

National Dialogue for Young Canadians



The Canada Young Canadians Want



Citizenship in Action

2005

CPRN
10th Anniversary



RCRPP
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Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc. www.cprn.org

Workbook

Section 2: Dialogue Issues



National Dialogue for Young Canadians

**Participant Workbook
Section 2: Dialogue Issues**

November 2005



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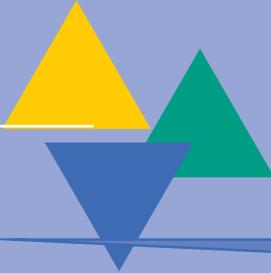
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Section 2



Dialogue Issues

Dialogue Issues



Learning

To help inform your dialogue, this section provides for each issue:

- ◆ brief factual background information
- ◆ some challenges associated with the issue
- ◆ different possible directions/actions to address these challenges
- ◆ some arguments in favour and against each direction/action.

This material is provided to spark your thinking – we are not advocating a particular perspective or direction. Some of the challenges posed were suggested by our Advisory Committee and young people and others emerged from conversations with policy experts. However, we know that you will have your own ideas about challenges and choices which could be different from what is presented. There are no easy answers to these issues and choices always have consequences. This dialogue is not intended to make you instant experts. It is designed to uncover what is most important to you, what policy directions are needed, what trade-offs you as citizens are prepared to make (and under what conditions) to move in those directions, what you need from others, and what you are prepared to do yourselves.



Work



Health



Environment

Learning



Learning: Background

The provinces and territories are responsible for delivering education. In most provinces, education is the second largest single budget item after health care. The federal government transfers funds to provinces and territories for education, and supports research activities within universities and colleges. Federal and provincial government expenditure on post-secondary education (PSE) peaked at \$18.9 billion in 2001, dropping slightly in 2002.¹

What are the Societal and Individual Benefits of Higher Education and Lifelong Learning?

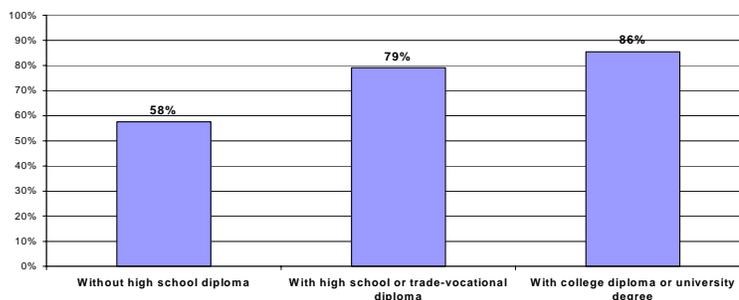
Making sure everyone has access to higher education and is able to continue learning throughout life serves two goals – achieving a higher quality of life, and providing people with the skills they need to adapt to life’s opportunities and challenges.

- ◆ People who complete PSE, especially university graduates, are much more likely to be employed, have higher incomes, have opportunities to upgrade their skills while working, and are much more likely to vote in elections, and engage in civic activities.²
- ◆ More than a third of employees with PSE participate in formal training supported by their employers, compared to

only 13% of those who have high school or less.³

- ◆ Those who do not complete high school are less likely to have a job than those with more formal education, (see Figure 1 below).
- ◆ Education matters more than job experience in terms of getting a skilled job. Jobs are classified according to the tasks and duties undertaken.⁴ Low skilled jobs [e.g. cashier] require high school or less, skilled jobs require apprenticeship qualifications or college [e.g. technician], and highly skilled jobs [e.g. engineer, teacher] require

Figure 1: Employment Rates in Canada for 20 to 24 Year Olds Not in Education, by Level of Educational Attainment, 2002



Source: OECD and CPRN (2005).

university. In general, skilled jobs offer better pay, better working conditions and benefits, and better prospects for advancement.

- ◆ Lifelong learning (or adult learning) boosts productivity, assists people in their everyday activities and encourages more active citizenship.⁵

Who Attends College and University and Who Pays?

- ◆ PSE attendance is at an historic high – about 40% of young people (20-24 years) are enrolled compared to 19% in 1976.⁶
- ◆ Tuition has increased significantly in the past decade and lower-income students are more sensitive to rising costs. Young adults from higher-income families are two to three times more likely to attend university than young adults from low-income families. The proportion attending college is more evenly distributed across family-income levels.
- ◆ Students and their families are paying a larger share of the increasing costs associated with post-secondary education – 23% in 2001 compared to 17% in the mid-90s – while governments' support has not matched these growing costs.⁷
- ◆ Most European governments provide much more funding for PSE and families and students pay less than Canadian students. However, the percentage of their young people attending university is much lower.

- ◆ To cope with increased costs, some students reduce their course loads and work part-time – and some interrupt their schooling or drop out.
- ◆ Financial circumstances and considerations do limit access, but other factors like parents' education and expectations, location (living in a rural/remote area), inadequate information about the costs and benefits of PSE, and entry requirements are found to be as, or more, important.⁸

What Happens to Young People Who Go Into the Workforce from High School?

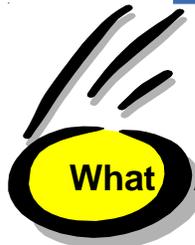
- ◆ Most individuals in Canada who go into the workforce directly from high school (about 60% of young people) have a harder time getting good jobs that pay well, provide good benefits and opportunities to move up. This is not the case in European countries, where high school graduation enables young people to move into skilled occupations.

- ◆ The Adult Literacy and Life Skills survey indicates that about 40% of adults in Canada have problems dealing with everyday activities involving literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills, where no routine procedures exist. These people have difficulties coping with everyday life and work tasks and are more likely to be unemployed and have low wages. The rate of literacy hasn't improved in the past decade.⁹ Those with less formal education are much more likely to have lower levels of literacy.
- ◆ The ability to use information and computer technologies is important in today's economy and for personal needs – those with good literacy and computer skills are five times more likely to be in the top 25% of earners than those with low literacy skills and low computer use.¹⁰
- ◆ About 60% of Canadians (between 16-65) participate in active informal learning (e.g. learning by oneself, trying things out and getting help). The rates of informal learning increase sharply with rising levels of educational attainment. In Canada, adults with higher education are nearly five times more likely to participate in informal learning than those with high school or less.¹¹



Literacy = Ability to read and write, plus having the knowledge and skills necessary to understand different kinds of documents (e.g. job applications, payroll forms, maps).

