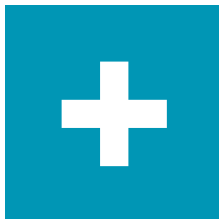


LEARNING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



2011 What's Worth Knowing:
Health & the Environment Symposium

Final Report
February 2012

2011 What's Worth Knowing: Health and the Environment Symposium



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INTRODUCTION

Current health care spending rates are affecting the sustainability of our healthcare system and putting financial pressure on other areas of governmental responsibility, especially education. Yet education plays a key role in helping citizens to lead healthier lives, thereby restraining health care costs. Education not only secures positive health outcomes by influencing lifestyle choices and understanding of health issues, it also creates awareness of the poorly understood links between environment and health. Furthermore, education enhances employment and income both of which are positively correlated with good health. Clarifying the relationship between health, education and the environment was the motivation behind the What's Worth Knowing: Health and the Environment Symposium hosted by Learning for a Sustainable Future (LSF) in November 2011.

The Symposium gathered senior decision makers from government, industry, research, education and health sectors to develop sustainability education oriented policy recommendations that would enhance the overall health and wellbeing of Canadians. Recommendations were developed in facilitated sessions that drew on sector specific expertise. Participants began broadly with a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the existing health care system in Canada. The next session involved breaking down the Symposium's key themes - social determinants of health, air quality, food, technology, nature & physical activity and toxins - with the goal of identifying critical information for target audiences, especially governmental decision makers, parents, consumers, educators and the media. The final session of the day served as a 'call to

action' where participants generated practical and informed policy recommendations that emphasized the link between health, education and the environment. These sessions were energized by presentations that highlighted sustainability issues at the intersection of health, the environment, the economy and education. Please see Appendix A for the list of speakers.

This Final Report captures the outcomes that were developed at the What's Worth Knowing: Health and the Environment Symposium¹. It provides a summary of the activities and processes through which diverse stakeholders - with backgrounds in health, the environment, the economy and education - responded to question: What's worth knowing?

¹ This document has benefited from the review of health, governmental, education and corporate sector leaders. It is informed by the What's Worth Knowing: Health & the Environment Background Paper which can be accessed from the LSF website (<http://lsf-ist.ca/symposium2011>). This document is influenced by LSF's mission to promote, through education, the knowledge, skills, perspectives and practices essential to a sustainable future. This commitment to preparing youth for responsible citizenship is illustrated by LSF's role in the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (The Decade) which runs until 2014. The goal of The Decade is to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. Implementation of the Decade is dependant on the collaboration of international stakeholders. LSF, in partnership with Environment Canada and Manitoba Education is leading the Canadian response to the UN Decade through the implementation of a series of initiatives including the 2011 What's Worth Knowing: Health and the Environment Symposium.

How Does Education Reduce Health Expenses And Help Citizens To Make Good Health And Environmental Decisions?

Education is a social determinant of health and good health increases the likelihood of educational success. Unhealthy children become the "heirs to the impediments" (Laurie, 2008), as they are less likely to succeed in school, thereby cementing a generational cycle of limited advancement and gain in adulthood. Health interventions must address the multiple levels at which behaviour is influenced. Schools and workplaces are the ideal location to create environments where healthy choices are easy to make (Sallis & Glanz, 2009). In addition to being where children and adults spend the majority of the day, these organizational settings have the capacity to implement policies, educate and motivate.

Children are a priority; Canada's economic health depends on their academic success, optimal health and well-being (Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion, 2010). By engaging schools, a guaranteed connection with this key population is ensured. Due to their capacity to support student health, schools have tremendous influence on the lives of children, and childhood is when healthy habits and positive behaviours are learned. According to the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (2010), "education is seen as a major pathway out of poverty". Educated societies are healthy societies. The value of health lessons learned in school extends beyond children to benefit their families and communities. The World Health Organization (WHO) finds that "an effective school health

program can be one of the most cost-effective investments a nation can make to simultaneously improve education and health” (WHO, 2011). Schools are a community asset with the capacity and infrastructure to address community specific concerns.

