

National Dialogue for Young Canadians



The Canada Young Canadians Want



Citizenship in Action

2005

CPRN
10th Anniversary



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10^e anniversaire

Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc. www.cprn.org

Background on the
Four Policy Issues



National Dialogue for Young Canadians

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November 2005

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Dialogue Issues

This document provides background information on the four policy issues to be discussed at your dialogue. The complete Section 2 of the Workbook will be provided at registration. In addition to the background, it contains:

- ◆ some challenges associated with the four issues
- ◆ different possible directions/actions to address these challenges
- ◆ some arguments in favour and against each direction/action.

We invite you to review this background information on learning, work, health and environment to help stimulate your thinking about the kind of Canada you want in these four domains.



Learning



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?

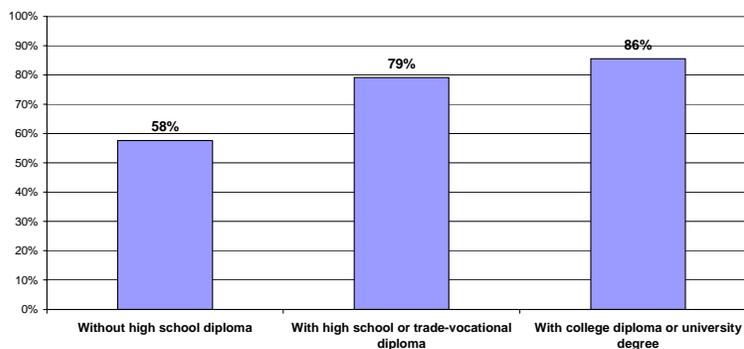
Making sure everyone has access to higher education and is able to continue learning throughout life serves two goals – achieving a higher quality of life, and providing people with the skills they need to adapt to life’s opportunities and challenges.

- ◆ 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?

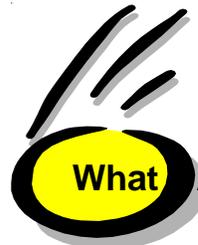
- ◆ Most individuals in Canada who go into the workforce directly from high school (about 60% of young people) have a harder time getting good jobs that pay well, provide good benefits and opportunities to move up. This is not the case in European countries, where high school graduation enables young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



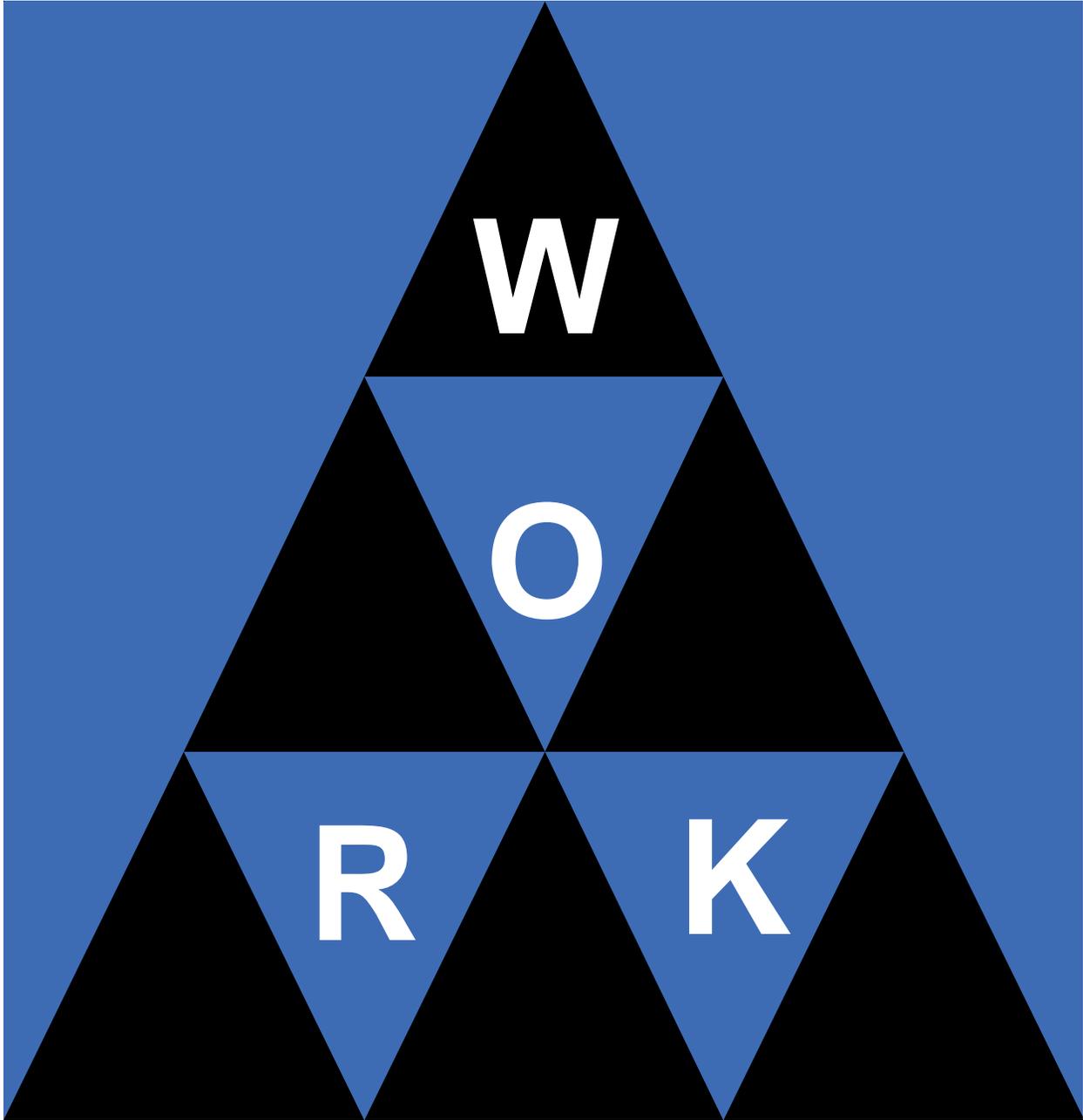
Literacy = Ability to read and write, plus having the knowledge and skills necessary to understand different kinds of documents (e.g. job applications, payroll forms, maps).