Numeracy = Facility and skills to use and understand numbers in everyday situations such as household budgeting, following a recipe, and shopping.



What About the Future?

- ▼ Do we need to rethink how we educate young people to better prepare them for lifelong learning and for their citizenship rights and responsibilities? How should we support lifelong learning?
- ▼ What kind of education will be needed two decades from now?
- ▼ What effect will telecommunications and information management systems have on how tomorrow's generations learn?

Challenges for Consideration

1. How do we make sure that all qualified students are able to attend university or college?

<u>Directions/Actions</u>	
Provincial/territorial governments would increase funding to PSE institutions to enable them to reduce tuition and other costs for students and families.	
<u>Arguments For</u>	<u>And Against</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Less debt for students after graduation, giving them better options for a good start in the labour market. ◆ Students from lower-income backgrounds will not be discouraged by high tuition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Governments will need to increase taxes or reduce other spending to make up for the expenditures. ◆ Because those from well-off families are much more likely to get PSE, these better off families would benefit the most from tuition decreases.
<u>Directions/Actions</u>	
Governments would increase funding for student loans and schools would substantially increase grants for those in need. Universities and colleges would be free to increase tuition to improve the quality of education.	
<u>Arguments For</u>	<u>And Against</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Loans and grants would be targeted to those who most need the help; those who can afford to pay more would do so. ◆ It is governments' responsibility to provide financial assistance to those in need – not to all students. Schools will improve the quality of education and this is critical for competitiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Some students (especially those from middle income families) could be ineligible for support and would face even higher debt loads after graduation. ◆ Government funding is not likely to be enough to cover the costs of increased tuition and other fees. Too many students from lower-income families may become discouraged by higher costs and not go on to PSE.

Directions/Actions

Families would be expected, encouraged and supported to save enough for their children's education. Governments would focus on offering more financial incentives to save; high schools and governments would promote higher education with students and families; business would be encouraged to provide greater support through scholarships and bursaries.

Arguments For

- ◆ With greater incentives and better information on the benefits of higher education, more families will save for their children's PSE and there would be less cost to the taxpayers.
- ◆ It is up to government to make sure families and students understand the benefits of education – and then it is up to families to make sure their children get the education they need.

And Against

- ◆ Many lower-income families would not be able to save enough to finance their children's education and, as a result, the gap between the rich and poor would widen.
- ◆ Financial incentives are not really fair – they provide the greatest benefit to well-to-do families, who can most readily afford PSE.

2. How do we make sure that young people who don't go on to college or university get the skills that they need for employment and life?

Directions/Actions

Provincial/territorial governments would redesign and increase funding for high school vocational streams (for those entering the workforce after graduation), work to increase literacy and numeracy levels of graduates, and partner with businesses to ensure that their credentials are recognized (including providing co-op placements).

Arguments For

- ◆ Not everyone needs to go on to college or university. Students deserve a high quality high school education that prepares them for the labour force and for informal learning throughout life.
- ◆ Education-business partnerships to provide students with on-the-job training and experience would better prepare students for the work force. Our economy needs these workers and we should encourage and value their contributions.

And Against

- ◆ There would be increased risk that some students whose parents have less education and lower incomes would be steered to a vocational path, even if they are interested in college or university.
- ◆ A knowledge intensive and highly productive economy requires higher, not lower, levels of PSE attainment – we need to focus our attention on getting more students to pursue PSE, not in making other options more attractive.

Directions/Actions

Governments would collaborate on the implementation of coordinated and comprehensive adult learning and literacy initiatives, and would substantially increase investments.

Arguments For

- ◆ This would boost productivity, increase employment, promote active citizenship and help people in their daily lives.
- ◆ For lots of reasons, some people don't finish high school, or leave school with poor literacy and numeracy skills. These people deserve a 'second chance' to get the educational qualifications and skills needed for better jobs and to have a higher quality of life.

And Against

- ◆ It's better to take a preventative approach – we need to focus resources on early childhood development, Kindergarten to grade 12 and post-secondary education – this has a higher payoff for individuals and society.
- ◆ Governments (taxpayers) should not have to bear the cost, since much of the gain from improved literacy goes to employers and individuals.

Directions/Actions

Employers would take on greater responsibility for improving the literacy and numeracy skills of their employees who need help. Families and individuals would take on greater responsibility for improving their own literacy and skills upgrading.