A review of school curriculum across Canada indicates inconsistent or weak links between health, the economy and the environment. However, there are several promising initiatives that have the potential to enhance health curriculum and advance students’ ability to understand such ‘big picture’ connections. Alberta is currently developing a Wellness Education Framework for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Alberta Education, 2011). The plan has a comprehensive school health approach and is oriented towards achieving improved learning and wellness outcomes that appreciate the broad concept of wellness. Quebec is responding to health based concerns at the individual and societal level through its Wellness Oriented School Program (Ministère de l’Éducation, 2011). Key areas of learning that will be addressed include Health and Well-Being; Personal and Career Planning; Citizenship and Community Life; Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities; and Media Literacy. Manitoba has had a combined Kindergarten to Grade 10 Physical Education/Health Education Framework since 2000, aimed at developing student knowledge, skills and attitudes for physically active and healthy lifestyles. In 2008, Physical Education/Health Education was further mandated for students in Grades 11 and 12. The broadened focus

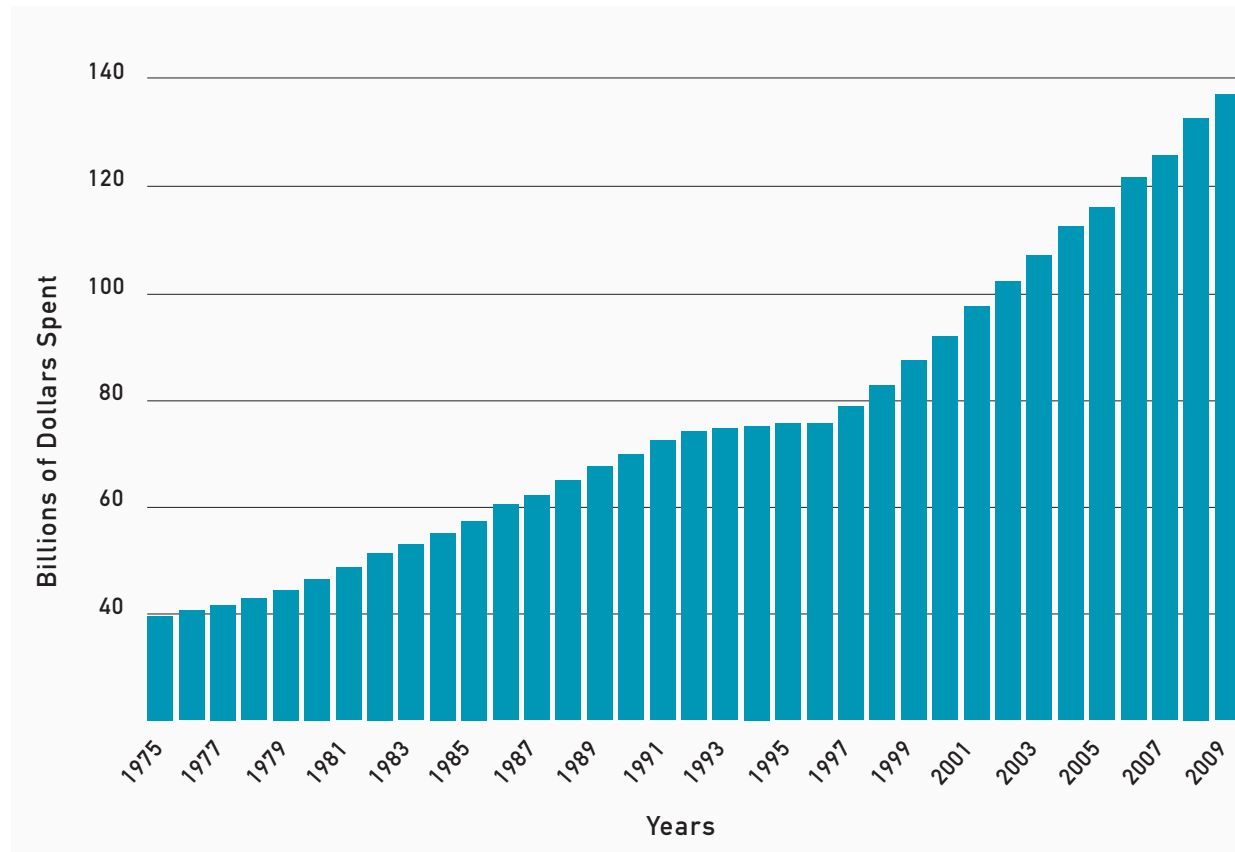
will address nutrition and stress management, prevention of health problems, safety and violence prevention. While these efforts are notable for their thorough approach, a broader commitment to health and wellness in curriculum remains a need across Canada.

