary Planning Agency is interested in partnering with us to link our community GPI projects to its vision of creating "learning communities" that can improve governance and the quality of civic participation.

### ***Other GPI Presentations***

The projects mentioned above and presentations of the GPI work have become the main source of income for GPI Atlantic and for the GPI researcher salaries. There have been recent GPI presentations to the Health, Work and Wellness Conference in Toronto, Recreation Nova Scotia annual conference, Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia annual conference, the Solar Energy Society of Canada annual conference, and the New Brunswick Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

Upcoming GPI presentations and consultations include:

- January 30, 9.30am: Nova Scotia Health Research Council, Westin Hotel, Halifax.
- January 31, 7.30pm: Kings College Journalism School, Halifax, with Jim Meek.
- February 7, Cooper Institute, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.
- February 13-14: Further working sessions with Newfoundland Statistics Agency.
- March 15-16, Miramichi, New Brunswick, on social inclusion.
- March 27-28, National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy stakeholder conference on sustainable development indicators, Ottawa.

- March 29-30, Climate Change Conference, Fredericton, New Brunswick.
- April 20 or 27, (to be confirmed): Cape Breton Regional Municipality annual volunteer awards, Sydney.
- May 15, 10.30am: St. Johns, Newfoundland: Senior Social Service Managers Forum.
- May 26, 9am, Halifax: Heart and Stroke Foundation (on value of voluntary work).
- June 22, Montreal (tentative): Canada Pension and Benefits annual conference.
- Sept. 20-21, St. John, New Brunswick: Community development and beautification conference.

***GPI Atlantic work has also been featured in:***

- The Treasury Board's *Managing for Results*.
- The Nova Scotia Environment Act Review Panel's recommendation to the Nova Scotia government, which included a specific recommendation for the adoption and use of genuine progress indicators.
- Lead front-page news stories, and radio and TV spots, on the GPI *Cost of Tobacco in Nova Scotia* results. Two lead front-page follow up stories featured the GPI results, which have now helped move the Nova Scotia government to announce a planned increase in tobacco taxes in the coming year. (See summary of results below in this issue.)
- Newspaper stories and a CBC Maritime Noon phone-in on GPI Atlantic's Christmas gift story (see below in this issue.)
- CBC interview taped on the GPI Halifax Harbour cleanup study for upcoming Maritime Noon slot.

***The Cost of HIV/AIDS in Canada***

GPI Atlantic has just completed (January 20,01) a 10-page analysis on *The Cost of HIV/AIDS in Canada*, prepared for the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, and submitted for publication in a Commonwealth Secretariat publication. The GPI study, co-authored by Colin Dodds MA, Ronald Colman PhD, Carol Amaratunga PhD, and Jeff Wilson BES, found that HIV/AIDS costs the Canadian economy \$2 billion a year. The next issue of GPI News will feature results from this study, and the report will be available from the GPI web site bookstore.

**In sum**, we have become somewhat self-supporting through this contractual work and through our membership base. The GPI Atlantic work is also becoming exposed to an ever wider audience. Our hope is that this activity will draw more attention to our core projects and help to attract much needed funding.

**5. The Core Nova Scotia Genuine Progress Index: Upcoming Releases**

The best way we can spread the GPI approach and make a real contribution to these new methods of measuring wellbeing is to produce a workable, policy-relevant Genuine Progress Index for Nova Scotia. The real challenge in the coming year, therefore, is to maintain that

strong central focus, even as we take on other activities and become more self-supporting by fulfilling contracts and responding to requests for GPI assistance and presentations. We have certainly been slowed down in that core mission, but we are still making steady headway and moving slowly towards our goal. Here is an update on upcoming releases and work in progress.