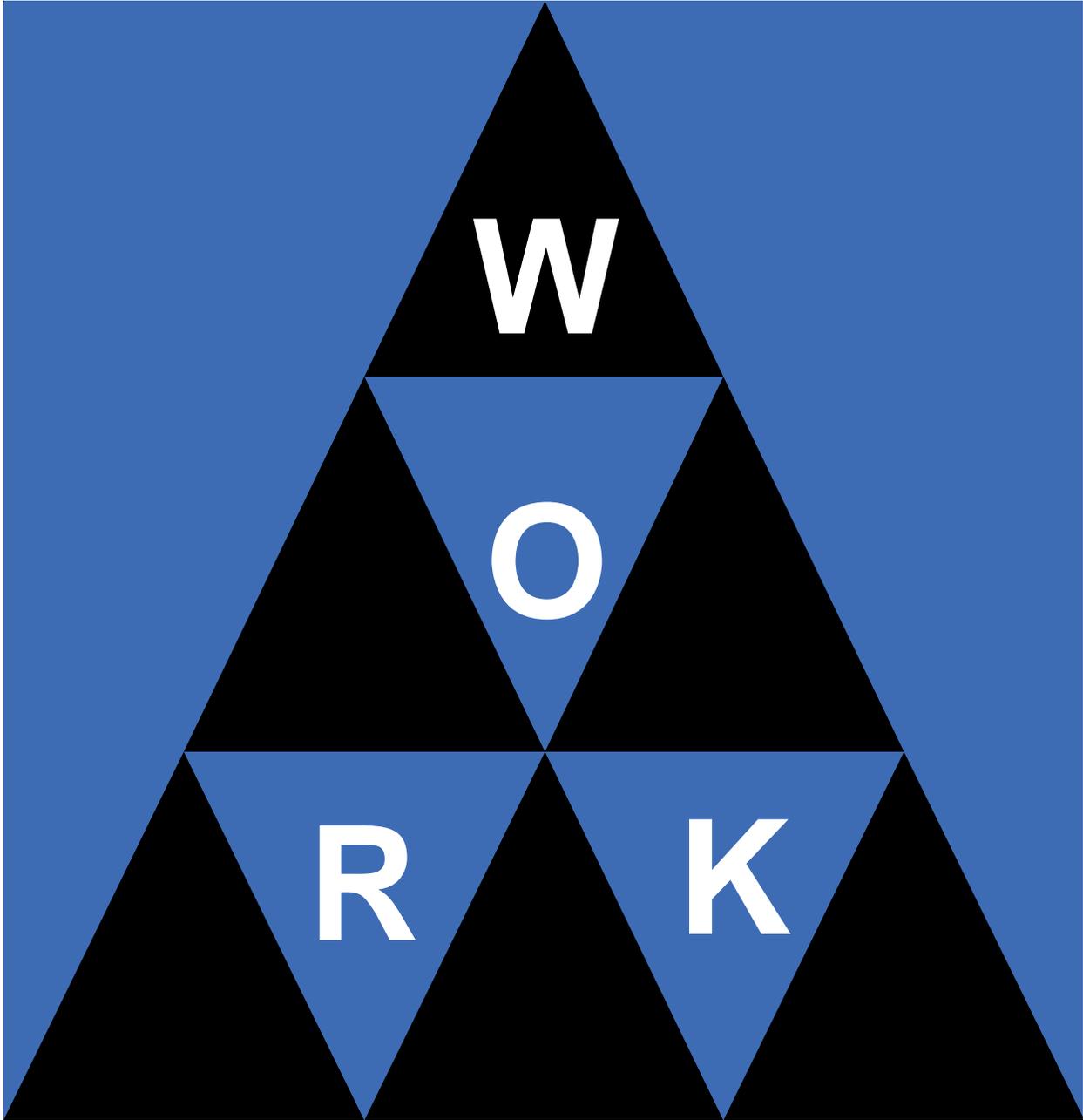
Arguments For

- ◆ Costs should be borne by those who directly benefit and people are more motivated if they contribute directly.
- ◆ This would free up public funds to invest in other priorities (e.g. post-secondary education).

And Against

- ◆ It's unreasonable to expect business and individuals to address this societal problem – the benefits of a literate population extend to all of society; so too should the costs of improving literacy.
- ◆ Employers may under-invest because of worries that people will leave for other jobs after they've had upgrading and training.





Work: Background

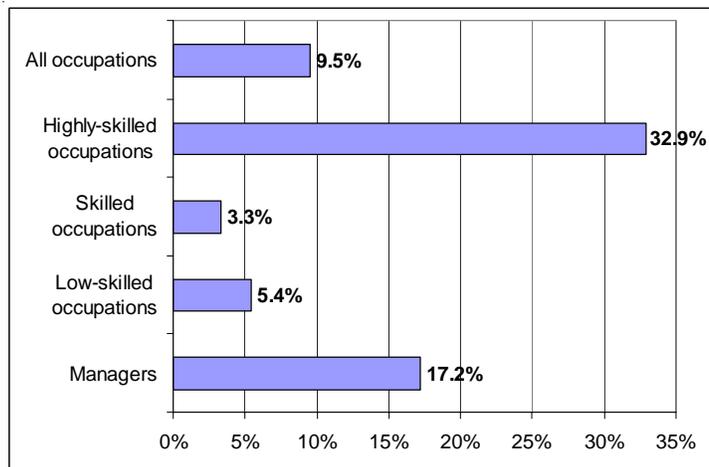
Work is Changing

The nature of work has changed radically in the past 25 years, due to globalized trade, new technologies and changes in family and work life (two-earner families). Skill requirements are higher, workplaces emphasize teamwork and flexibility, jobs are less secure, wages are under pressure, it is harder to qualify for employment insurance, and families are juggling work, family and community responsibilities.

- ◆ About **63% of employed Canadians are in “standard” jobs** – full-time, longer-term relationships with one employer.
- ◆ The remaining **37% are in “non-standard” jobs** – working in part-time, temporary, casual or self-employed positions.¹²
- ◆ The number of self-employed workers nearly doubled in the past 25 years – going from **1.2 million in 1976 to 2.4 million** in 2003 (about 15% of all workers).¹³
- ◆ Non-standard jobs typically do not offer medical, dental or disability plans, do not pay vacation time, or provide pension plans. Many workers in non-standard jobs are not covered by employment standard laws, such as minimum wage and other job protections.
- ◆ The labour force is changing (see Figure 2). The number of **highly-skilled jobs** (those

normally requiring a university education) increased by **33%** between 1991 and 2001, triple the rate of growth for the labour market as a whole. Highly-skilled jobs now account for **16%** of all jobs, up from **13%** a decade earlier. In contrast, low-skilled jobs

Figure 2: Labour Force Growth by Occupational Skill Group, 1991 to 2001



Source: Statistics Canada 2001 Census. Chart prepared by CPRN.

(those normally requiring at most a high school diploma) grew by only 5% and their share of the labour force dropped to **43% from 45%**.

- ◆ **Skilled jobs** requiring college or apprenticeship training grew by only **3.3%**. Their share of the labour force is now **30%, down from 32%** in 1991.

