

Caring Cities?

Public Opinion and Urban Social
Issues in Western Canadian Cities

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An Analysis of the Looking West 2007 Survey

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In addition to this report, the results of the Looking West 2007 Survey were released in five segments between March and June 2007:

- Segment 1 – Urban Environment
- Segment 2 – Urban Policy Priorities and Assessing Governments
- Segment 3 – Urban Transportation
- Segment 4 – Urban Social Challenges
- Segment 5 – Urban Quality of Life and Urban Growth

A summary report, *City Views*, was released in September 2007. Visit the Canada West Foundation website (www.cwf.ca) to download the segment reports and the summary report at no charge.

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Executive Summary

Many urban social challenges, such as homelessness, prostitution, and drug activity, are concentrated in inner city communities. How urbanites view these street level urban social challenges provides important context for the social agencies, volunteers, police services, community groups and governments that are trying to address them.

Caring Cities? presents an overview of public opinion regarding urban social challenges, public safety, and quality of life in six western Canadian cities: Vancouver; Calgary; Edmonton; Regina; Saskatoon; and Winnipeg. The findings are drawn from the Canada West Foundation's Looking West 2007 Survey. The survey was conducted in early 2007 and included 500 respondents from each of the six cities.

Highlights:

- Two-thirds of western Canadian urbanites feel that reducing homelessness is a high or very high priority, with 1 in 5 stating that it is a very high priority.
- Western Canadian urbanites state that increased programs for homeless people and increased affordable housing are the best ways to address homelessness in their cities.
- To address illegal drug activity, western Canadian urbanites favour an increase in law enforcement directed at drug dealers and drug houses rather than at addicts.
- For each of the western cities (except Regina), the number of residents stating that governments are doing a poor job addressing social issues is considerably higher than the number stating that governments are doing a good job.
- Most western Canadian urbanites feel that there are parts of the city that they are scared to set foot in and rate reducing crime as a high priority.
- Visible minority residents rate quality of life in their city less highly than do non-visible minority residents, and for all western cities except Winnipeg, Aboriginal residents rate quality of life in their city less highly than do non-Aboriginal residents.
- With the exception of Saskatoon, individuals with annual household incomes below \$40,000 are less likely to state that the quality of life in their city is good.

As policy-makers and community leaders work to address urban social challenges, an understanding of the public mood on these issues will provide clues as to the public's support for various policy options.





1. Introduction

Since 2000, the Canada West Foundation's *Western Cities Project* has been examining a broad range of urban policy topics including infrastructure, taxes, urban Aboriginals, water, natural capital, arts and culture, affordable housing, and municipal-provincial relations. As part of this ongoing urban research, the *Core Challenges Initiative* is examining "street level" urban social challenges such as homelessness, prostitution, and drug activity. These issues are considered to be "core" challenges in at least two ways. First, they tend to be concentrated in inner city communities. Second, successfully addressing street level challenges is critical to the long-term health and vitality of western Canada's cities.

In September 2007, the Canada West Foundation released *Hard Times: A Portrait of Street Level Social Problems in Western Canada*. As the first report of the *Core Challenges Initiative*, *Hard Times* used qualitative research to create a portrait of street level social challenges in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg. The research found that street level social challenges are both intensifying and becoming more complex.

Caring Cities? supplements *Hard Times* by presenting an overview of public opinion regarding a number of street level social challenges, as well as attitudes about quality of life and public safety. As policy-makers and community leaders work to address street level social challenges, understanding how the public views these issues will provide valuable context.

2. Methodology

On behalf of the Canada West Foundation, Probe Research administered the Looking West 2007 Survey between January 2 and February 3, 2007 from its Winnipeg call centre. A total of 3,000 western Canadian urban residents were interviewed, with 500 from each of the following urban areas: Vancouver; Calgary; Edmonton; Regina; Saskatoon; and Winnipeg. One can say with 95% certainty that the results are within +/-1.66 percentage points of what they would have been if the entire adult population of these cities had been interviewed; for individual cities, results are within +/-4.38 percentage points. For the combined results and for the demographic analyses, a weighting adjustment factor was applied to match each city's sample weight to its portion of the combined population aged 18 and over of the six cities.

3. Specific Street Level Social Challenges

The Looking West 2007 Survey included questions about four specific street level social challenges: homelessness, drug activity, prostitution, and panhandling.



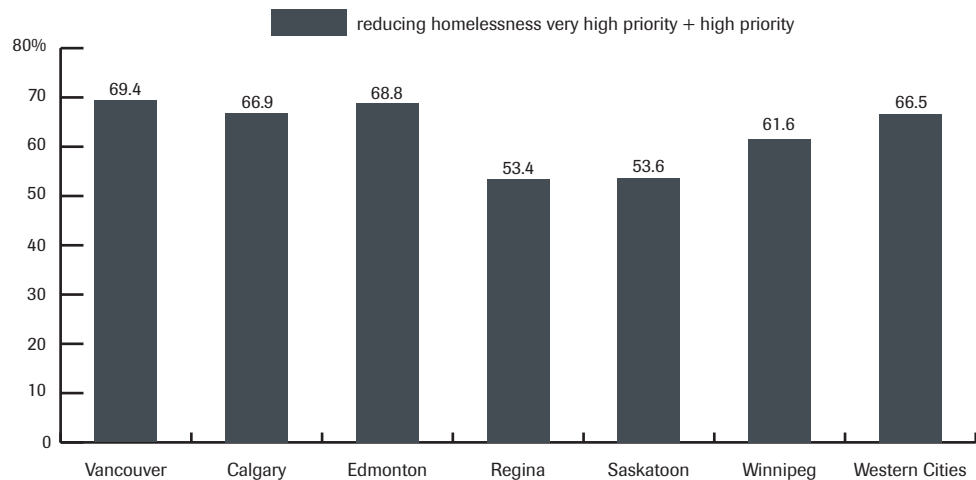
a. Homelessness

Homelessness is a growing problem in Canadian cities. As *Hard Times* documents, homelessness varies in form and scope across western Canada's large cities. In Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton, absolute homelessness (individuals who either live in social service shelters or on the streets) is described as a significant challenge. In Saskatoon, Regina and Winnipeg, absolute homelessness is reported to be a relatively less significant issue, but at risk homelessness (individuals living in inadequate or poor quality housing) and hidden homelessness (individuals who cannot afford a place of their own and are housed privately by "couch surfing" with family or friends) are identified as large issues.