Viewing health issues through a sustainability lens ensures attention to the interconnections among the related economic, environmental and social issues. This approach also considers long range implications of alternative policy choices. Much of Canada’s health discourse, which is premised on short-term responses to health concerns, ignores the bigger picture of sustainability challenges (Conference Board of Canada, 2011). Social determinants of health play a major role in this circumstance given that income, education and physical environment are factors that increase vulnerability to poor health outcomes.

Viewing health issues through a sustainability lens ensures attention to the interconnections among the related economic, environmental and social issues.

In order to improve health outcomes this discourse needs to shift towards reducing disparities and improving overall health outcomes through inter-sectoral collaboration. Cooperation between and among federal and provincial governments; ministries, industries and the private sector is required to bring about sustainable change. In addi-

Total Health Expenditure in Constant 1997 Dollars



National Health Expenditure Trends, 1975 to 2010, Canadian Institute for Health Information, Oct 2010

tion, greater incorporation of environmental health across sectors can address uneven representation and better reflect the multidimensional reality that informs our health and healthcare system.

Emphasizing a comprehensive approach to health promotion has a cascading effect that improves awareness and knowledge in the general population. These efficient social links encourage sustainable development and underscore the important connections between health, education, responsible citizenship and a good quality of life (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2008). Educating about health as early as possible is imperative to ensuring sustainable and long-term implementation of programs.

Participants in the What's Worth Knowing: Health and the Environment Symposium viewed health, education and the environment as intrinsically linked. Changing societal expectations about wellness and the environment through formal (classroom-based learning from pre-kindergarten to post secondary), non-formal (workplace training and professional development) and informal (public awareness) education will affect demand for healthcare. Symposium participants emphasized the need for integrated, community specific policies that address knowledge gaps and provide tools for more effective health and environment literacy.

Public Health & Learning: It Is Everybody's Business

Symposium speakers identified the roots of the current unsustainable conditions in which the health care system is operating.² Each presentation explored ways participants could promote the healthy citizen ideal in their respective sectors and communities. Exemplifying this ideal involves encouraging a connection to nature, making informed consumer choices and adopting a preventative approach to health.

The recent rise in health issues such as asthma, obesity and heart disease, particularly in low-income communities has been produced in large part from social conditions within the built environment. This circumstance indicates that positive health outcomes are heavily influenced by where and how citizens live.

According to Dr. Harvey Skinner of York University, appreciating this circumstance requires investigating 'what's going on upstream'. Evaluating the structural underpinnings that have led to our current unsustainable health care system reveals the importance of two key points. First - that preventative health habits have long lasting effects if learned during childhood. Second - that in order to secure such habits and effectively address social determinants of health, particularly low income and poor living conditions, collaboration across governmental, public and private sectors must occur.

²For a complete list of What's Worth Knowing: Health & the Environment Symposium presenters, please see page 19.

Bruce Lourie of the Ivey Foundation sought to shift attention from toxins in the industrial environment to the toxins in our immediate environment - in the products that we purchase, in the spaces that we live and work in. Of particular concern, are endocrine disrupting chemicals such as Bisphenol-A (BPA), found in metal and plastic food containers, which are linked to fertility problems, cancer, early onset of puberty in girls and neurobehavioural problems such as attention deficit disorder (Canadian Environmental Law Association, 2011). Messaging campaigns and stricter labeling policies will enhance the ability of citizens to minimize their exposure to risk through informed consumer choices.