- ◆ Managers are not included in skill-based classifications because of the great variation in their backgrounds and educational levels. There are about **1.6 million managers** in the workforce, an increase of about **17.2%** in a decade.¹⁴
- ◆ The Canadian economy and labour market have been strong in recent years. And yet, **4% of all employees** (547,000 individuals) work at or below the minimum wage, and half of them are 20 years of age or older.¹⁵
- ◆ Almost two-thirds of minimum wage workers are women, 5% are heads of families, 6% have a partner who isn't working and 5% live alone. Minimum wages vary from a high of \$8.50 in Nunavut to a low of \$6.25 in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- ◆ Less than one third of workers have unionized jobs (typically better paid, with benefits) and only **14% of younger workers (17-24) are in unions** (compared to 26% in 1981).
- ◆ Even full-time workers face insecurity – 16% are paid less than \$10/hour, and this percentage has not fallen since 1981. Half of those under 25 earn low pay, and 27% of recent immigrants are low paid (compared to 16% of Canadian-born workers).¹⁶

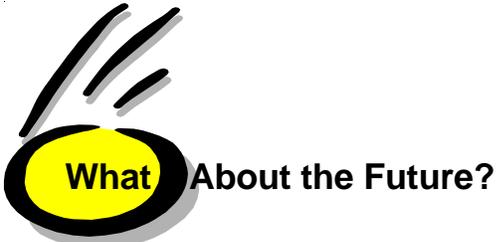
- ◆ Some low paid workers are not poor, because they live in households where others have jobs. But they are more vulnerable to poverty when they lose their job or if the family breaks up.
- ◆ Low pay is four times more prevalent among those who haven't completed high school than for people with university or college qualifications. And it is not much better for those with only high school diplomas – they are three times more likely to be in low paid jobs.

What is a High Quality Job?

Money matters, but it is not the most important factor for most Canadians. Over 60% of employed Canadians consider the following to be “very important” in a job.¹⁷ They value a job where/that:

- ▶ People you work for treat you with respect ▶ (74%)
- ▶ Work is interesting ▶ (72%)
- ▶ Gives a feeling of accomplishment ▶ (71%)
- ▶ Has good communication among co-workers ▶ (70%)
- ▶ Allows a balance of work and family ▶ (70%)
- ▶ Lets you develop skills and abilities ▶ (65%)
- ▶ People are friendly and helpful ▶ (64%)
- ▶ Allows you freedom to do your job ▶ (63%)
- ▶ Job security is good ▶ (62%)
- ▶ Pays well ▶ (62%)

58% of Canadians said (2001) that they were having trouble combining work and life responsibilities (role overload). 49% of Canadian workers who experience high role overload are depressed and 70% are experiencing high levels of stress. This means more trips to the doctor, higher medication costs and lost time at work.



What About the Future?

- ▼ With what we know today, are we able to accurately predict the labour market of tomorrow?
- ▼ Will post-secondary education continue to pay off? Will there be enough good jobs to go around?
- ▼ Will more people opt to work for themselves and if so, what are the implications for education, access to pensions, health benefits, upgrading, and other policies?
- ▼ Will tomorrow's workers want to trade-off less income for more personal and family time?

Challenges for Consideration

1. How do we improve work conditions and increase incomes for people with less secure forms of and/or lower paid employment (temporary, part-time, contract employees, self-employed)?

Directions/Actions

Employers would be required by legislation to increase minimum wages and to provide better working conditions and benefits for non-standard workers.

Arguments For

- ♦ This would ensure that the wages of low-paid workers would increase, work conditions would improve and employers, rather than taxpayers, would bear most of the cost.
- ♦ Increased minimum wages would lead to higher job satisfaction, lower job turnover and higher productivity.

And Against

- ♦ Employers must be able to adapt quickly to changing market demands – they need flexibility to grow or shrink their workforce to remain competitive. This would make them less competitive.
- ♦ The cost of adjusting to these new regulations and higher wages may result in loss of jobs or increased prices for goods and services.

Directions/Actions

Governments would provide some benefits (e.g. coverage for catastrophic drug costs) for all, or some, workers and would introduce mechanisms to enable the self-employed to access benefits and insurance at a reasonable cost.

Arguments For

- ♦ Gives everyone access to some basic supports, not just those fortunate enough to obtain such benefits through employment, and some barriers to self-employment would be lowered.
- ♦ People on welfare, especially parents, would be encouraged to work, because they would have some benefits covered by government.

And Against

- ♦ The extra costs would be borne by taxpayers unless governments reduced spending in other areas.
- ♦ Some benefits may go to some employees and employers who could afford to pay for them.

Directions/Actions

Governments would provide income supplements for the working poor.

Arguments For

- This would increase the incomes of the working poor and reinforce the work ethic, especially for lower income single parents.
- This would be targeted to those who need help the most.

And Against

- This could lead to employers cutting wages for less-skilled workers unless minimum wages increase. It could also discourage lower income parents from working if their health benefits are cut because of increased wages.
- This would be costly to the public purse unless minimum wages are increased, given the large number of low wage workers. Governments would need to raise taxes or redirect funds to other priorities.

2. How do we improve job quality?

Directions/Actions

Employers would be required to implement new employment standards (e.g., paid personal leave; increased vacation time, right to refuse overtime; educational and personal leave, compassionate leave). Governments would strictly enforce these improved standards.

Arguments For

- This would lead to greater employee job satisfaction which would mean less turnover, absenteeism and higher productivity.
- Workers would be more likely to invest in skills upgrading and families would have greater flexibility in managing work and family responsibilities.

And Against

- Tightening of labour markets as the baby-boom generation retires, and employee demands for better work-life balance will be enough to encourage employers to change. Governments should not intrude where they are not needed.
- The cost of adding new employees would increase a lot, making employers less willing to take on new workers.

Directions/Actions

Governments would launch a strategy to encourage employers to voluntarily enhance job quality (e.g. adopt family-friendly practices, flex time policies, training incentives). Governments would also demonstrate leadership by implementing their own quality of work strategies to improve work conditions.

Arguments For

- ♦ A voluntary approach that emphasizes awareness-raising and educating employers on the benefits of providing good jobs is the best way to achieve change; it would encourage employers to work with employees to design healthy workplaces.
- ♦ Governments would lead by example – creating high quality workplaces that attract young people.