Looking West 2007 Survey respondents were asked to rate the priority of "reducing homelessness." Two-thirds of western Canadian urbanites feel that reducing homelessness is a high or very high priority, with 1 in 5 stating that it is a very high priority. Reflective of the reported differences in absolute homelessness in the six cities, Saskatoon, Regina and Winnipeg residents are somewhat less likely than Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton residents to rate reducing homelessness as a high priority; for Saskatoon and Regina, just over half of the residents state that this is a high or very high priority.

Reducing Homelessness

Figure 1: Reducing Homelessness



	Reducing Homelessness	
	Very high priority	High priority
Vancouver	24.0%	45.4%
Calgary	22.0%	44.9%
Edmonton	18.8%	50.0%
Regina	10.6%	42.8%
Saskatoon	11.8%	41.8%
Winnipeg	13.8%	47.8%
Western Cities	20.2%	46.3%

Demographic variables: Women, younger (18-24 year olds), older (65+ year olds), and lower income residents are the most likely to state that reducing homelessness is a high or very high priority.



Survey respondents were asked the following open-ended question: “There are growing concerns about homelessness in your city. What do you think governments should do to address homelessness in your city?” For all of the cities outside Alberta, the most frequently mentioned solution to homelessness was increasing support programs for homeless people, while in Calgary and Edmonton, the most frequent response was to increase affordable housing options. Affordable housing was mentioned less frequently in Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg. For all of the western cities, increasing the availability of homeless shelter beds was mentioned by only 1 in 5 residents.



Response to Homelessness

Figure 2: Response to Homelessness

	Vancouver	Calgary	Edmonton	Regina	Saskatoon	Winnipeg
Increase support programs for homeless	48.0%	39.9%	38.6%	40.4%	40.4%	44.0%
Increase affordable housing options	41.6%	48.5%	48.6%	28.5%	29.7%	26.4%
Increase availability of shelter beds	21.0%	21.0%	24.8%	21.1%	19.5%	21.2%

Note: Up to three responses were accepted. Figure 2 presents multiple response data.

Demographic variables: Women are more likely than men to mention increasing support programs for the homeless, increasing affordable housing options, and increasing shelter beds. Respondents with annual household incomes above \$100,000 are more likely to mention increasing support programs for the homeless; respondents aged 65 and over are less likely to mention increasing support programs for the homeless.



b. Drug Activity

Drug activity—open drug use/dealing and drug houses (e.g., crack houses)—is reported to be an underlying cause of many other street level social issues. As *Hard Times* documents, frontline social service agency workers in western Canadian cities report that street drug activity is a large problem that is getting worse.

Looking West 2007 respondents were asked: “Of the following options, which is your *first choice* for dealing with illegal drug activity in your city:

- increase law enforcement directed at drug dealers and drug houses
- increase law enforcement directed at drug addicts
- increase programs for addicts, including addiction treatment and employment training;
- establish safe injection sites;
- legalization and regulation of street drugs; or
- I don't care if anything is done?”

Across the cities, the most popular option is to increase law enforcement directed at drug dealers and drug houses; in all of the cities except Vancouver, half of the respondents selected this option. The second most popular option is to increase programs for drug addicts. Less than 1 in 10 identified legalization and regulation of street drugs as the first choice for dealing with illegal drug activity, and less than 1 in 20 selected more law enforcement directed at individuals suffering from drug addiction. Safe injection sites are a frequent source of public debate and less than 1 in 20 respondents stated that such programs are their first choice in dealing with illegal drug activity in their city.

Figure 3: Responses to Illegal Drug Dealing and Use

	Vancouver	Calgary	Edmonton	Regina	Saskatoon	Winnipeg	Western Cities
Increase law enforcement directed at drug dealers/drug houses	43.2%	51.9%	52.6%	50.6%	51.6%	52.0%	49.8%
Increase programs for addicts	31.4%	24.8%	24.2%	30.3%	25.9%	25.4%	28.4%
Legalize and regulate street drugs	8.8%	9.2%	7.0%	5.8%	8.2%	9.4%	8.7%
Increase law enforcement directed at addicts	5.0%	4.8%	4.8%	5.2%	5.0%	4.2%	4.9%
Safe injection sites	5.6%	2.4%	4.2%	2.6%	3.2%	3.0%	4.3%
Don't care/do nothing	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%

Demographic variables: Women, respondents with bachelor or graduate/professional degrees, and 18-24 year olds are the most likely to select increased programs for addicts. Men and 18-24 year olds are the most likely to select legalization and regulation.



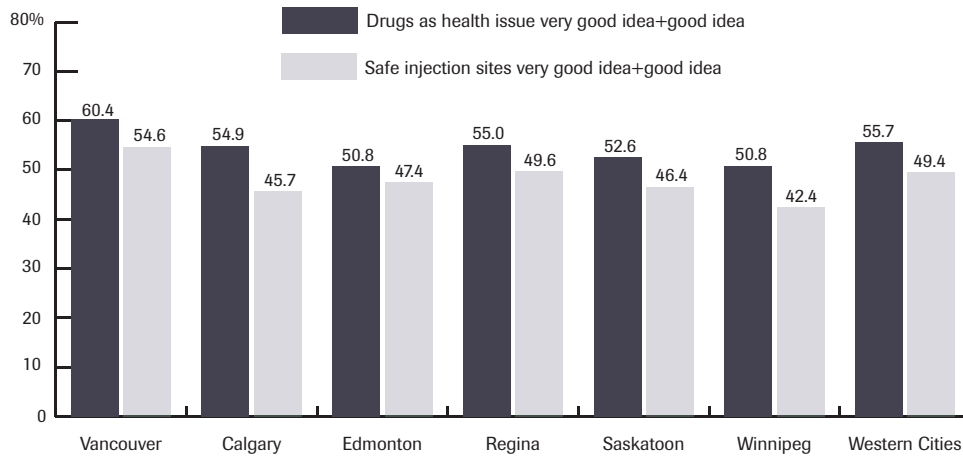


Drugs as a Health Issue and Safe Injection Sites

Respondents were asked to rate the statement “governments should treat illegal drug use as a health issue, not as a criminal issue” as a very good idea, a good idea, a poor idea, or a very poor idea. The majority in each city stated that this is a good or very good idea; Vancouver residents were particularly supportive, with 6 in 10 stating that it is a good or very good idea to treat illegal drug use as a health issue.