- The ***GPI Forest Accounts***, authored by GPI researcher Sara Wilson, M.Sc. (Forestry), have been through several expert reviews and revisions, and we are now in the final production stage. The 180-page report, replete with charts and tables is the fruition of nearly three years research and numerous early drafts, and reveals ground-breaking new data on the state of Nova Scotia forests never before published. The report is scheduled for release in February. Watch the newspapers and the GPI web site on this one -- we expect it to make waves!
- The GPI ***Water Quality Accounts*** were accompanied by a detailed case study applying the GPI full-cost accounting methods to an analysis of the costs and benefits of a cleaner Halifax Harbour that are predicted from the proposed sewage treatment plants. Similarly, work is currently under way on a detailed **case study of sustainable forest harvest methods in Nova Scotia** that can show a sustainable way forward for our forest industry. GPI researchers Linda Pannozzo and Minga O'Brien are currently hard at work on that project.
- The Nova Scotia ***Ecological Footprint***, authored by GPI researcher Jeff Wilson, has also been reviewed and revised and is now in the final revision and production stage. We expect it to be released in February as well. This is a vital component of the Genuine Progress Index that complements the GPI natural resource accounts in a very important way. While natural resource accounts inevitably place responsibility for sustainable harvest methods on producers, the Ecological Footprint places the onus for sustainability squarely on the shoulders of consumers from where the demand for natural resource products originates. Thank you Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group for a recent \$1,500 grant towards the completion of this GPI component.
- The GPI ***Greenhouse Gas Accounts***, authored by GPI researcher Dr. Sally Walker, have been woefully under-funded. We have been through as many revisions and re-writes as our voluntary efforts and limited budget can manage, but we still want to do more work on what is now a third draft. We have received some excellent feedback from expert reviewers, and we know that another 2-3 months of work can make a substantial difference to the final report. Based on income from speaking engagements and consultations in December-January, we can now dedicate an additional \$2,000 to that task that will take us at least part way towards completion.
- Good news is that we have just received a 3-month grant from the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy to do more work on the GPI ***Soils and Agriculture Accounts*** and the GPI ***Marine Environment / Fisheries Accounts***. While this grant will not "complete" these reports to the full extent, we will produce and release the completed sections in March this year at the same time that we present results to the Round Table.



In fact, GPI soils researchers, Jennifer Scott MES and Julia Cooper will be ready to release the first section of the Agriculture work, on *The Economic Viability of Farming in Nova Scotia*, in February. That detailed report has already been reviewed by five experts in the field and extensive feedback is now being incorporated into the final draft. Fisheries researchers Dr. Tony Charles of St. Mary's University, Heather Boyd and Amanda Lavers MES, are currently working a first draft report of that set of accounts.

- A first draft of the GPI ***Sustainable Transportation*** component, prepared by researchers Dr. Larry Hughes of Dalhousie University, Vanessa Husain, and David Caulfield, has been prepared and carefully reviewed. We predict that another 2-3 months work is now required on the second draft before it is ready to be sent out for review, and we predict that the final report will be ready for release in the late spring or early summer.
- GPI researcher, Anne Monette MES, is working steadily at the ***Air Quality*** component of the Nova Scotia Genuine Progress Index and is now at a very interesting stage of applying for the first time a brand new Environment Canada model assessing the cost of the health impacts of air pollution. We anticipate that the final Air Quality report will be ready for release in April. In the absence of a dedicated GPI web site manager, Anne has also performed yeoman duty for GPI Atlantic in keeping our web site functional and making GPI materials accessible to members and the general public.
- After working full-time for six weeks on ***The Cost of HIV/AIDS in Canada***, Colin Dodds MA is now returning to his primary GPI research on the ***Income Distribution*** component of the Genuine Progress Index. As with the Soils and Agriculture work, we will release this component in sections, with the first part, analyzing income trends over time by quintile distributions, expected to be ready for release by March.
- Earlier GPI reports on the economic value of voluntary work, the economic value of unpaid household work, the cost of crime, the cost of obesity, the cost of tobacco, women's health, the value of water resources, shorter work time options, and other issues are all available on the GPI web site at [www.gpiatlantic.org](http://www.gpiatlantic.org). Brief biographies of GPI researchers are included in the GPI Atlantic profile on the web site.
- One of the most exciting things discussed at the December 15 full-day GPI strategic planning session was the possibility of using existing results from individual reports to begin construction of the Genuine Progress Index itself in such a way that results can be updated annually. So far, all effort has gone into constructing each individual component of the index slowly, carefully and painstakingly, one part at a time, with attention to proper methodology and location of data sources.

However, at our December 15 meeting, we realized that, even before all components are completed, we will soon have a sufficient mix of social, economic and environmental results to operationalize the GPI itself. We will re-visit that possibility later in 2001, and perhaps organize a special retreat to evaluate all results from our four years of work to date and to select the key indicators and results that should be updated in an annual index of genuine

progress. That index can then be expanded as future research on the separate components continues.

As you can see there is enormous amount of ongoing core GPI research that is going into the construction of the Nova Scotia Genuine Progress Index, and many researchers are hard at work. Almost all this work is under-funded, and so the contractual work and GPI presentations are providing partial support. Our membership base, and the ongoing support of GPI News subscribers helps to keep that core work going. Thank you! This annual report is intended simply to provide an overview of the multiple activities of GPI Atlantic. We hope it is useful, and we thank you for your generous and indispensable support.