And Against

- ♦ Many employers would not adopt practices to enhance job quality, leading to two classes of employees: those lucky enough to have good employers, and those not.
- ♦ Too much emphasis on job quality deflects from competitiveness – which, in the end, determines job security.





Health

Health: Background

The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined health as a “state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” In other words, health means a lot more than just not being sick.

Most Canadians enjoy long, healthy lives. Only Japan, Switzerland, Sweden and Iceland have higher life expectancies than Canada. But:

- ◆ Low-income and unemployed Canadians die earlier and suffer more illnesses than the rest.¹⁸
- ◆ People living outside urban areas have a lower life expectancy than those in urban areas.¹⁹
- ◆ Aboriginal Canadians have shorter lives, suffer higher rates of diabetes and heart ailments, and experience higher rates of infant mortality.²⁰

Life styles have a major impact on health:

- ◆ In general, smoking rates are declining, but younger women and Aboriginal people are smoking more.²¹
- ◆ In 1996, over 70% of 15-19 year olds drank alcohol regularly or occasionally, and in 1999, 45% of 20-24 year-old men were binge drinkers. Binge drinking rose among young people between 1995-1999.²²
- ◆ In 2002, almost 38% of 18 and 19 year olds had used cannabis at least once in the past year, up from 23% in 1994.²³
- ◆ Almost half of Canadians are physically inactive, and rates of obesity have soared, especially for children. Between 1981 and 1996,



Many things affect how healthy we are:

- ▼ Levels of income and education, including early childhood development,
- ▼ Employment and working conditions,
- ▼ Our social, physical and cultural environment,
- ▼ Lifestyle choices like nutrition and exercise, and
- ▼ The quality and availability of health services.

the rate has tripled for boys (up to 13.5%) and doubled for girls (11.8%).²⁴

- ◆ Rates of sexually transmitted diseases are rising for youth. There are about 56,000 cases of HIV/AIDS in Canada, and young women are increasingly infected. (Globally, there are over 39 million cases of HIV/AIDS – about 25 million of these are in Sub-Saharan Africa.)²⁵
- ◆ Mental health problems are most likely to emerge between the ages of 16-24. In 1999, 12% of hospitalizations of young people were for a mental disorder, compared to 4% of the general population.²⁶

- ◆ Suicide is a leading cause of death for young adults, second only to accidents. Suicide rates are much higher among Aboriginal populations.²⁷

Canadian governments spend almost \$80 billion each year on health, mostly on health care services by doctors and hospitals. Approximately 3% of this is for public health services focused on prevention of illness, health promotion and reducing health inequities among population groups.²⁸

Health Care – A Great Asset ...

Until the late 1960s, Canadians had to pay for their own medical and hospital care. Some families were going bankrupt, and could not afford the care they needed.



"I remember borrowing money to pay for the birth of our first child."

Source: Participant from the CPRN Citizens' Dialogue on the Future of Health Care in Canada, 2002.

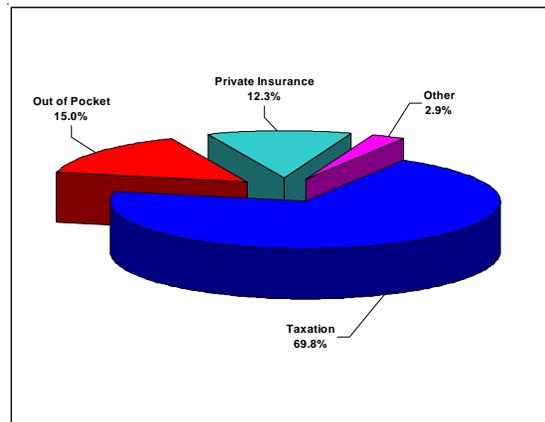
To protect Canadians against these risks, in 1968, the federal and provincial governments agreed to provide public health

insurance for medical and hospital services. The Canada Health Act sets out the principles that govern publicly insured health care, including universal access to medically necessary services given by doctors and hospitals, regardless of income.

How we pay for health care:

- ◆ Provincial governments pay for public insurance plans to cover the costs of doctors and hospital services. When you visit your doctor, you don't pay anything – the doctor simply bills the provincial insurance plan.
- ◆ The federal government transfers money to the provinces to cover about 25% of these costs.
- ◆ Some provincial insurance plans also partially, or fully cover services like eye exams, and prescription drugs for people with low income or seniors.
- ◆ In total, about 70% of health care services in Canada are paid for with our tax dollars (see Figure 3). About 40% of provincial and territorial budgets are spent on health services.
- ◆ Employer-based health insurance plans cover 12% of all health costs, and another 15% is paid by Canadians out of their own pockets.

Figure 3: Source of Health Care Spending



Note: The 'other' component of the private sector includes non-patient revenue to hospitals including ancillary operations, donations, investment income.
Source: Canadian Institute of Health Information (CIHI), 2004.

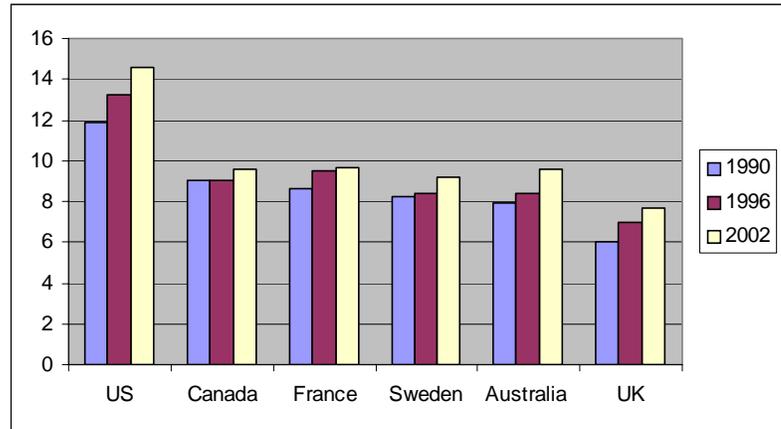
Canada spends about the same percentage of its GDP on health care as countries like France and Sweden, more than the United Kingdom and less than the United States. However, how countries choose to pay for health care varies.²⁹

- ◆ Many European governments provide some public funding to help cover many health care services, but users also contribute a fee – even for doctors and hospital services. People buy insurance to offset their costs and the governments do provide some coverage for low-income people.
- ◆ The United States relies extensively on private insurance, though the government funds services for low-income people, some groups like the military, and seniors.