Respondents were also asked to rate the statement “there should be safe injection sites for drug addicts in your city” as a very good idea, a good idea, a poor idea, or a very poor idea. As noted earlier, only 1 in 20 selected safe injection sites as their first choice in dealing with illegal drug activity in their city. However, the fact that it was rarely identified as the first choice does not mean that the public is necessarily opposed to the idea; rather, the survey results suggest a fair degree of division on the issue, with roughly half of western urbanites stating that safe injection sites are a good or very good idea. Vancouver residents are the most supportive of the idea, but even here opinion is divided.

Figure 4: Drugs as a Health Issue and Safe Injection Sites



	Treat Drugs as Health Issue		Safe Injection Sites	
	Very good idea	Good idea	Very good idea	Good idea
Vancouver	24.4%	36.0%	21.6%	33.0%
Calgary	19.2%	35.7%	14.2%	31.5%
Edmonton	17.6%	33.2%	11.8%	35.6%
Regina	19.1%	35.9%	15.1%	34.5%
Saskatoon	17.5%	35.1%	13.3%	33.1%
Winnipeg	21.4%	29.4%	12.8%	29.6%
Western Cities	21.2%	34.5%	16.5%	32.9%

Demographic variables: Respondents with graduate/professional degrees and respondents with annual household incomes under \$40,000 are most likely to state that treating illegal drug use as a health issue is a good or very good idea. Women, respondents with graduate/professional degrees, and 18-24 year olds are the most likely to state that safe injection sites are a good or very good idea.



c. Prostitution

Survey respondents were asked: “Of the following options, which is your *first choice* in dealing with street prostitution in your city:

- increase law enforcement directed at johns;
- provide more social services to sex trade workers;
- license and regulate street prostitution;
- establish a red light district and move prostitutes away from business and residential areas; or
- I don't care if anything is done?”

Looking at the western cities as a whole, there is considerable diversity of opinion on this issue: increased law enforcement for johns, increased programs for sex trade workers, and licensing and regulating street prostitution are each favoured by roughly one-quarter of respondents, while establishing a red light district is the first choice of 1 in 5 respondents. Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg respondents clearly favour increased law enforcement for johns, and are the least supportive of the idea of a red light district.

Figure 5: Responses to Street Prostitution

	Vancouver	Calgary	Edmonton	Regina	Saskatoon	Winnipeg	Western Cities
Increase law enforcement for johns	19.0%	25.7%	28.0%	40.0%	36.1%	31.6%	25.2%
Increase programs for sex trade workers	23.2%	24.4%	29.8%	24.5%	27.3%	29.4%	25.8%
License and regulate street prostitution	28.0%	24.2%	18.0%	16.9%	15.1%	19.6%	23.3%
Establish red light district	25.6%	19.8%	17.8%	11.4%	12.4%	12.4%	20.1%
Don't care/do nothing	0.2%	0.6%	0.4%	1.0%	0.8%	0.4%	0.4%

Demographic variables: Women are the most likely to select increased law enforcement for johns. Women, 18-34 year olds, respondents born in Canada whose parents were also born in Canada, and respondents with a bachelor degree are the most likely to select increasing programs for sex trade workers. Men, 55-64 year olds, respondents with incomes above \$40,000, and respondents with graduate/professional degrees are the most likely to select licensing and regulating street prostitution. Men, immigrants and respondents with less than a grade 12 diploma are the most likely to select the establishment of a red light district.



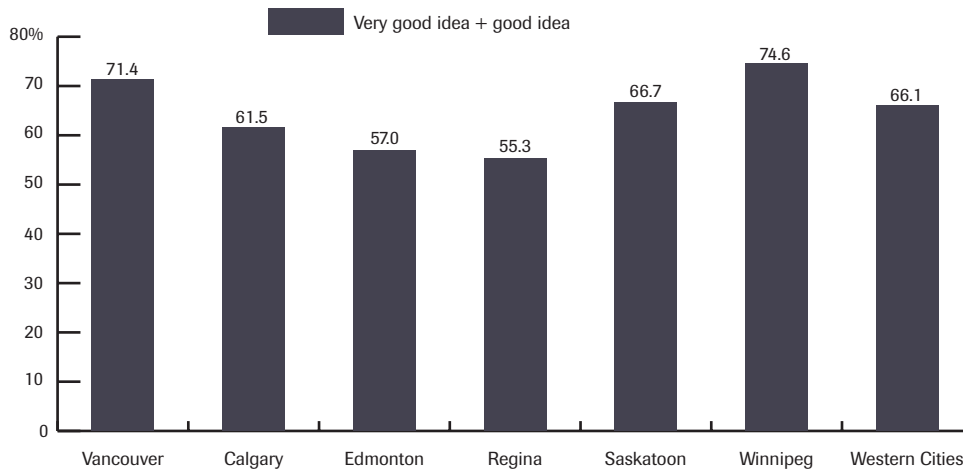
d. Panhandling

There is an important difference in perceptions of panhandling. On the one hand, as *Hard Times* reports, frontline social service workers generally do not see panhandling as a large issue, particularly when compared to issues such as homelessness, prostitution, and drug activity. On the other hand, the Looking West 2007 Survey findings suggest that the public sees panhandling as an issue that should be addressed. Respondents were asked to rate the statement “police should crackdown on panhandling in your city” as a very good idea, a good idea, a poor idea, or a very poor idea. Approximately two-thirds of western Canadian urbanites feel that cracking down on panhandling is a good or very good idea, but there is some variation across the cities. In Winnipeg and Vancouver, over 7 in 10 state that this is a very good or good idea. Numbers are somewhat lower in Regina and Edmonton, where less than 6 in 10 state that a crackdown on panhandling is a good or very good idea.