## **SMOKING: IS IT GOOD FOR US?**

The question would be laughable, if the consequences of smoking were not so tragic. But it has to be asked, even in this day and age, because the reality is that smoking is conventionally counted as a benefit to the economy. When, as a society, we assess how "well off" we are, we still look to the economic growth statistics to assess our economic "health" and wellbeing as a society. And by those conventional measures, smoking makes a powerful contribution to our economic health.

Canadians spend nearly \$10 billion a year on tobacco products, smoking 45 billion cigarettes a year. Nova Scotians smoke 1.5 billion cigarettes a year, contributing \$295 million to the province's annual GDP. Smoking continues to make the economy grow with spending on nicotine replacement therapy and doctor, hospital and drug bills to pay for smoking-related illnesses.

Because current measures of progress based on economic growth statistics make no distinction between economic activities that create benefit and those that cause harm, spending generated by smoking, crime, pollution, car accidents and other liabilities are conventionally counted as signs of economic growth, prosperity and wellbeing.

In the Genuine Progress Index, by contrast, smoking is counted as a cost rather than a gain to the economy, because it causes sickness and premature death. This is common sense economics that corresponds to our actual wellbeing. From the GPI perspective, money not spent on smoking, and money saved on smoking related illness costs, could be spent on more productive activities. In Nova Scotia in particular, spending diverted from imported tobacco products would stimulate the local economy, because the new spending would include a higher proportion of locally produced goods and services.

### **The True Cost of Smoking**

Tobacco costs the Nova Scotia health care system \$168 million a year in direct health care costs, and it costs Canadians \$4.5 billion a year in health care costs. Smoking kills about 1,650 Nova Scotians and more than 45,000 Canadians every year. When productivity losses due to premature death and absenteeism are added to medical costs, smoking costs the Nova Scotia economy more than half a billion dollars annually, and it costs Canada more than \$13 billion a year.

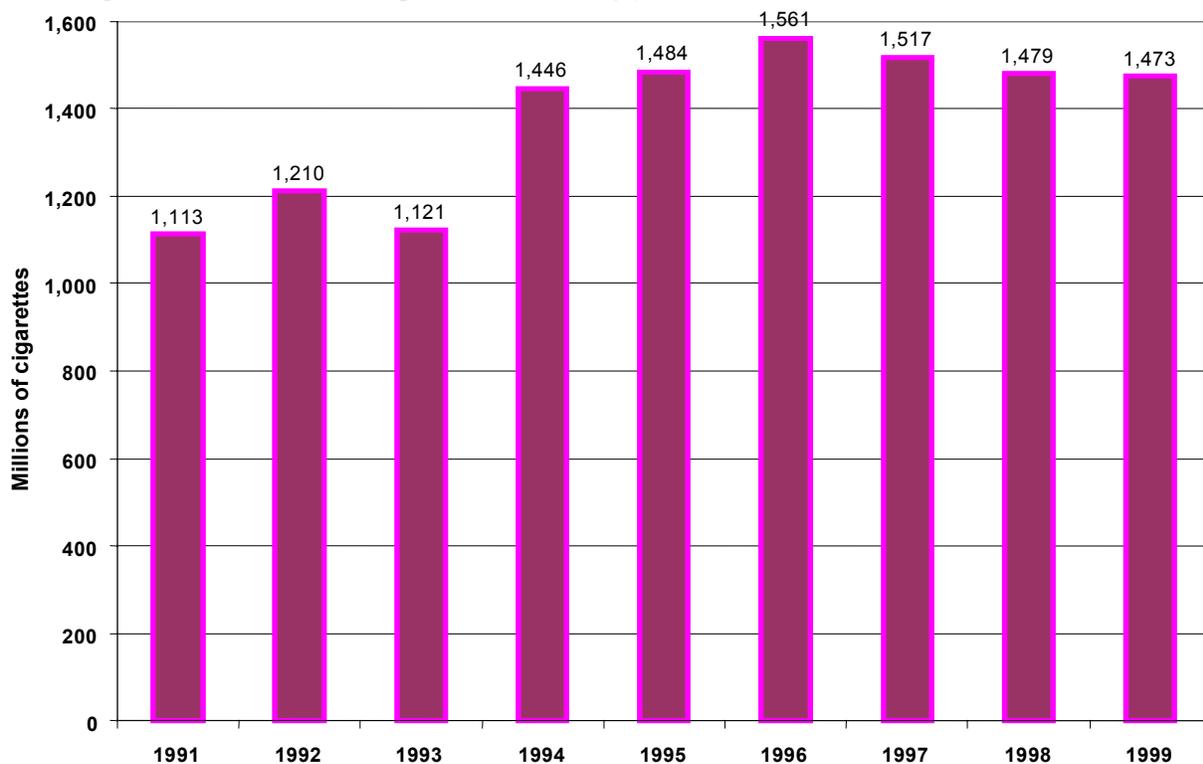
It costs Nova Scotia employers about \$250 million more a year (or \$2,280 per smoker) to employ a smoker than a nonsmoker, -- in lost on-the-job productivity, excess absenteeism, higher life insurance premiums, and smoking area costs.

