

Canada Watch

PRACTICAL AND AUTHORITATIVE ANALYSIS OF KEY NATIONAL ISSUES

a publication of the York University Centre for Public Law and Public Policy and the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies of York University

SPECIAL ISSUE: FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FUTURE OF CANADA

BY SERGIO MARCHI

At the turn of the century, Canada seemed poised to undergo profound and radical change. Our population was growing quickly and our social landscape was evolving. Sir Wilfrid Laurier predicted optimistically that the new century would belong to Canadians. He envisioned Canada developing into a strong and prosperous nation and a leader in the international community. At the heart of his nation-building vision were our natural resources. He viewed them as the key to realizing our potential as a country.

In many respects he was right. As the century unfolded, it became clear that even Laurier had underestimated how rich Canada was. Over the years we have harvested a generous bounty from our environment. It has shaped our economy and our way of life. It is a part of who we are and what we do. It is at the core of our identity, helping to draw Canadians of diverse backgrounds and faiths together into one family.

Over the years, however, we have come to realize that nature is not simply a warehouse of raw materials. We cannot afford to exploit recklessly our forests and lakes and mountains. While the environment is remarkably resilient, there is only so much we can ask it to absorb. Unfortunately, in many areas of the world we are reaching the limits of that endurance.

Humanity is placing a tremendous burden on our common home. Population growth and industrialization are having profound effects on the natural world. Since 1950, the global population has dou-

bled. It is expected to increase by an additional one billion over the next decade alone. More and more people inflict a greater strain on the environment. There is an ever growing demand for food to eat, fuel to burn, and materials for shelter.

At the moment, the value of the global economy is estimated at \$25 trillion. This will double in real terms within fifteen years. The impact of economic development and industrialization can be seen everywhere. Increasing air and water pollution, for instance, is affecting the health and welfare of our population. In cities like Toronto and Hamilton, the incidence of childhood asthma is much higher now than it was only 10 or 20 years ago. It is estimated that it will cost \$1

continued on page 2

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA: BOOM OR BUST?

BY PHILIPPE CRABBÉ

THE 1997 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

"In March 1997, leading organizations of civil society and business from around the world will gather in Rio de Janeiro to evaluate our planet's progress towards sustainable development in the five years since the Earth Summit". So says the Earth Council in its

invitation to the Rio +5 Forum which is meant to move sustainable development from *Agenda to Action*. In June 1997, the United Nations General Assembly will review national governments' progress since Rio as well. What will Canada's report card show?

continued on page 4

FEATURES

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1
Sustainability and the Future of
Canada
by Sergio Marchi

1
Sustainable Development in
Canada: Boom or Bust?
by Philippe Crabbé

3
Editorial—In This Issue
*by David V.J. Bell & Patrick J.
Monahan*

7
The Role of Environmental
Commissioners in Promoting
Sustainability
by Eva Ligeti

9
Resources for Tomorrow
by Rodger Schwass

10
Ensuring Basic Economic
Security—Key to a Sustainable
Society
by Sally Lerner

11
Rethinking Sustainable
Development
by John B. Robinson

AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES ON QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE

13
If Quebec Becomes
Independent
by Joseph T. Jockel

15
Quebec's Sovereignty
Movement and Its Implications
for the American Economy
by Earl Fry

18
The American National Interest
in Quebec and Canada
by Christopher Sands

SECESSION THROUGH HISTORY

21
The Price of Independence
by John C. Thompson

SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FUTURE OF CANADA *from page 1*

billion a year to treat people suffering respiratory ailments due to air pollution. It is clear—we need a healthy environment to ensure that we have healthy Canadians.

It is vital that we tread with a lighter footprint on the face of the Earth.

We need to work here at home for solutions, but we also need to get our international partners involved. The problems we face cross borders and airspace boundaries. Mother Nature does not pay attention to lines on a map. The depletion of the ozone layer due to increased CFCs in the atmosphere is a global problem. Around the world, parents now have to put sunscreen on their children before they can safely play outdoors. We need to work together to tackle problems like this head on.

If this is the state of the planet now, what will be the impact of a \$50 trillion economy? Will our children

have clean air and water? Will there still be fish in our oceans? Will birds continue to sing in our backyards?

It is vital that we tread with a lighter footprint on the face of the Earth. This means protecting our flora and fauna and preserving natural habitats. It also means promoting environmentally friendly ways of doing business. The environment and business are mutually supportive. In fact, there is a thriving environmental industry sector in this country which employs over 150,000 Canadians and generates annual revenues of over \$11 billion. It is expected that the global market for green products and services will grow from \$425 billion to \$600 billion in the next five years. Canadian firms need to take advantage of the opportunities which are opening up in this new and exciting sector.

We need to encourage all industries and all companies to adopt eco-efficient practices. Put simply, they need to make products that require fewer resources and create less waste. This helps companies become more competitive. It also helps us to meet the needs

of the present without depleting the resources of the future.

Sustainable development is not just about maintaining our capacity to harvest from the earth. It is about sustaining the earth itself. It is clear that a healthy environment enriches all aspects of life in this country. It is a prerequisite for both economic prosperity and national growth. Sustainable development is a goal to which this Government, and Canadians, are committed. We dedicated a full chapter in the Red Book to this subject.

I am proud to say that this Government is heading in the right direction. We have introduced one of the "greenest" budgets ever. We established a Commissioner of Environment and Sustainable Development to hold all federal government departments accountable for their progress towards sustainable development. We have established programs to stimulate investment in environmental technologies and to encourage Canadians to get involved in cleaning up their communities. I will be introducing the Canadian Endangered Species Protection Act very shortly. It will ensure that ani-

mals and plants are protected for future generations. I will also be introducing a renewed Canadian Environmental Protection Act sometime this fall. This is all a start, but more needs to be done. And more will be done.