Police Crackdown on Panhandling

Figure 6: Police Crackdown on Panhandling



	Police Crackdown on Panhandling	
	Very good idea	Good idea
Vancouver	29.6%	41.8%
Calgary	23.8%	37.7%
Edmonton	18.8%	38.2%
Regina	17.3%	38.0%
Saskatoon	25.5%	41.2%
Winnipeg	34.2%	40.4%
Western Cities	26.2%	39.9%

Demographic variables: Residents with bachelor or graduate/professional degrees are less likely to state that a crackdown is a good or very good idea, while residents aged 65 and over, immigrants and visible minorities are more likely to favour this idea.

4. Broader Perspectives on Urban Social Issues and Public Safety

In addition to exploring public attitudes on specific street level social challenges, the Looking West 2007 Survey tapped into public opinion regarding quality of life, public safety, and government performance on social issues.

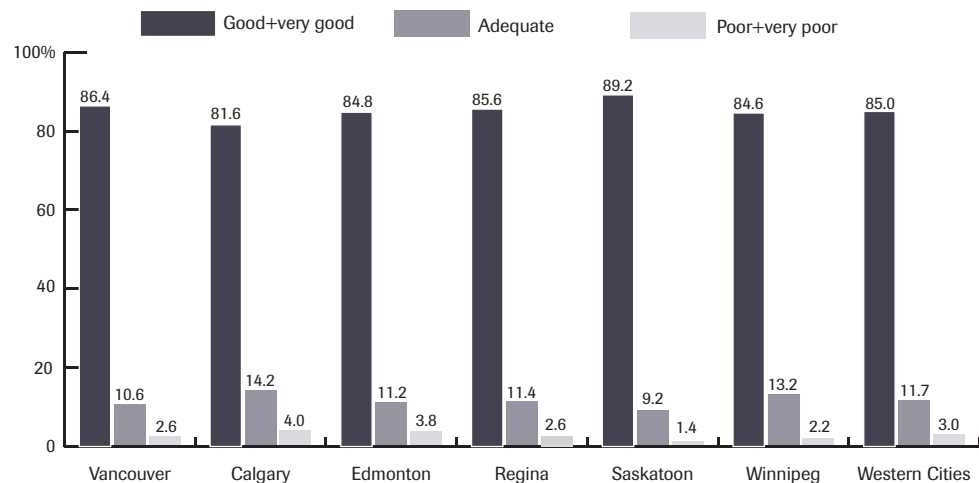
a. Quality of Life

When asked to rate the current quality of life in their cities, western Canadians are quite positive. Across the six cities, over 8 in 10 residents state that the quality of life in their city is either good or very good, and less than 1 in 20 feel that quality of life in their city is poor or very poor. However, when asked how the current quality of life compares to that of five years ago, Vancouver and Calgary residents are more likely to state that it has deteriorated than to state that it has improved (see Figure 8).

In Calgary, over 4 in 10 state that quality of life in the city has deteriorated over the past five years. Calgarians are also somewhat pessimistic about future quality of life in their city: when asked what will happen to quality of life in the next five years, Calgarians are as likely to state that it will deteriorate as they are to state that it will improve.

For the other five western cities, there is greater optimism; residents in Saskatoon, Regina and Winnipeg are particularly optimistic, with a majority stating that quality of life will improve.

Figure 7: Current Quality of Life in City



Current Quality of Life



	Very good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very poor
Vancouver	45.8%	40.6%	10.6%	2.2%	0.4%
Calgary	41.9%	39.7%	14.2%	3.2%	0.8%
Edmonton	40.2%	44.6%	11.2%	3.6%	0.2%
Regina	43.4%	42.2%	11.4%	2.2%	0.4%
Saskatoon	50.2%	39.0%	9.2%	1.2%	0.2%
Winnipeg	31.4%	53.2%	13.2%	1.6%	0.6%
Western Cities	42.1%	42.9%	11.7%	2.5%	0.5%

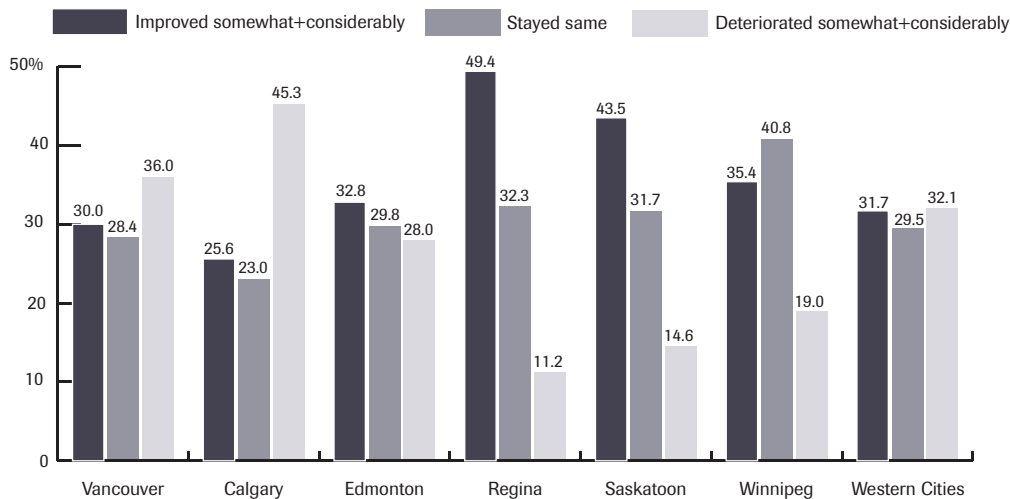
Question: "Thinking about your city as a whole today, would you rate the overall quality of life in your city as very good, good, adequate, poor, or very poor?"

Demographic variation: Respondents with less than a grade 12 diploma, respondents aged 18-24, Aboriginal respondents, visible minority respondents, respondents with annual household incomes below \$40,000, and respondents who have lived in the city for less than five years are less likely to rate current quality of life as good or very good.