Nova Scotia currently has the highest smoking rate in Canada (29%), the heaviest consumption of cigarettes per smoker, and the highest rate of nicotine addiction in the country. Twenty-eight per cent of pregnant mothers smoke and 31% of teenagers 15-19 years old smoke in Nova Scotia, with teen smoking rates up throughout Canada compared to 1990.

At today's rates, more than 65,000 Nova Scotia children and teens alive today will become regular smokers. Of these, 15,000 will be killed by their addiction in middle age, each losing about 22 years of nonsmoker life expectancy. In 1994, Nova Scotia joined four other Canadian provinces in drastically lowering tobacco taxes in an effort to curb cigarette smuggling. But the drop in cigarette prices is directly correlated with increased tobacco sales and the sharp rise in teenage smoking in particular.

**Cigarette Sales, Nova Scotia, 1991-1999 (millions of cigarettes)**

*(Cigarette taxes were cut by \$14 per carton in February, 1994, and subsequently raised by \$1.40 in December, 1996; \$1.20 in February, 1998; and \$1.20 in November, 1999. Note that sales volumes parallel these tax changes almost exactly.)*



If just 10% of Nova Scotia smokers quit, Nova Scotia would save \$1 billion over 30 years and save 92,000 life years, compared to the costs incurred if these quitters had kept smoking. If the province restored tobacco taxes to pre-1994 levels, savings would be nearly \$3 billion, based on pre-1994 cigarette consumption rates, and including the extra revenues to government from higher tobacco taxes.

There are currently 16,000 underage smokers in Nova Scotia spending \$10.6 million annually on cigarettes. These illegal sales yield \$6.4 billion in federal and provincial taxes, eight times Nova Scotia's current tobacco control budget. Price elasticity studies show that every 10% increase in the price of cigarettes will reduce smoking among Nova Scotia teenagers by 7%.

The figures are contained in a GPI Atlantic study on *The Cost of Tobacco in Nova Scotia*, prepared for Cancer Care Nova Scotia's 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Cape Breton Cancer Symposium held in Sydney in October, 2000.

### **\$1 of Prevention Yields \$15 in Savings**

The GPI study also examines in detail the cost effectiveness of different tobacco control strategies, including school-based smoking prevention curricula, counseling for pregnant mothers, anti-tobacco advertising, physician advice, and smoking bans at work and in public places.

For example, every dollar spent in delivering Nova Scotia's exemplary "Smoke-Free for Life" curriculum would yield more than \$15 in savings from avoided health care and productivity losses. Delivered to all 76,000 Nova Scotia 10-15 year-olds, it would save \$70 million a year. Yet the curriculum is not required and most Nova Scotia schools do not use it.

Similarly, every dollar invested in counseling pregnant smokers will yield more than \$10 in savings on avoided intensive neonatal care for low birth-weight babies and long-term infant care costs, and on avoided health care costs for the mothers. Sadly, 28% of Nova Scotia mothers report smoking during their pregnancy, and these self-reported rates are known to underestimate the actual prevalence of smoking.

Paradoxically, such smoking prevention expenditures are currently counted as "costs" in our current accounting system, rather than investments in human health and wellbeing that will yield major long-term economic savings. The province currently spends only \$800,000 a year (or 85 cents per capita) for its entire tobacco control strategy.

By comparison, there is currently a very strong demand to twin Highway 101 where 66 people have died in car crashes since 1993, or about 8 people per year. Perhaps half those lives, or four lives per year, could be saved by twinning the highway at a cost of \$1 million per lane kilometre or \$150 million for 75 kilometres. Is there not a parallel case for a modest investment to help save the lives of the 1,600 Nova Scotians who die every year from smoking-related diseases?

*For more information, see the full GPI Atlantic report, *The Cost of Tobacco in Nova Scotia* (81 pages including 21 charts and tables), available through the GPI web site at [www.gpiatlantic.org](http://www.gpiatlantic.org). Members and GPI news subscribers receive a 25% discount on all GPI publications.*

## COUNTING THE COSTS OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

The recent collapse of the climate change talks in The Hague made it clear that Canada, the United States and other countries want to have their cake and eat it too. What emerged unscathed and unchallenged from The Hague is our holy and untouchable economic growth paradigm, still the central measure of wellbeing.