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?



Work: Background

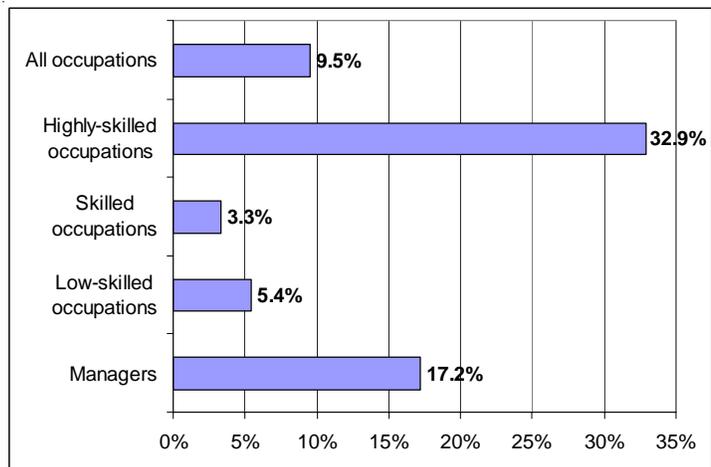
Work is Changing

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.

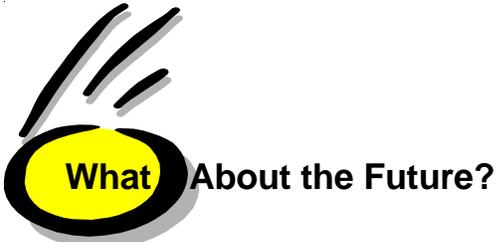
- ◆ Low pay is four times more prevalent among those who haven't completed high school than for people with university or college qualifications. And it is not much better for those with only high school diplomas – they are three times more likely to be in low paid jobs.

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?



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.

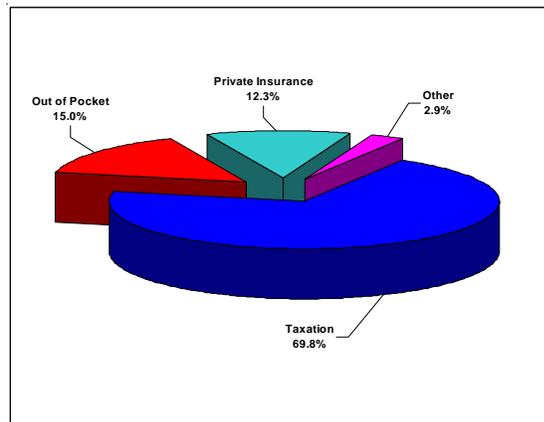
To protect Canadians against these risks, in 1968, the federal and provincial governments agreed to provide public health