Current Quality of Life in City Compared to Five Years Ago

Figure 8: Current Quality of Life in City Compared to Five Years Ago



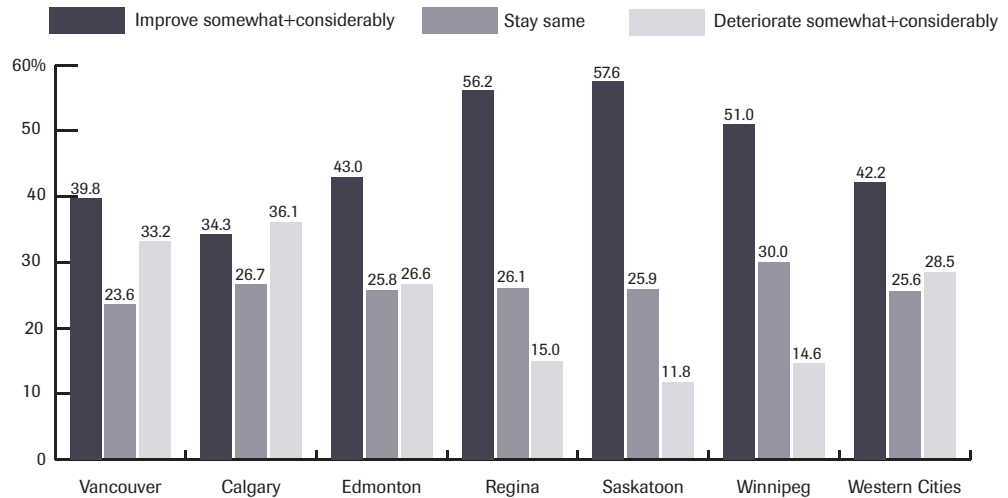
	Improved considerably	Improved somewhat	Stayed same	Deteriorated somewhat	Deteriorated considerably
Vancouver	5.6%	24.4%	28.4%	31.0%	5.0%
Calgary	5.2%	20.4%	23.0%	37.1%	8.2%
Edmonton	8.4%	24.4%	29.8%	23.6%	4.4%
Regina	11.8%	37.6%	32.3%	9.4%	1.8%
Saskatoon	9.2%	34.3%	31.7%	11.2%	3.4%
Winnipeg	6.6%	28.8%	40.8%	17.0%	2.0%
Western Cities	6.6%	25.1%	29.5%	27.2%	4.9%

Question: "When you compare overall quality of life in your city as a whole now to five years ago, would you say that quality of life has improved considerably, improved somewhat, stayed the same, deteriorated somewhat, or deteriorated considerably?"

Demographic variation: Men, residents aged 18-24, immigrants, and visible minority respondents are more likely to state that quality of life has improved considerably or somewhat. Women, residents aged 45 and over, respondents with a graduate/professional degree and second generation Canadians (those born in Canada with one or two immigrant parents) are more likely to state that quality of life has deteriorated considerably or somewhat.

Future Quality of Life

Figure 9: Expectations for Quality of Life Five Years in Future



	Improve considerably	Improve somewhat	Stay same	Deteriorate somewhat	Deteriorate considerably
Vancouver	7.0%	32.8%	23.6%	27.4%	5.8%
Calgary	7.6%	26.7%	26.7%	27.9%	8.2%
Edmonton	9.2%	33.8%	25.8%	22.8%	3.8%
Regina	12.2%	44.0%	26.1%	11.8%	3.2%
Saskatoon	10.8%	46.8%	25.9%	9.4%	2.4%
Winnipeg	6.2%	44.8%	30.0%	13.4%	1.2%
Western Cities	7.8%	34.4%	25.6%	23.4%	5.1%

Question: "Thinking ahead to five years from now, how do you expect overall quality of life in your city as a whole to change? Do you think it will improve considerably, improve somewhat, stay the same, deteriorate somewhat, or deteriorate considerably?"
Demographic variations: Respondents aged 18-24, immigrants, visible minority respondents, and respondents who have lived in the city for five years or less are more likely to state that quality of life will improve somewhat or considerably. Respondents with a graduate/professional degree are more likely to state that quality of life will deteriorate somewhat or considerably.

It must be noted that across the western cities, visible minority residents rate quality of life in their city less highly than do non-visible minority residents, and for all western cities except Winnipeg, Aboriginal residents rate quality of life in their city less highly than do non-Aboriginal residents. However, visible minority residents are more likely than non-visible minority residents to state that quality of life has improved over the past five years, and are more likely to anticipate that quality of life will improve over the next five years. (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents do not differ in their perceptions of change over the past five years, nor in anticipated change over the next five years.)





Figure 10: City-Specific Variations in Perceptions of Current Quality of Life Among Sub-Populations

	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Visible Minority	Non-Visible Minority
Vancouver	76.1% very good/good	86.7% very good/good	79.7% very good/good	88.8% very good/good
Calgary	70.9% very good/good	82.1% very good/good	77.2% very good/good	82.7% very good/good
Edmonton	80.0% very good/good	85.0% very good/good	77.3% very good/good	86.7% very good/good
Regina	77.7% very good/good	86.5% very good/good	81.7% very good/good	86.6% very good/good
Saskatoon	75.6% very good/good	90.4% very good/good	77.8% very good/good	91.4% very good/good
Winnipeg	84.4% very good/good	84.3% very good/good	79.7% very good/good	85.0% very good/good
Western Cities	77.7% very good/good	85.3% very good/good	78.7% very good/good	86.7% very good/good

Variations in Perceptions of Current Quality of Life

Perceptions of current quality of life also vary with family income: individuals with lower annual household incomes are less likely to state that current quality of life in their city is very good or good. However, lower income respondents do not differ significantly from middle income and higher income respondents in their assessments of the change in quality of life over the past five years, nor in their anticipations for future quality of life in their cities.

Figure 11: City-Specific Variations in Perceptions of Current Quality of Life Among Income Categories