By that measure, whatever is done to meet the challenge of climate change must not imperil economic "health" as reckoned by GDP growth rates. The more fossil fuels we burn and the more quickly we burn them, the faster the GDP will grow, and the "better off" we think we are. And if climate change produces more severe hurricanes, storms, and other extreme weather events, then the clean up costs will make the GDP grow again. Natural resource depletion, pollution, and natural disasters all make the economy grow simply because they generate market activity.

By contrast, the Genuine Progress Index recognizes such activities as costs rather than gains to the economy. Unlike measures of progress based on the GDP, in which "more" is always "better," the GPI recognizes that we may actually feel better if we eat a little *less* cake. And so a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions signifies genuine progress.

Perhaps the single greatest difference between the accounting methods of the GPI and those of the GDP is that the GPI takes a long-term view based on the value of natural, human, social and manufactured capital, while the GDP is simply a current income statement. While the GDP treats non-renewable fossil fuel reserves as consumable income and ignores the dependence of human economies and societies on a stable climate system, the GPI explicitly values vital ecosystem services and counts their depletion or degradation as natural capital depreciation.

The long-term GPI perspective and method accords with ancient native traditions in which an elder represented the interests of the seventh generation hence at all major policy gatherings. How might the Hague negotiators have acted if they had considered the consequences of climate change and of their actions for the next seven generations? Indeed, the current increase in global surface temperatures is so rapid and dramatic that the effects of climate change are likely to be felt long before the 7<sup>th</sup> generation hence.

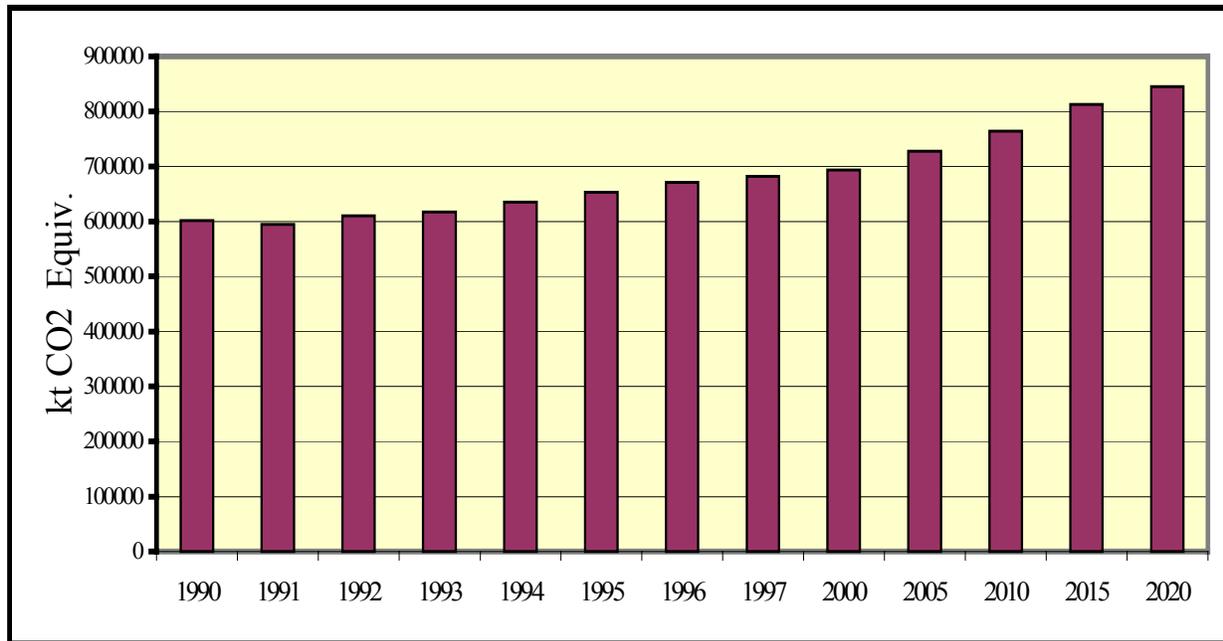
### Canadian Greenhouse Gas Emissions on the Rise

The twentieth century rise of up to 0.6°C is larger and more rapid than at any other time in history. There have now been 20 consecutive years of above-normal temperatures. The 1990s were the warmest decade since the beginning of instrumental measurements in the 1860s and included 7 of the 10 hottest years on record. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, with 2,000 scientists from around the world, has linked human greenhouse emissions directly with global warming.