The ability to make informed choices begins broadly with sustainability education. Children will take their knowledge from school to home where it will have a high likelihood of taking root within the entire family. As Eli Bamfo of Chartwells discussed, combining sustainable food literacy with experience - prominently positioning nutritional food choices on menus - has resulted in the increased uptake of healthier food choices in school food programs.

The ability to make informed choices begins broadly with sustainability education.

Research shows that time spent in green space decreases levels of physical and emotional illness. As Bill Kilburn of the Back to Nature Network indicated, engaging with nature not only has positive health outcomes but also serves as an opportunity to emphasize stewardship. Education that takes

place in nature makes young people healthier and permits them to connect meaningfully to the physical environment.

Diana MacKay of The Conference Board of Canada focused on how employers can contribute to the solution to Canada's health challenges. Employers will see tremendous returns from their investments in traditional workplace health and wellness programs like smoking cessation and physical activities. They can expect improved performance and profitability by making investments in other determinants of health such as employee housing, commuting arrangements, workplace nutrition, and education and training. Employers can also have a profound impact on the health of children and youth through providing flexible work arrangements, relevant benefit packages for employees with children, and direct investments in children. Further, the leadership of any organization producing a good or service ought to consider the health impacts of these products and services, particularly as they relate to children.

The most important improvements to the health care system will come from non-health sectors.

The issue of sustainability within the health care system is one that has only just emerged in the last two generations. Don Drummond of Queen's University underscored how changes in lifestyle have contributed to a surge in rates of health services usage. Furthermore there is a well documented inverse relationship between socio-economic status and the use of and need for health services. Education improves socio-economic status and subsequently also improves overall health. There is a need then to educate the population about both their own health and responsible use of the health care system.

The most important improvements to the health care system will come from non-health sectors. Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Arlene King captured the sentiment of the Symposium by declaring "public health is everyone's



business". Political will needs to be fostered across sectors to reorder priorities in a manner that emphasizes prevention. Coordinating public health policies with policies from other sectors can yield meaningful results even if health is not the primary objective. For instance, early childhood education policies are rooted in the education sphere but have a positive effect on long-term health outcomes. Dr. King also emphasized the connection between the built environment and chronic disease - buildings, parks, schools and road systems all have a profound impact on our health. Citizens with convenient access to recreation and grocery stores with healthy food choices are much more likely to achieve and maintain good health. Good health starts long before we visit doctors. It starts in childhood, in our homes, in our schools, our workplaces and our communities.

The more we preserve and enhance the natural environment around us, the more we will realize that this will improve our quality of life.

Deputy Minister of Manitoba Education, Dr. Gerald Farthing made a compelling argument that Canada's collective wellbeing cannot be just about economic growth. Our claim to be one of the greatest places to live on the planet depends not only on our wealth but more importantly on our commitment to social equity and the natural environment. The more we preserve and enhance the natural environment around us, the more we will realize that this will improve our quality of life. Similarly we need to share our good fortune with those that are less fortunate than us. In ad-

ressing his topic: *Taking Ownership and Action on Children's Health and Well-Being*, he spoke of the need for Ministries of Education to take a stand; be public about the stand; make it known to others; and take action by allocating resources, being a good partner, and connecting the dots of what matters! He highlighted 9 things that support Health and Environment in Manitoba:

1. Connecting policy and practice
2. Connecting learning and doing in a whole school approach.
3. Connecting outside and inside learning.
4. Connecting the built and natural environment.
5. Connecting the physical (nutrition and exercise) and the academic (physical education and health courses)
6. Connecting achievement and socioeconomic circumstance.
7. Connecting early childhood education and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).
8. Connecting technical and vocational education and ESD.
9. Connecting the behaviour of many.

He left the participants with two questions:

- What kind of world do we want to leave to our kids?
- What kind of kids do we want to leave to the world ?

FACILITATED SESSIONS

What's Worth Knowing: Health and the Environment Symposium held three facilitated sessions throughout the day. These sessions were designed to engage participants' sector specific leadership and expertise in the development of informed policy recommendations.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

A SWOT analysis reveals the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for a given issue. In the first facilitated session, all participants were asked to conduct a SWOT analysis of Canada's health care system in its present form. This broad exercise served as a gateway towards in-depth analytical conversations about health, the environment and education.