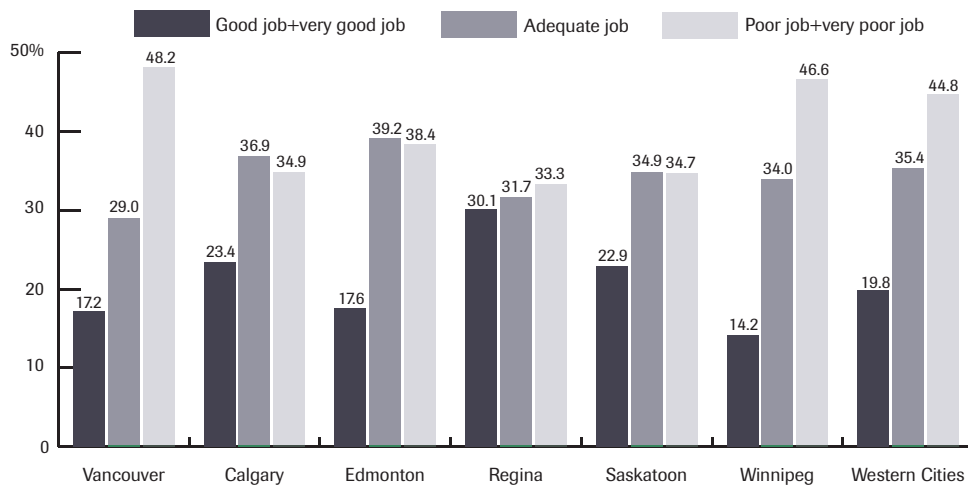
	Under \$20,000	\$20,000-39,999	\$40,000 – 99,999	\$100,000 and over
Vancouver	72.5% very good/good	82.6% very good/good	88.4% very good/good	93.7% very good/good
Calgary	70.0% very good/good	71.1% very good/good	80.9% very good/good	89.6% very good/good
Edmonton	75.0% very good/good	79.2% very good/good	87.8% very good/good	96.2% very good/good
Regina	78.8% very good/good	85.1% very good/good	88.5% very good/good	86.9% very good/good
Saskatoon	77.8% very good/good	93.8% very good/good	88.9% very good/good	94.6% very good/good
Winnipeg	68.6% very good/good	83.6% very good/good	84.8% very good/good	90.1% very good/good
Western Cities	72.8% very good/good	81.0% very good/good	86.4% very good/good	92.5% very good/good



b. Government Performance on Urban Social Issues

When it comes to urban social issues, western Canadian urbanites do not feel that governments are doing the best possible job. Respondents were asked: “In your opinion, how good a job are governments doing to address social issues such as poverty in your city?” Only 2 in 10 residents state that governments are doing a good or very good job addressing social issues in their city; Regina residents are more positive, with 3 in 10 giving governments a good or very good rating. For each of the western cities (except Regina), the number of residents stating that governments are doing a poor or very poor job is considerably higher than the number stating that governments are doing a good or very good job; the difference is greatest for Vancouver and Winnipeg at over 30 percentage points.

Figure 12: Government Performance on Urban Social Issues



	Very good job	Good job	Adequate job	Poor job	Very poor job
Vancouver	2.6%	14.6%	29.0%	39.4%	8.8%
Calgary	3.2%	20.2%	36.9%	27.3%	7.6%
Edmonton	2.2%	15.4%	39.2%	32.2%	6.2%
Regina	6.6%	23.5%	31.7%	28.1%	5.2%
Saskatoon	3.6%	19.3%	34.9%	29.5%	5.2%
Winnipeg	1.6%	12.6%	34.0%	39.6%	7.0%
Western Cities	2.8%	17.0%	35.4%	36.8%	8.0%

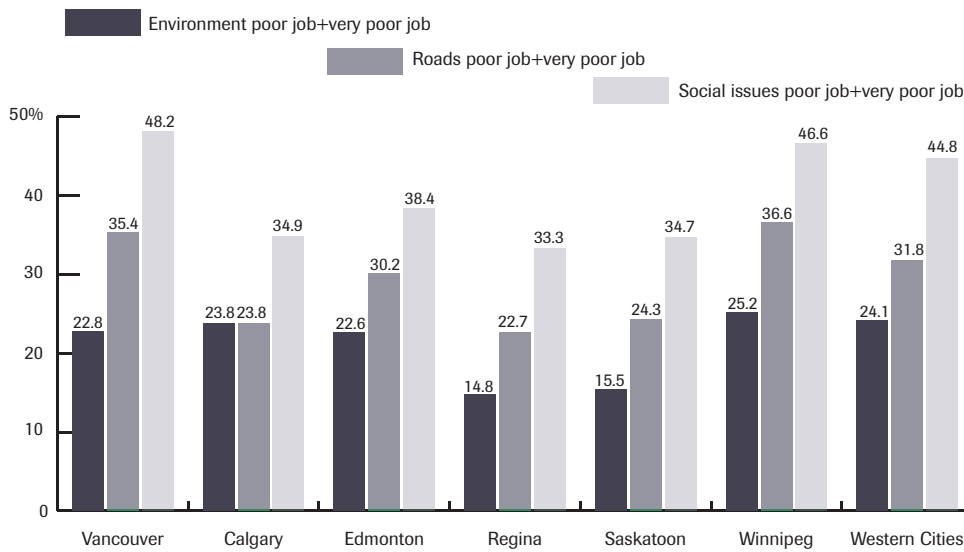
Demographic variables: Women, respondents with graduate/professional degrees, respondents aged 55-64, and respondents with annual household incomes of \$100,000 and over are more likely to rate government performance on urban social issues as poor or very poor. Men, immigrants, visible minority respondents, 18-24 year olds, respondents with a high school diploma or less, and respondents who have lived in the city for less than five years are more likely to rate government performance on urban social issues as good or very good.





For context, it is useful to consider the public's rating of government performance on social issues with its rating of government performance on roads and the environment. Across the six cities, urbanites are more likely to state that governments are doing a poor job on social issues in their city than to give governments a poor rating on the environment or on roads. This is an interesting finding given that environmental and road issues tend to attract considerably more public attention.

Figure 13: Government Performance on Urban Environment, Roads and Urban Social Issues



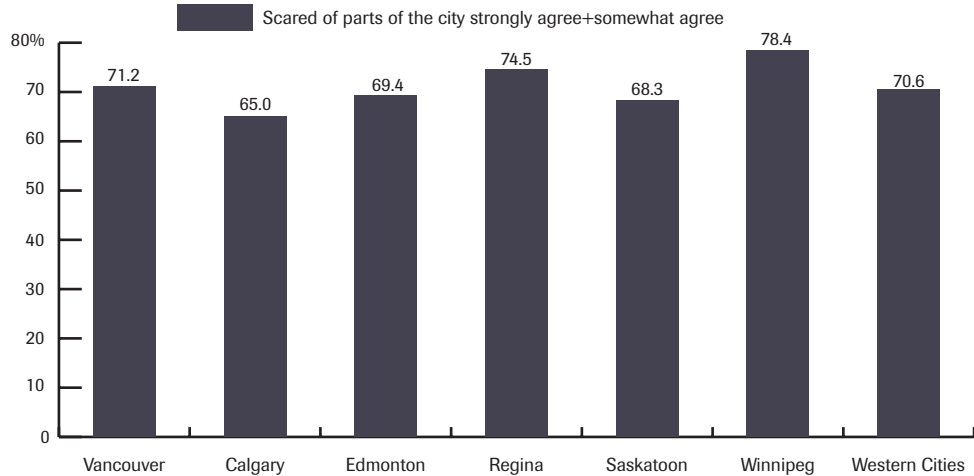
Questions: "In your opinion, how good a job is your local government doing to ensure an efficient road system? A very good job, a good job, an adequate job, a poor job, or a very poor job." "In your opinion, how good a job are governments doing to protect the environment in your city? A very good job, a good job, an adequate job, a poor job, or a very poor job."