The forthcoming *GPI Greenhouse Gas Accounts*, authored by Dr. Sally Walker, note that Canada's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions rose by 13.5% between 1990 and 1997, from 610,000

kilotonnes to 682,000 kilotonnes in CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents, while Nova Scotia's emissions increased by 3.1% from 19,400 kt. to 20,000 kt. On a per capita basis, Canadians emit 22.7 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year and Nova Scotians emit 21.4 tonnes. Canada's per capita emissions are the second highest levels in the world after the United States which emits 25 tonnes per capita. By the year 2020, Canada's GHG emissions are expected to reach 845 megatonnes, a 40.6% increase over 1990 levels, if no concerted action is taken to reduce emissions.

### Canada's Projected Greenhouse Gas Emissions to 2020



Source: Natural Resources Canada 1999, *Canada's Emissions Outlook: An Update*

These emissions know no boundaries and will be costly for the world. Unlike other elements of the Genuine Progress Index, where the impacts of actions can be measured close to home, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions will contribute to flooding in Bangla Desh, droughts in Africa, fires in the Amazon, and hurricanes in the Caribbean. Closer to home, Environment Canada has predicted that the impacts of climate change in Atlantic Canada will include sea level rise, drought, increases in extreme weather events and changes in rainfall. All these impacts can have an adverse impact on existing social infrastructure, tourism, fisheries, forestry, agriculture, ecosystems and water resources.

Based on complex climate change models, economists have estimated the global damages of greenhouse gas emissions at anywhere between \$38/tonne and \$1,040/tonne. That means that Canada's emissions in the year 2000 will cause long-term global damages of between \$26.6 billion and \$728 billion. Because the vast majority of scientists agree that global warming has already begun, and because atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases continue to accumulate, every tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent currently emitted is contributing to climate change and is therefore considered a cost in the Genuine Progress Index.

This does not mean that all emissions can be cut instantaneously without severe economic repercussions. However, the David Suzuki Foundation has demonstrated that it is completely feasible for Canada to reduce its emissions by 50% in the next 30 years by decreasing dependence on fossil fuels for energy and by using available technologies to increase energy efficiency. This target exceeds Canada's international commitment at Kyoto to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 6% below 1990 levels by 2008-2012.

Indeed, Suzuki demonstrates that a new "low carbon future" is the key to Canadian prosperity rather than a burden to the economy, a proposition supported by extensive research in both Canada and the United States. (See for example, Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins and L. Hunter Lovins, 1999, *Natural Capitalism*, and David Suzuki, *Power Shift: Cool Solutions to Global Warming*.)

### **Reducing Emissions Can Produce Net Benefits and Economic Savings**

The Nova Scotia *GPI Greenhouse Gas Accounts* support these findings by demonstrating that, compared with the massive damage costs avoided, it can be highly cost effective to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There are proven "no regrets" measures that can actually produce net benefits rather than costs to society when energy efficiencies and savings, reduction of other air pollutants associated with fossil fuel combustion, reduced depletion of nonrenewable resources, and other social and environmental benefits are included in the equation.

To demonstrate the applicability of the GPI "full-cost accounting" mechanisms that include social and environmental benefits and costs, GPI Atlantic has produced a detailed case study demonstrating that a 10% shift from truck to rail freight in Nova Scotia would save more than \$10 million a year. The study counted the costs of greenhouse emissions, air pollution, accidents, policing, road and rail maintenance and capital expenditures, and a wide range of other costs to assess the true value of the shift.

Similar opportunities for greenhouse gas reductions exist in electricity and steam generation, public transportation and residential energy use. It is estimated that even a limited range of these "no-regrets" measures can reduce Nova Scotia's greenhouse gas emissions by up to 4.7 million tonnes over ten years, yielding net benefits to the province of \$5.4 billion.

The GPI study concludes that Nova Scotia could take a lead in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and become a model for other jurisdictions. The essential first step is to stop counting additional fossil fuel combustion as a contribution to economic prosperity and wellbeing, and to recognize that it represents a potentially catastrophic cost to society.

So long as measures of societal wellbeing are based on the GDP and economic growth measures, there will be no more incentive for such action than for real progress in future climate change negotiations. Once an accurate accounting system is established, there is no obstacle to setting reasonable sector-specific targets for reduction, determining the most cost-effective ways to meet those targets, setting up incentives and regulations to implement the reduction measures, and monitoring genuine progress.

***Postscript: Latest IPCC Climate Change Predictions Are Alarming***

As this issue of GPI News goes to press, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which includes hundreds of the world's top scientists, has issued its first update since 1996 of global warming trends. Five years ago, the panel predicted that average temperatures could rise by up to 3.5°C over the next 100 years. Now they are predicting that temperatures could rise by as much as 5.8°C -- a scale of climate change that could be as catastrophic in its own way as that which prompted the last Ice Age.