Identified strengths primarily revolved around the public support and funding for universal access to health care services. Participants also indicated the following strengths: diversity of services, infrastructure, integration of research based best practices, professionalism and engagement of champions.

In terms of weaknesses within the existing health care system, participants were most concerned about how patients and health care providers are disconnected from each other. Wait times, lack of financial sustainability and shortages of health care professionals were also indicated as weaknesses as well as a lack of innovation and general lack of knowledge among citizens about how to navigate the health care system.

With regard to opportunities, participants underscored the importance of developing cross-sectoral partnerships, specifically by engaging business, revising policies and strengthening health accords. The focus on prevention through education (for example, concerning particularly childhood obesity) stemmed from a desire to emphasize holistic approaches to health care and strengthen inter-professional practice and delivery. Collaboration figured prominently as an opportunity, specifically aimed at creating a preventative health paradigm premised on innovative research and policy.

Threats include concerns about an aging population, chronic disease, funding and a low level of awareness of health issues related to the built environment. Poor comprehension amongst low-income citizens with regards to environmental health issues was also raised. There was a concern that political complacency could potentially lead to privatization of health services; a circumstance that would compromise the aforementioned strengths pertaining to universal access.

What's Worth Knowing and Who Needs To Know It?

The chart on the following page captures the results of the Symposium's second facilitated session. Participants were divided into theme groups and were asked to draw on their respective expertise to identify target audiences for critical, theme specific information. In addition to the six key themes of social determinants of health, air quality, food, technology, nature & physical activity and toxins, an additional 'open' theme was provided to capture broad discussion points.

	WHAT'S WORTH KNOWING?	WHO NEEDS TO KNOW IT?
Social Determinants of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social determinants of health such as income level and education shape the ability to make informed health choices. • Factors that are often beyond one's control such as geographical location, cultural community and the ability to access information also play a significant role in determining health outcomes. • The interaction of these various factors needs to be integrated into a health promotion approach that favours prevention above mitigation. • Early educational interventions are required to mitigate social determinants of health. • In addition, employers can implement related wellness programs for the workplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media • Community Activists • Teachers • School Staff • Citizens • Taxpayers
Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustaining individual, local and global well-being requires consistent assessment and management of air quality. • Messaging strategies need to focus on enhancing comprehension of climate. • Specific efforts should be aimed at distinguishing between indoor and outdoor air quality. • Information about wellness needs to emphasize the importance of individual actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy analysts • Educators • Product Managers Business/Industry • Ministers • Politicians • Media
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food has an undeniable connection to health and is rooted in social and cultural experiences. • The links between food, security and income underscore the need to ensure equity of access. • Food literacy – the ability to understand content, nutritional value and purchasing habits – must increase in order to counteract the skewed information presented in marketing. • Efforts need to be made to regulate food marketing to children and to increase enforcement of accurate and complete labels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers • Producers • Retailers • Policy Makers • Citizens • Students • Educators • Academics • Health Professionals • Regulators • Parents • Courts • Chefs • Farmers • Government

	WHAT'S WORTH KNOWING?	WHO NEEDS TO KNOW IT?
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology can be used to enhance health and wellbeing through a cell phone based messaging strategy. Text messages that encourage outdoor activity or provide nutritional information have the potential to motivate citizens to take ownership of their health. While preliminary studies indicate that incorporating technology into health promotion can be successful, this is an area that requires further investigation. Of particular concern is the need for equitable access to technology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Educators Parents Teachers School Boards Technology Providers Government
Nature and Physical Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a direct measurable connection between nature, activity and health. Schoolyards, community centres and local parks are all locations from which to engage with nature. There is also an established connection between outdoor based learning and enhanced academic and work performance. Efforts should be made to preserve existing natural spaces perceived as at risk, and enhance the presence of green spaces within the built environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents Educators Local Leaders Urban Planners Government Corporations Employers
Toxins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toxins affect the entire population yet there is widespread confusion and misinformation about products and practices. Information about toxins needs to be easily accessible. Increased testing for toxins in products in addition to rigorous labeling practices are key. Consumers need to be able to use their purchasing power to support toxin free products and make "toxin-free choices" when such options are available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumers Regulators
Open Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There needs to be a cohesive, inclusive vision of wellness along with an informed strategy/plan to reach it. The 'right' choices need to be accessible and simple. Education, knowledge transfer and readily understood communications are the way forward. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health champions dedicated to the agenda
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As learning and health are related, any disruption to learning needs to be avoided. Beyond young citizens, efforts need to be made to enhance the motivation to learn across the population. Simple, low-cost, readily available actions will increase uptake of 'good' decisions. The key is to expand engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents Ministries Children Government