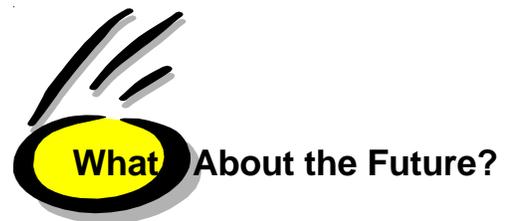
... But We Still Face Some Serious Challenges:

- ◆ 12% of Canadians do not have a family doctor, and fewer medical school graduates are choosing to go into family practice or work outside urban areas.³⁰
- ◆ There are long waiting lists for some surgical and medical care.
- ◆ The cost of prescription drugs is growing rapidly, due to the introduction of new drugs and to increased use. This can pose a huge financial burden on people who need expensive drugs if they aren't covered by insurance.

Figure 4: Health Care Expenditures as a Share of GDP in Canada and Selected Countries, 1990 to 2002



Source: Marchildon, Greg. 2005. Health System Profile – Canada. Prepared for the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (forthcoming). Chart prepared by CPRN.



- ▼ What will be the major health issues facing Canadians 20 years from now?
- ▼ Will we have enough resources to pay and care for a very large population of senior citizens, given that the workforce will likely be smaller?
- ▼ How will we deal with ethical concerns surrounding issues such as reproductive technology, allocation of organs, and end of life?
- ▼ Will we be able to cope with more global epidemics of new and deadly diseases?

Challenges for Consideration

1. How do we become a healthier population?

<u>Directions/Actions</u>	
<p>Individuals and families would take more responsibility for making good lifestyle choices. Governments could encourage behaviour change by providing information and disincentives (like higher taxes on cigarettes and unhealthy foods).</p>	
<p><u>Arguments For</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We know that people will respond if they are properly informed and if incentives and disincentives are in place – look at smoking. Applying such approaches to other lifestyle issues, such as obesity, would work too. ♦ This would be a cost-effective way of making change – focussing on getting people to accept more responsibility for their own health. 	<p><u>And Against</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Access to education, adequate income, a clean environment, early childhood development programs, and positive cultural identity has a big impact on people's health – people need a lot more than information and awareness-raising to make good lifestyle choices. ♦ People make poor choices for a variety of reasons – sometimes because they feel marginalized or powerless over their lives. This would make it even worse for them and may not improve their health.
<u>Directions/Actions</u>	
<p>Governments would make health promotion and prevention of illness a top priority.</p>	
<p><u>Arguments For</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ If we are to effect big changes in health outcomes, governments would need to reinforce economic, environment and social policies that support public health goals (e.g. clean air and water, universal immunizations, exercise, income security). ♦ It is more effective to prevent disease before it happens than it is to treat the symptoms. 	<p><u>And Against</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We still need to address the real health care problems of real people, like those on long waiting lists for surgery or to see specialists. Their needs should take priority. ♦ Just because governments want this doesn't guarantee people will make healthy choices.

2. How do we sustain our health care system into the future?

Directions/Actions

To achieve a more efficient and effective health care system, we would create/support primary health care whereby family doctors would work in teams with other health professionals (e.g., nurse practitioners, pharmacists, nutritionists, psychologists, home care providers and community services) to prevent or minimize illness. They would share the workload, match patients' needs to the type of service required and share patient information within the team.

Arguments For

- ♦ More Canadians would have access to better coordinated, more accessible health care, reducing the number of visits to more costly hospital-based emergency room care.
- ♦ This type of health care delivery would be more attractive to new medical graduates. They would be more likely to choose family medicine if they could work with a team of professionals and have a better work-life balance.

And Against

- ♦ We don't have enough hospital beds now, and for many people it is hard to find a doctor. People are going to get sick and natural disasters will happen. We need to deal with these priorities first.
- ♦ Many people will still want to see their own doctor when they are sick. Their own doctor knows them best and can provide the best service. A team approach would mean a patient gets less consistent and individualized attention.

Directions/Actions

Our health care system would allow more choice in health care by permitting people to purchase some private health services and sharing some costs through user fees.

Arguments For

- ♦ Other developed countries with good public health care systems have user fees and private health services. If they can do it, why can't Canada? This would free up public dollars for other important 'public goods' like education, addressing poverty or lowering taxes.
- ♦ If people who could afford to move to a 'parallel' private system were permitted to do so, this would take pressure off the public system by reducing waiting times. We're already moving in this direction – the Supreme Court of Canada recently confirmed people in Quebec have the right to buy private insurance to cover privately provided health services if the public system can't offer the necessary services in a timely way.

And Against

- ♦ This would do little to control health care spending: it just shifts the costs from public to private payment – we won't end up with a more sustainable health care system overall.
- ♦ There is a danger that people who could afford to pay for private care would get faster and better services – leading to second class public health care for those who could not afford to go to the private system. Doctors would be attracted away from the public system to a private system where they could make more money – this would make the doctor shortage in the public system worse.

Environment



Environment: Background

Canadians take pride in our natural environment – it is part of our individual and collective identity. It has special meaning to Aboriginal people and it is an economic asset.

Our natural and built environments are not separate entities; and the environment doesn't recognize borders. The world is all part of the same eco-system, so what we do in one place and time can affect many other parts of our environment – both now, and for many generations to come.

The quality of our environment is affected by many things – the air we breathe, the water we drink and play in, the safety of our neighbourhoods, availability of good jobs and schools, affordable housing, public transit and cultural and recreational facilities. Employers are attracted to communities with a good quality of life, which in turn leads to economic stability and the potential for growth. Growth requires careful planning and investment in assets such as schools, recreational facilities, water services treatment, roads, public transit systems and waste management.