As reported in *The Globe and Mail*, January 22, 2001, the new IPCC statement "is by far the strongest warning ever issued on climate change by an international body. It is considered the definitive scientific standard that serves to advise government policies around the world." The IPCC statement was accepted unanimously by the panel, including 123 of the world's leading authorities on climate change.

According to the report, the 1990s were the warmest decade on record, and 1998 was the warmest year on record. Environment Canada's science adviser on climate change, Henry Hengeveld, says: "This isn't just a future issue. It's happening now." Among trends already observed are rising sea levels, thinning Arctic sea ice, and an increase in extreme weather events including major heat waves, floods and droughts.

The IPCC chairman, Robert Watson predicts that tens of millions of people will be displaced by rising sea levels, that agriculture will be disrupted in many tropical and subtropical countries, and that water stores in arid and semi-arid countries will decline.

As the IPCC members have also concluded that the observed warming is likely due to the increase in human-induced greenhouse gases, simple caution and responsibility to future generations demands that the new warnings be translated without delay into a concerted effort to reduce emissions.

The GPI greenhouse gas report acknowledges that there is still tremendous uncertainty on the causes and reality of human-induced climate change. But the GPI adopts the internationally recognized "precautionary principle" (also enshrined in the Nova Scotia Environment Act) that states that lack of scientific certainty must never be taken as an excuse for inaction when there is the potential for serious or irreversible environmental damage. From that perspective, the GPI measures a decline in greenhouse gas emissions as a vital sign of genuine progress. The new IPCC report makes the need for a better measure of progress more pressing than ever: The stakes are very high!

## **THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT -- AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE MALL?**

### **Canadians Waste \$2 Billion Buying Unwanted Gifts: Survey Finds Holiday Gift Mismatches Waste 30% of Value**

Across Canada, consumers spent \$20 billion in the year 2000 holiday season, including at least \$6.3 billion on gifts. Of that, Canadians they wasted about \$2 billion in unwanted and unvalued gifts, if they are as incapable of choosing the right gifts as Americans.

A survey in New Haven, Connecticut, found that holiday gift-giving destroys up to one-third of the value of gifts, because recipients do not want, use or value what they receive, and because many gift-givers simply don't know what their friends and relatives really need.

The survey asked respondents what they would be willing to pay for the gifts they received, and found that they were willing to pay 30% less on average than what the givers had actually paid. The worst mismatches were in gifts by grandparents, followed closely by aunts and uncles, with recipients valuing the gifts well below what their relatives paid.

Nova Scotians spent more than \$360 million on department store type merchandise in December alone, nearly twice the monthly average. November and December sales account for 25% of annual sales, and include an estimated quarter billion dollars spent on Christmas gifts. That is more than \$260 for every man, woman and child in the province, a 4% increase from 1999 and 11% higher than 1998. Applying the New Haven figures, Nova Scotians likely wasted \$75 million of that spending buying the wrong presents.

These estimates are conservative, because they exclude all food, liquor and supermarket sales, as well as cars and other items not sold in department stores. Also, the New Haven survey question assumes that recipients were willing to buy the gift items themselves. Considering that many recipients would not have spent the money at all, the actual loss of value is likely much higher than these estimates.

People have always had doubts about whether the commercialization of Christmas undermines the true holiday spirit. Now we also know it is actually wasteful. The findings present a real challenge to look for less materialist ways to express our generosity and to manifest the holiday spirit.

### **Counting the True Cost of Christmas Spending**

In fact, the true cost of the loss is actually much greater than these numbers reveal, when the environmental consequences of over-consumption are considered. The production and consumption of market goods uses precious resources and energy, and produces waste, none of which are fully counted and valued in the market statistics. So the true cost of excess spending is a lot more than the price we pay at the check-out counter.

If we consider the trees that are cut down just to produce the advertising inserts in newspapers and mailboxes, and the waste produced by packaging alone, we get an indication of the magnitude of the actual costs. If those costs were counted, the true losses would be much greater than the \$2 billion in unwanted gifts we waste at the check-out counter. From that point of view we could actually help the world more by spending less on Christmas gifts.

The richest 20% of the world's people already consume 80% of the world's resources, with North Americans the biggest consumers of all. Just 5% of the world's population, Americans and Canadians use up 30% of the world's resources. The average Canadian consumes 30 times as much as a citizen of India.

### **Does Spending More Make Us Happier?**

Because the Genuine Progress Index includes valuations of environmental quality and wellbeing that are not captured in the standard economic growth statistics, the GPI perspective is clearly that more spending does not necessarily improve our quality of life, and is often costly.