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

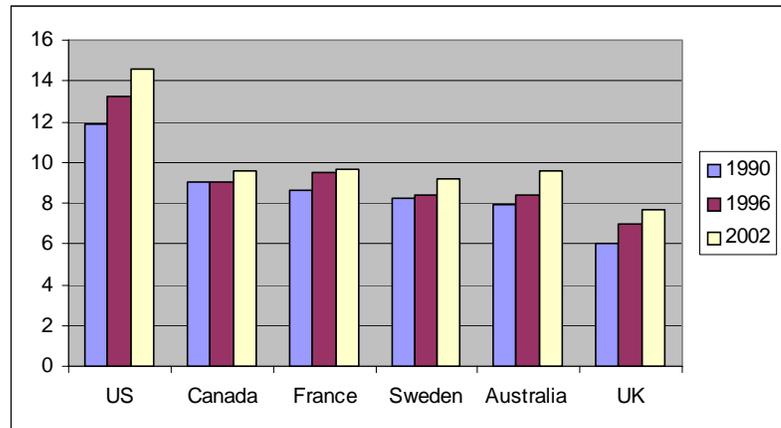
- ◆ Many European governments provide some public funding to help cover many health care services, but users also contribute a fee – even for doctors and hospital services. People buy insurance to offset their costs and the governments do provide some coverage for low-income people.

- ◆ The United States relies extensively on private insurance, though the government funds services for low-income people, some groups like the military, and seniors.

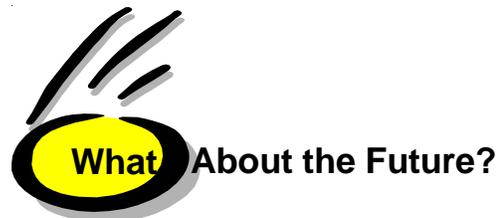
... But We Still Face Some Serious Challenges:

- ◆ 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?

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.



“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.



- ▲ 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.

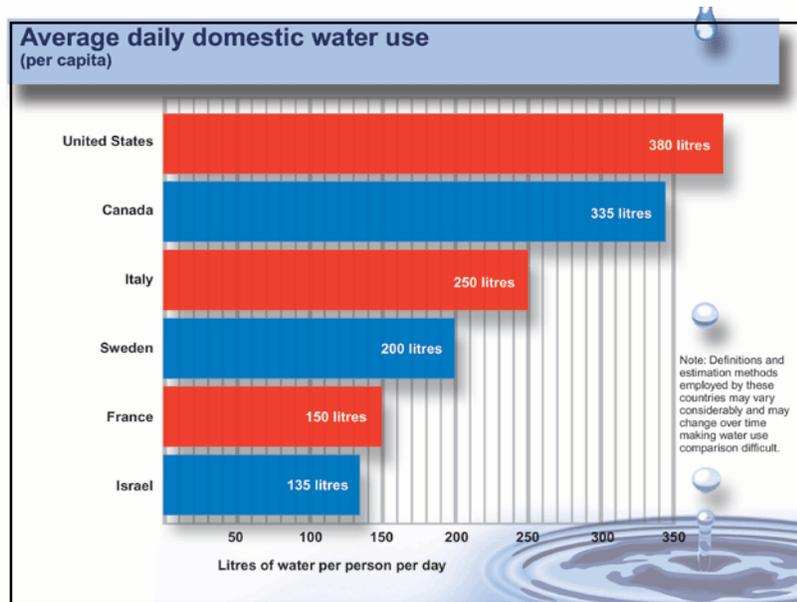
Over the past half century, Canadians and others around the world have become more aware of the environmental impact of human activities and have taken some steps to improve the environment, including:

- ◆ 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

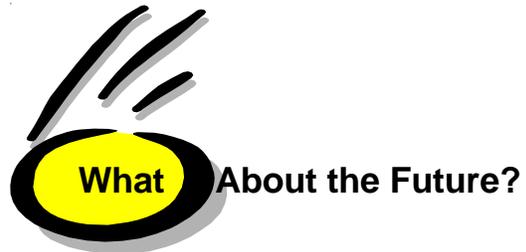
This summer, six countries – United States, China, India, Japan, Australia and South Korea – that did not sign the Kyoto Accord unveiled their Asia-Pacific partnership to develop cleaner energy technologies to

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).

Endnotes

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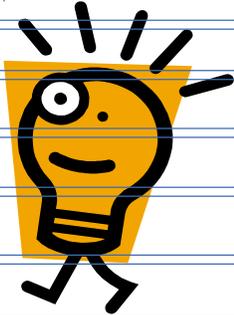
Your ideas ...

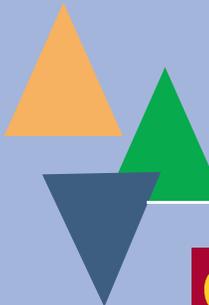
Handwriting practice area consisting of multiple sets of blue horizontal lines. Each set includes a central blue shaded band that tapers at both ends, designed to guide letter height and placement.



Your ideas ...

Handwriting practice area with blue lines and three blue shaded wedges.





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