All Canadians have a part to play. In nature, everything is connected to everything else. Pull on one strand of the web of life and the shock waves are felt everywhere. I believe that this is true in the social and political world as well. All Canadians are connected together. The bond that unites us is trust: trust in each other, and trust in our collective future. The basis of this trust is a shared vision, and shared goals. No matter where you live, whether it's Newfoundland, Quebec or Manitoba, there are common dreams we all share and hopes we want to see realized. I see the federal government as a catalyst which helps draw all levels of government and all parts of society together to identify and articulate these common goals. Working together we will achieve agreement on what we want. Then

continued on page 5

CanadaWatch

PRACTICAL AND AUTHORITATIVE ANALYSIS OF KEY NATIONAL ISSUES

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

David V.J. Bell, *Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University*

Patrick Monahan, *Osgoode Hall Law School, York University*

MANAGING EDITORS

Krystyna Tarkowski
Vladislav Tumir

COLUMNISTS IN THIS ISSUE

Sergio Marchi
Philippe Crabbé
David V.J. Bell & Patrick J.

Monahan
Eva Ligeti
Rodger Schwass
Sally Lerner
John B. Robinson
Joseph T. Jockel
Earl Fry
Christopher Sands
John C. Thompson

Canada Watch is produced jointly by The York University Centre for Public Law and Public Policy, and The Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies of York University.

For information, call (416) 736-5499, fax (416) 736-5739, write to *Canada Watch*, 227 York Lanes, 4700 Keele St., North York, Ontario M3J 1P3, or visit us at www.yorku.ca/faculty/osgoode/canwatch/cwhome.htm.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Canada Watch is published six times per year.

Annual subscription rates

Institutions\$75.00
Individuals\$35.00
Students\$20.00
(Outside Canada add \$10.00)

© 1996 Centre for Public Law and Public Policy; the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies

Printed in Canada

ISSN 1191-7733

SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FUTURE OF CANADA *from page 2*


we can sort out who has the responsibility and capacity to act. Each level of government and civil society has a part to play, drawing on their particular strengths, and pooling their resources.

I firmly believe that it will be Canada's diversity and openness which will allow us to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century. In the natural world, diversity is the raw material of evolution. It makes nature productive and adaptable. This is also the case in society. Growth, be it social

or economic, depends on a willingness to broaden horizons and look for innovative solutions to problems. Innovation will be the key to lightening our footprint on the world. Canadians have shown that they have the creativity and talent to make a difference.

We have many choices before us as we approach the new century. The stakes are very high. The federal government has a clear responsibility to do everything it can to protect and preserve our natural inheritance for future gen-

erations of Canadians. After all, the environment is a key to their health, their economic opportunities, and their heritage. The ultimate responsibility goes far beyond elected officials in Ottawa. It lies with all governments, all industries, and all Canadians. I know that Canadians care passionately about the environment. It is a source of wealth, nationhood, and spiritual sustenance. The key to preserving this, and the key to our national development in the twenty-first century, will

be the imagination and dedication of our people. I firmly believe that we are limited only by our commitment and ingenuity. 

Sergio Marchi is the Federal Minister of the Environment, Government of Canada.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA: BOOM OR BUST *from page 4*

measured in money, while de-

Given the increase in the globalization of the economy and the progressive demise of the nation state, the crumbling of the welfare state, and the increasing alienation of the public from government bureaucracy, the community is perceived as the last refuge against the disintegration of the social fabric.

velopment is a multidimensional and subjective concept akin to quality of life. What is becoming increasingly clear is that, beyond a certain threshold, the two concepts cease to be positively correlated. This phenomenon is not picked up by the UNDP Human Develop-

ment Index. Sustainable development, both as moral doctrine and political ideology, is also communitarian. Given the increase in the globalization of the economy and the progressive demise of the nation state, the crumbling of the welfare state and the increasing alienation of the public from government bureaucracy, the community is perceived as the last refuge against the disintegration of the social fabric. Communities and their organizations are called social capital. Next to familiar physical and human capital, natural and social capital is to be conserved through proactive investments. Sustainable development aims at linking together economic, environmental, and social objectives.

RECENT AND ALARMING CHANGES IN THE INTERNATIONAL RHETORIC

At the last meeting of the IUCN in Montreal, a French representative pointed out that the expression "sustainable development" had been used only once in the official communiqués of the G-7 meeting in Lyon, while the

expression "sustainable social growth" had been used much more frequently. The international rhetoric of the IMF and the World Bank has turned to sustainable global growth, which conveniently forgets the environmental tenets of sustainability while keeping the others. The concern here is very much about old-fashioned non-inflationary growth, job creation, and exchange rate stability based on a so-called new paradigm, the knowledge partnership, the sharing of the "global commons of knowledge". According to Neo-Classical Economics ideology, knowledge and not the environment is the true limiting factor for economic growth. The new knowledge paradigm underpinning sustainable global growth has now turned investment into human and social capital, and the elimination of poverty into investment in infrastructure, i.e., into productive spending and development of human resources. The moral doctrine of sustainable development has been transformed under the magic utilitarian wand of

Neo-Classical Economics into a culture of development, where results are assessed by the "quality" of human and social infrastructures. The Conservation Movement in North America spanned two generations. Sustainable development may not even have the opportunity to span one!

CANADA'S LAGGING BEHIND

Canada had been a leader in promoting sustainable development internationally and nationally. "When environmental considerations conflict with economic considerations, environmental considerations will prevail", said the Federal Minister of the Environment in 1989, when environment was considered as the top priority by two-thirds of Canadians. Canada was one of the first countries to promote a communitarian approach to sustainability by creating national and provincial roundtables on the environment and the economy. These were first discussed in 1986 (a year before the UNCED

continued on page 6