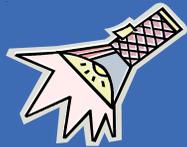
- ▲ Canada, at 9,984,670 square kilometres, is the second largest country in the world, following Russia. The vast majority of our population lives in a narrow band close to the border with the United States.

Source: Natural Resources Canada.

Canada is home to:

- ▲ about 20% of the world's natural areas,
- ▲ 9% of the world's renewable fresh water,
- ▲ 25% of the world's wetlands,
- ▲ an estimated 150,000 species of plants and animals, and
- ▲ 0.5% of the world's population.

Source: CIA: The World Factbook.



"Municipal governments are increasingly required to consider substantive changes in the way resources such as water and energy are consumed and waste produced and managed in the context of economic growth. These changes are necessary in order to maintain quality of life for future generations."

Source: Federation of Canadian Municipalities 2005.

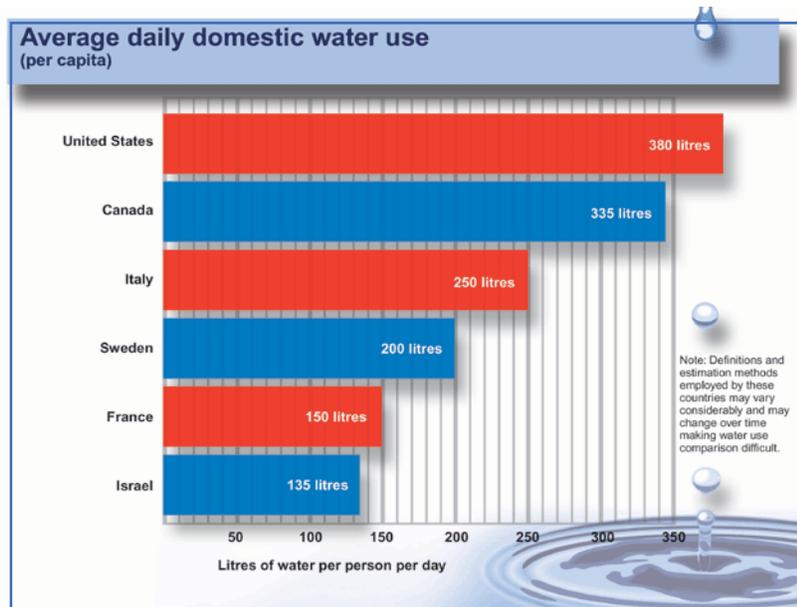
Over the past half century, Canadians and others around the world have become more aware of the environmental impact of human activities and have taken some steps to improve the environment, including:

- ◆ Urban air quality improved between the years 1991-2001. Pollutants from Ontario, Canada's industrial heartland, fell 24% between 1998 and 2002.³¹
- ◆ The new On-road Vehicle and Engine Emission Regulations now in place will significantly reduce emissions from 2004 and later model, on-road vehicles – in some cases, by up to 95%.³²

- ◆ International measures are being taken to reduce some of the most damaging and persistent pollutants, like PCBs and DDT.³³

- ◆ Canada, and many other countries around the world, have agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change.

- ◆ As of November 2005, just over 184,000 Canadians have signed up for the David Suzuki Foundation's Nature Challenge and agreed to three actions they will take to help conserve nature and improve our quality of life.³⁴



Source: Environment Canada.

However, we are far from being model environmentalists. Canada is the sixth highest user of primary energy in the world, and we use more water per capita than every other country except the United States.³⁵

- ◆ More than 75% of our energy comes from fossil fuels, like oil, gas and coal. Burning these fuels for transportation, industry and heating makes us the fourth highest emitter per capita of greenhouse gases in the world and is the major cause of climate change, air pollution and acid rain.

- ◆ We know that higher levels of air pollution lead to more hospital and emergency room admissions and premature deaths – especially for the elderly, children and people with respiratory and cardiac problems.

- ◆ Wind power, the fastest growing form of electricity generation in Canada, still makes up only a fraction of the energy we consume. And for now, at least, using renewable energy sources to produce electricity is more expensive than using fossil fuels.

- ◆ Even though two-thirds of Canadians now have access to recycling programs, we are sending more waste each year to municipal landfill sites which produce significant methane emissions, a potent greenhouse gas. About half of the garbage that we produce is packaging from products we buy.³⁶
- ◆ Close to half of the 431 plant and animal species at risk in Canada live in the densely-populated Quebec City-Windsor corridor.³⁷

Climate Change and the Global Environment

Climate change is a global problem with implications that reach far into the future – in ways we cannot precisely predict. Even if we stop producing greenhouse gases today, those in the atmosphere will continue to affect the environment for the next century. The rapidly developing economies of China, India and Brazil have huge energy requirements and depend, to a large extent, on fossil fuels. Some people in these countries ask why they should sacrifice economic growth for environmental protection when Western countries didn't make any such trade-offs.

The 141 countries (including Canada) that ratified the Kyoto Protocol (passed February 2005) account for 55% of global greenhouse gas emissions. They have committed themselves to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 5.2% by 2012. Canada has agreed to reduce its net greenhouse gas emissions to 6% below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012.³⁸

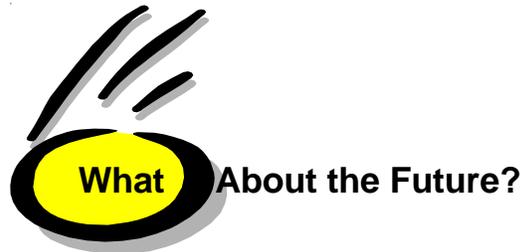
This summer, six countries – United States, China, India, Japan, Australia and South Korea – that did not sign the Kyoto Accord unveiled their Asia-Pacific partnership to develop cleaner energy technologies to

help address climate change. Together, they produce half of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. They have not yet identified specific targets or a timeframe to achieve reductions and haven't agreed to legally-binding requirements.³⁹

- ◆ Canada and other countries are already seeing some effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, melting glaciers and sea ice and changes in location or migration patterns of wildlife.⁴⁰ These changes could have a large impact on our way of life.
- ◆ Some sectors of the economy, including forestry, agriculture and fishing, along with coastal regions, are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.⁴¹

Sweden's climate and economy are quite comparable to Canada's. Initially, in response to the oil crisis in the 1970s, the Swedish government, industry and the public have collaborated to make their environment more sustainable. Today, Sweden ranks much higher than Canada on the World Economic Forum's business growth and competitiveness measures of developed countries.