Government Performance on Urban Environment, Roads and Social Issues

c. Public Safety

As reported in *Hard Times*, frontline social service agency workers frequently mentioned that street level social challenges have negative implications for both actual public safety and public perceptions of safety. The Looking West 2007 Survey reveals that western Canadian urbanites have two different perceptions on the safety of their cities. Most residents feel that there are unsafe parts of their cities; when asked to rate their agreement with the statement, “There are parts of the city I am scared to set foot in,” 7 in 10 strongly or somewhat agreed. In addition, when asked to rate the priority of “reducing crime in your city,” almost 8 in 10 stated that it was a high or very high priority.

Figure 14: Dangerous Parts of the City



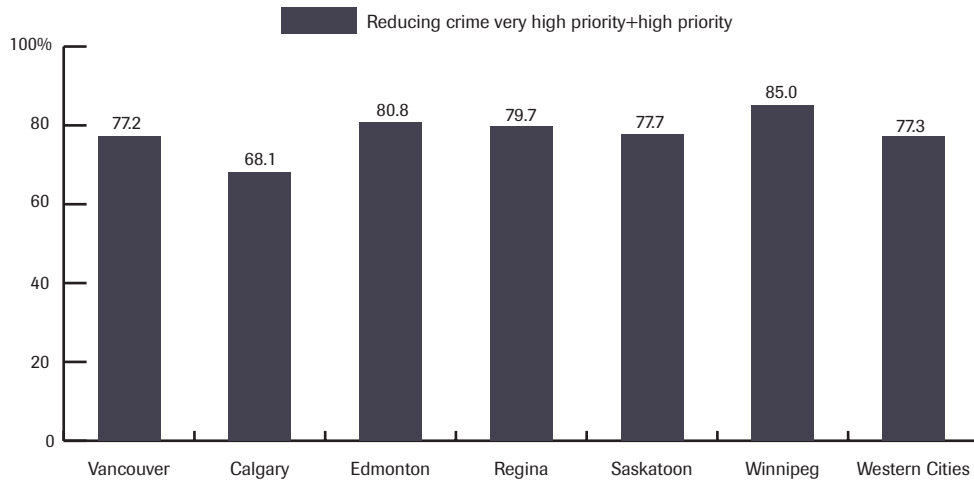
	Scared of parts of the city	
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree
Vancouver	42.6%	28.6%
Calgary	31.9%	33.1%
Edmonton	38.0%	31.4%
Regina	44.4%	30.1%
Saskatoon	39.8%	28.5%
Winnipeg	52.8%	25.6%
Western Cities	40.9%	29.7%

Demographic variables: Women and respondents with annual household incomes above \$150,000 are more likely to strongly or somewhat agree. Respondents aged 18-34 and 55-64 are more likely to strongly or somewhat disagree.





Figure 15: Reducing Crime



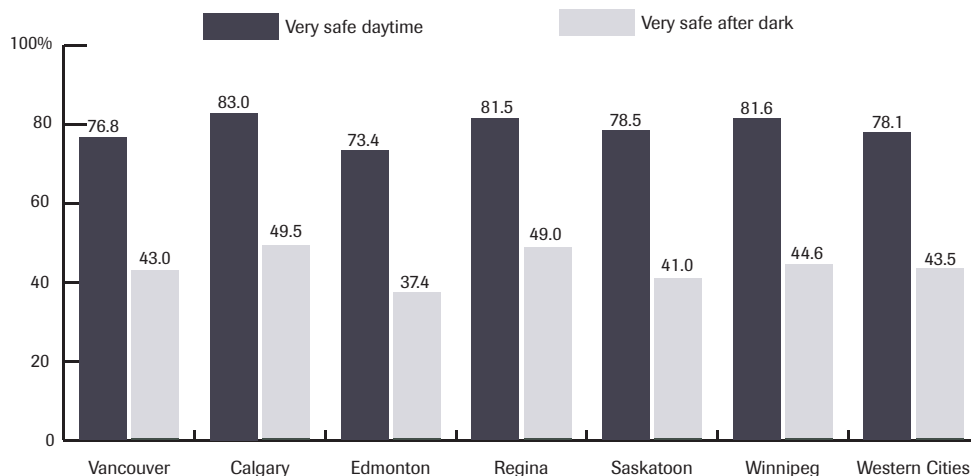
	Reducing crime	
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree
Vancouver	25.6%	51.6%
Calgary	18.6%	49.5%
Edmonton	27.0%	53.8%
Regina	23.3%	56.4%
Saskatoon	23.1%	54.6%
Winnipeg	32.4%	52.6%
Western Cities	25.2%	52.1%

Demographic variables: Respondents with a high school diploma or less, respondents aged 65 and over, second generation Canadians, visible minority respondents, and respondents with annual household incomes under \$60,000 are more likely to state that reducing crime is a high or very high priority.



Yet while many urbanites are afraid of parts of the city and that reducing crime is a high or very high priority, respondents generally feel safe in their own neighbourhoods. Almost 8 in 10 report feeling *very safe* walking alone in the neighbourhood in which they live during daylight hours. Feelings of safety drop when darkness falls, but still over 4 in 10 report feeling *very safe* walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark, and almost 8 in 10 report feeling *very or somewhat safe* after dark.