In fact, the evidence is that the more we spend, the less satisfied we have become. A University of Chicago National Opinion Research Center poll found that the percentage of people saying they are "very happy" has fallen by 15% since 1957, while those who say they are "pretty well satisfied with their financial situation" has fallen from 42% to 30%. A separate survey found that most Americans would welcome less spending and less emphasis on gifts during the holidays, with 15% of Christmas shoppers still paying off the previous year's holiday bills.

Children's spending has increased particularly sharply in recent years. One study found that U.S. children aged 4-12 spent \$33 billion in 1997, a three-fold increase in the 1990s alone. Not surprisingly, nearly \$3 billion of the \$400 billion spent on advertising in North America each year is directed specifically at young children, with new "cradle to grave" advertising techniques designed to hook infants on brand names to which they will become attached for life.

Another U.S. survey found that 87% of parents believed that advertising has made their children more materialistic. 80% of parents said advertising created pressure on their children to buy things that were too expensive or bad for them; and 70% said that marketing to children was bad for their values and world view.

### **Planning Ahead: Christmas 2001 Suggestions from GPI Atlantic**

Unless we're sure that the gifts we buy will benefit the recipient, we can look for more creative ways of giving. Here's a few GPI Atlantic recommendations for the 2001 holiday season, to give our readers a chance to plan well ahead.

#### **1) A gift to those in need**

Real benefit occurs in the work that many charities do. How about a gift to your charity of our choice in the name of a friend or relative, that will help those in real need? That may express the holiday spirit at least as well as the purchase of expensive toys, gadgets and clothes, and it

produces a lot less waste. The survey of gift recipients shows that it would also produce a lot more value for the money we spend.

## **2) The gift of time**

We could also express our generosity by spending more time with our loved ones. Time use surveys show that we spend a lot less time with our own children than our parents spent with us. The amount of time children spend just sitting and talking with someone at home has dropped by 50% in the last 16 years to only half an hour a week. At the same time, Nova Scotians spend more time than ever shopping, 5 1/2 hours per week, averaged over the year, up 27% since 1992 alone, and 44% more than a generation ago.

Christmas shoppers might ask themselves how many extra hours they will have to work to pay for their purchases, and whether they would rather spend that time (plus the time they spend in the mall) with their families and children. With a little extra time on our hands, we might also make creative hand-made gifts, draw a picture, or write a song or a poem for a loved one.

## **3) If you have to shop...**

At least, before we go the mall, we might also check our credit card balance; and ask how much our loved ones will actually use the gift we plan to buy, whether they already have it, and how quickly the thrill will wear off after the package is opened.

Beyond that, shoppers can consider how the gift will be disposed of, whether the materials are recyclable, and what resources were used to make the gift. For example, almost all toys we buy in Canada are made in China. The Shanghai toy factories are notorious for using child labour for long hours at almost no pay. If we have to shop, can we find fairly traded environmentally friendly goods?

If we want to avoid those tough decisions, we can simply shop less, and celebrate the holiday season by socializing more and by finding other ways to express the generosity, caring, and giving that really represent the Christmas spirit. Get ready now for Christmas 2001!

## **Closing Note to Friends of GPI: You Can Support What You Value**

The way we measure progress can significantly shift the policy agenda from its present purely economic focus to a broader view of well-being and quality of life that reflects our shared aspirations as human beings. If we are to shift course from some of the destructive patterns we currently embrace and to plan a better future for our children, we can begin by counting and valuing what really matters.

*As a non-profit group, GPI Atlantic depends on donations and funding support. Most of the GPI research, data collection and analysis, and community development work is provided on a voluntary basis. Your financial support will enable our staff to devote more time and effort to their GPI work.*

Donations to GPI Atlantic (Box 489, RR#1, Tantallon, N.S. B0J 3J0, Canada) will be gratefully acknowledged. Please share this first complimentary issue of GPI News with your friends and associates, and encourage subscriptions and memberships (\$95 individual and non-profit, \$190 corporate and government, \$45 student). Members receive future issues of GPI News and a 25% discount on all GPI reports and publications.

Thank you for your support and your interest.

*Ronald Colman, Ph.D  
Director, GPI Atlantic*

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Please visit our web site at [www.gpiatlantic.org](http://www.gpiatlantic.org) and stay in touch with our work. The web site provides:

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- a summary of current activities and presentations;
- publication abstracts and ordering information;
- an update of progress on the community GPI;
- a list of our board of directors and researchers;
- membership information.

***Please note that GPI Atlantic has a new phone number: 902-489-7007.***