CALLS TO ACTION

In the final session of the day participants were grouped according to sector. Within these groups recommendations were produced that addressed the sustainability concerns located at the intersec-

tion of health, the environment, education and the economy. Facilitators were selected based on their leadership position within a given sector.

SECTOR	FACILITATOR	RECOMMENDATIONS
Government	Teresa McLenaghan Canadian Environmental Law Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase safety regulation and standard setting • Get information about toxic substances to the public • Shift to prevention/proactive regulation for promotion of healthy environments • Ensure that housing policies support access to groceries, safe parks and walking • Consider adequacy of the built environment as a basic human rights issue • Draft regulations that ensure safe and appropriate use of technology • Foster consumer knowledge through labeling and broad transmission of knowledge
Non-Governmental Organizations	Bill Kilburn Back to Nature Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take on a think tank role to set strategic direction, identify gaps and barriers • Identify and apply best practices • Mobilize public support and awareness - organize and create dialogue, facilitate discussion, provide leadership • Focus on changing and developing policy and practice • Collaborate with industry around sustainability
Community	Bruce Lourie Ivey Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities for information exchange - peer to peer discussions that emphasize collaborative information exchanges. • Lead by example with selective use and consumption of cell phones, Wi-Fi, cosmetics • Build awareness across many communities, serving as a place where emerging issues can first be identified • Gain a sense of what's important and inform the government • Serve as a learning laboratory for how we understand and approach issues

SECTOR	FACILITATOR	RECOMMENDATIONS
Industry/ Private Sector	Eli Bamfo Chartwells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invest in employee health – inform direction for workplace programs through surveys that investigate lifestyle health issues, invest in LEED certified buildings, extend volunteering to employees’ families ▪ Measure success beyond financial metrics ▪ “Act like a part of the community” by balancing commitment to community with the drive to make a profit. ▪ Take an active lead in the community, building partnerships and accountability, move beyond monetary donations ▪ Develop a culture of business ethics to guide decision making about what a company will and will not do ▪ Appoint resources with the organization to implement change such as designated sustainability personnel ▪ “Walk the talk” personally, model ‘healthy citizen’ behaviour
Health	Bob Bernhardt Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educate more practitioners who can spend sufficient time on behaviour change in patients (e.g. nurses, naturopathic doctors, social workers, midwives, dietitians, social workers) ▪ Fund more counseling of positive health habits, rather than care of ill health ▪ Make health care practitioners more focused on environmental impact behaviour ▪ Provide more professional development on environmental health issues ▪ Modify health education to provide a greater focus on the whole person (patient-centred care) ▪ Have more preventative health care providers in primary and secondary schools (e.g. school nurses, health promoters)
Media	Joanne DiMardo Canadian Cancer Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Go directly to reporters on key issues ▪ Provide training on how to understand systems and science behind the issues ▪ Provide contact list of credible sources of information ▪ Build relationships with reporters ▪ Utilize partnerships to develop positive health promotion/prevention education ▪ Know the different audiences and how they absorb media