Figure 16: Neighbourhood Safety



	Daytime				After dark			
	Very safe	Somewhat safe	Not very safe	Not at all safe	Very safe	Somewhat safe	Not very safe	Not at all safe
Vancouver	76.8%	18.8%	3.0%	1.2%	43.0%	35.6%	12.2%	8.6%
Calgary	83.0%	14.2%	2.2%	0.4%	49.5%	31.9%	12.0%	5.2%
Edmonton	73.4%	22.2%	2.0%	1.6%	37.4%	36.0%	16.2%	9.0%
Regina	81.5%	14.5%	2.8%	1.2%	49.0%	32.7%	10.2%	7.4%
Saskatoon	78.5%	17.1%	3.0%	0.8%	41.0%	36.3%	13.3%	8.2%
Winnipeg	81.6%	14.6%	2.2%	1.4%	44.6%	33.2%	12.4%	8.6%
Western Cities	78.1%	17.8%	2.6%	1.1%	43.5%	34.6%	12.9%	8.0%

Demographic variables: Women, respondents with a high school diploma or less, respondents aged 18-24, immigrants, visible minority respondents, and respondents with annual household incomes under \$40,000 are less likely to report feeling very safe during daytime. Women, respondents with a high school diploma or less, respondents aged 65 and over, immigrants, second generation Canadians, visible minority residents, respondents with annual household incomes under \$40,000 and respondents who have lived in their cities for less than five years are less likely to report feeling very safe after dark.



Feelings of safety in one’s neighbourhood vary with a number of demographic variables, including visible minority status, immigrant status, income, and gender. Across the six cities, visible minorities are less likely than non-visible minorities to report feeling very safe walking alone in their neighbourhoods during daylight hours, and for all cities except Vancouver and Regina, after dark. In both daylight and after dark, higher income respondents are more likely to report feeling very safe walking alone in their neighbourhoods, and lower income respondents are less likely to report such feelings. Similarly, women are less likely than men to report feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhoods.



Variations in Perceptions of Safety

Figure 17: City-Specific Variations in Perceptions of Safety Among Visible Minorities

	Very safe daylight		Very safe after dark	
	Visible Minority	Non-Visible Minority	Visible Minority	Non-Visible Minority
Vancouver	66.7%	79.9%	40.7%	43.8%
Calgary	70.9%	85.3%	39.2%	51.0%
Edmonton	64.8%	75.5%	29.5%	39.6%
Regina	73.3%	82.7%	50.0%	48.7%
Saskatoon	68.3%	80.6%	34.9%	42.2%
Winnipeg	75.0%	82.9%	39.1%	45.9%
Western Cities	68.0%	80.7%	38.2%	44.8%

Figure 18: City-Specific Variations in Perceptions of Daytime Safety (“Very Safe”) Among Income Categories

	Under \$20,000	\$20,000-39,999	\$40,000 – 99,999	\$100,000 and over
Vancouver	62.5%	71.4%	79.9%	88.4%
Calgary	63.3%	72.9%	80.9%	88.8%
Edmonton	59.1%	66.7%	73.3%	88.5%
Regina	71.2%	77.0%	85.2%	90.2%
Saskatoon	68.1%	79.6%	81.2%	94.5%
Winnipeg	68.6%	79.1%	82.3%	97.2%
Western Cities	63.3%	72.8%	79.2%	89.6%

Figure 19: City-Specific Variations in Perceptions of After Dark Safety (“Very Safe”) Among Income Categories

	Under \$20,000	\$20,000-39,999	\$40,000 – 99,999	\$100,000 and over
Vancouver	27.5%	36.5%	47.2%	57.9%
Calgary	23.3%	39.0%	42.8%	73.6%
Edmonton	15.9%	34.7%	39.8%	51.3%
Regina	32.7%	34.5%	53.1%	70.5%
Saskatoon	31.9%	32.7%	49.4%	65.5%
Winnipeg	28.6%	36.3%	47.3%	63.4%
Western Cities	25.1%	36.2%	45.1%	62.0%

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5. Conclusion

When it comes to addressing urban social issues, there is a danger that the human dimension will be forgotten, that “cracking down” on crime will get most of the attention, and that some residents will simply shrug their shoulders and argue that these issues are an inevitable part of life in a big city. These barriers to effective public policy are complicated by a related challenge, rooted in the existence of two very different perspectives on how best to address street level social challenges.

On the one hand, there are individuals and groups who focus on helping people in need. Those approaching street level social issues from this perspective are likely to place priority on policy options such as support programs for people with addictions, sex trade workers, and the homeless, and on addressing root causes, such as poverty, mental illness, and discrimination. On the other hand, there are individuals and groups who see street level social issues as problems to be “cleaned up” so as to reduce negative effects on businesses and residents. Those approaching street level social challenges from this perspective are likely to place priority on policy options such as crackdowns on crime. Given these two divergent perspectives, policy debates about street level social challenges have the potential to be highly divisive and contested.

While increasing public safety is important and a key part of any strategy for addressing urban social challenges, it should not be the only approach. Western Canadian urbanites can have both *safe* and *caring* cities, but this requires a balanced approach. In keeping with this, the Looking West 2007 Survey findings suggest that the public supports a balance between the two perspectives. While there is considerable support for crackdowns on drug dealers, johns, and panhandlers, there is also support for more programs for sex trade workers and the homeless, and a belief that drug addiction should be treated as a health issue rather than a criminal issue.

Although street level social issues are often concentrated in core areas, these issues have implications for all urbanites. Because addressing these issues will require long-term efforts, cities would be wise to place priority on these issues sooner rather than later.



About the Canada West Foundation

Our Vision

A dynamic and prosperous West in a strong Canada.

Our Mission

A leading source of strategic insight, conducting and communicating non-partisan economic and public policy research of importance to the four western provinces and all Canadians.

Canada West Foundation is a registered Canadian charitable organization incorporated under federal charter (#11882 8698 RR 0001).

In 1970, the One Prairie Province Conference was held in Lethbridge, Alberta. Sponsored by the University of Lethbridge and the Lethbridge Herald, the conference received considerable attention from concerned citizens and community leaders. The consensus at the time was that research on the West (including BC and the Canadian North) should be expanded by a new organization. To fill this need, the Canada West Foundation was created under letters patent on December 31, 1970. Since that time, the Canada West Foundation has established itself as one of Canada's premier research institutes. Non-partisan, accessible research and active citizen engagement are hallmarks of the Foundation's past, present and future endeavours. These efforts are rooted in the belief that a strong West makes for a strong Canada.

More information can be found at www.cwf.ca.

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