- ◆ Swedes have reduced their dependency on oil from providing 98% of their energy in 1970 to providing 30% today.
- ◆ They raised taxes on energy and lowered payroll taxes by an equivalent amount to reduce the burden on industry.
- ◆ They recover 80% of household waste through recycling, composting and incineration, which provides energy for 10% of the country's district heating needs.
- ◆ They use 50% less energy than Canadians to produce the same amount of goods and services.⁴²



- ▼ What investments in research and innovation may be needed now to prevent energy shortages in the future?
- ▼ What is needed to help developing and developed countries reach agreement on global pollution and conservation strategies?
- ▼ How will future generations adapt to the changing environment?

When asked, most Canadians agree that we should reduce our energy and water consumption, pay more of their real market cost, and use more renewable sources of energy. Yet, our consumption continues to rise. Our environmental challenges result from a variety of factors including: how we organize the production of goods and services, the types of technologies we use, and our lifestyles. Addressing these challenges depends to a great extent on the choices made by industry, governments and individuals (both as consumers and as citizens).

Challenges for Consideration

1. How do we protect and improve our environment in Canada?

<u>Directions/Actions</u>	
<p>Consumers and business would take voluntary action to reduce pollution, consumption and waste and protect natural spaces. Governments would use innovative ways to inform and educate the public and industry about the benefits of taking action and the costs of not acting.</p>	
<p><u>Arguments For</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ The best way to effect change is at the individual level. Consumers and businesses know more about the consequences of their actions and make decisions that best suit them. ♦ The possibility of short-term negative economic impacts on industry and jobs would be reduced if business takes the lead on solutions. 	<p><u>And Against</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Without regulations, disincentives and the threat of penalties, we are unlikely to change our behaviour. Intentions are one thing, but when it comes to paying more for electricity, cleaning up production processes or using our vehicles less and public transit more, would we really do it? ♦ Progress in protecting our environment and developing environmentally friendly lifestyles would be slower if we are given a choice. What would be the impact on future generations – can we afford to take this risk?
<u>Directions/Actions</u>	
<p>Governments would implement market-based incentives and enact stricter laws and regulations requiring industry and individuals to reduce consumption and pollution, protect natural spaces from development and use more renewable energy. Actual costs would be charged for electricity and water use would be limited.</p>	
<p><u>Arguments For</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ It is the government's responsibility to regulate and protect the environment for the sake of our and future generations' health. Getting people to change their behaviour, and industry to adopt higher environmental standards, requires governments to regulate and be prepared to enforce penalties on those who fail to comply. It also requires governments to design effective market-based incentives. ♦ By paying for the actual cost of resources consumed, individuals and corporations would take responsibility for what and how much they consume. It has to hit us in our wallets. 	<p><u>And Against</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Compliance with stricter regulations would impose high costs on businesses and could place us at a competitive disadvantage with the United States and other countries, leading to substantial job losses. ♦ Water and energy would become more expensive for everyone, and not everyone can afford to pay higher prices for these basic needs.

2. How do we support growing economies and better quality of life in developing countries in ways that minimize harmful impacts on the global environment?

<u>Directions/Actions</u>	
<p>Businesses would take the lead by investing more in developing and exporting environmentally friendly technologies for developing countries – technologies that support sustainable growth and a healthy environment and address global market needs. Governments would support private sector solutions.</p>	
<u>Arguments For</u>	<u>And Against</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Some Canadian companies already are world leaders in environmental technologies for developing countries – we would build on these environmentally green technologies and services (e.g. creation of cleaner fossil fuel technologies). This is a win-win situation: economic growth and the creation of jobs at home, and contributions to cleaner development in developing economies. ♦ The best way for change to occur is for governments to encourage and support market-driven research, development and innovation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ There is no guarantee that new technology would be the silver bullet, or that it would be affordable. Businesses have to make profits to survive. ♦ Canadians need to force change by refusing to buy goods made with cheap labour, unfair trade practices, and non-sustainable environmental practices. Unless we as consumers curb our materialism and desire for cheap products, we just feed the problem.
<u>Directions/Actions</u>	
<p>Developed countries would invest in aid designed to encourage sustainable development (i.e. meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs), and increase targeted investments to help developing countries protect their environment and build sustainable economies.</p>	
<u>Arguments For</u>	<u>And Against</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Canada can do everything possible to improve our environment at home. But what happens in developing countries with huge populations affects our environment at home, too. Helping developing countries create environmentally sustainable economic growth is the best way to help ourselves. ♦ We need to take a long-term approach. Assistance that links economic, social and environmental goals in developing countries is the responsible way to provide support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Canada is too small a player when it comes to development assistance to really make a difference on a global scale. We should concentrate our international aid on helping people in the poorest countries who need it to meet the basic necessities of life (food, education, shelter). ♦ Developing countries have to take responsibility for themselves and develop home-grown solutions that best meet their needs.

Endnotes

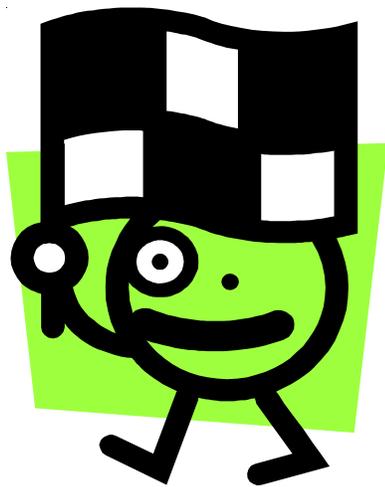
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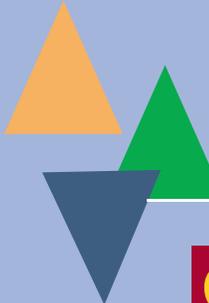
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Your ideas ...

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Funders



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