SECTOR	FACILITATOR	RECOMMENDATIONS
Post-secondary Education	Graham Pike Vancouver Island University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote health and sustainability learning in interdisciplinary teams ▪ Ensure curriculum promotes critical thinking re: environmental change ▪ Model well being and sustainability as an institution ▪ Ensure that reality matches rhetoric ▪ Find out what exemplary models exist and use them ▪ Ensure that credentialing bodies adopt a ‘big picture’ perspective ▪ Make a much greater connection between research and policy development ▪ Consider student “sustainability pledges” upon graduation
Education (K-12)	Gerry Connelly York University The Learning Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Get kids outside and connected to their health ▪ Approach literacy and numeracy in the context of health, wellness and sustainability. Health and sustainability are fundamental to all curricula, they are not exclusive topics ▪ Give teachers time to process and communicate interdisciplinary connections ▪ Adopt a province-wide approach ▪ Provide only healthy options in cafeterias (note that profitability is only affected in the short term) ▪ Engage students in all discussions and actions affecting their wellness. Senior students have far greater impact on younger students - have them on wellness committees in schools as student mentors ▪ Reduce toxins in the school environment (indoors and outdoors) ▪ Provide funding for preventative measures, especially in First Nations schools

NEXT STEPS

In addition to the recommendations identified in the “Call to Action” session, the What’s Worth Knowing: Health and the Environment Symposium also generated ideas for follow up activities and identified areas for further inquiry.

Engagement

An evaluation survey was circulated after the Symposium. Please see Appendix B for details. The results of the survey revealed that participants are enthusiastic about building on the momentum that was generated in the facilitated sessions. Given the large scope of the event, many requested an annual symposium or alternatively, a series of smaller, theme specific roundtables that would examine issues and develop related stakeholder action in greater detail. In addition to producing more detailed recommendations, such events would also expand the network to include educators, policy makers and personnel from the health care and social service sectors.

The production and distribution of this Final Report was also identified as being critical to advancing the dialogue that began at the Symposium. In addition to documenting processes and results, such material becomes a resource with which to engage more stakeholders.

Participants also indicated that establishing an online What’s Worth Knowing: Health and the Environment Symposium Forum would mobilize knowledge and foster new, valuable connections with individuals and organizations. Such a space would enhance communication and understand-

ing about the health care system, education practices and the economic realities that shape them.

Educators

LSF, with support from the Public Health Agency of Canada will provide teachers with a wider range of teaching tools that will complement and enhance the current inventory of health resources. In addition, LSF will create a searchable database of age appropriate, health, well-being and the environment themed literature for young children. It will offer meaningful support to primary school teachers while providing a strategic tool for enhancing ESD.

Students

Ten high school students attended the Symposium, representing provinces from across Canada. They participated in facilitated sessions and were charged with sharing the knowledge and experience that was gained with their respective communities. These students are now connected with each other through the ORION web platform. They will be sharing the follow up activities they have undertaken with their school communities back home. LSF will post these projects on the website in 2012. LSF is seeking funding for the development of a Health and the Environment Youth Leadership Forum that will engage youth in action projects in their schools and communities.

CONCLUSION

According to a recent study, “Provincial spending on healthcare will consume more than half of total revenues from all sources in six of ten provinces by the year 2020” (Stuart & Adams, 2007). Similarly, the Canadian Institute for Health Information found that Canada spent an estimated \$191.6 billion on health care in 2010 - up \$9.5 billion from the previous year (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2010). The recent explosion in healthcare costs is attributed to many factors including an aging population, new and expensive treatments, demanding consumer-patients and an increase in preventable, chronic illnesses. The gradual rate of growth for these items has made it easy to avoid making difficult, long-term decisions to stem growth (Stuart & Adams, 2007). However, merely increasing spending on healthcare alone does not translate into better health outcomes.

Investing in the long-term wellbeing of citizens through education can effectively reduce health care costs in the long run. Governments have a tendency to avoid investing heavily in early childhood development programs in spite of the broad and long lasting benefits. Similarly, addressing environmental health concerns will take years to show results, however the benefits will last generations. Emphasizing a comprehensive approach to health promotion has a cascading effect that improves awareness and knowledge in the general population. Given the important connections between health, education, responsible citizenship and quality of life, educating about health as early as possible is imperative to ensuring sustainable implementation of programs.

The 2011 What’s Worth Knowing: Health and the Environment Symposium mobilized knowledge about the links between health, the economy and the environment while positioning education as a vehicle for continuously improving the lives of citizens. While the participants for the Symposium had diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, they were united in their commitment to sustainability. While this commitment is shaped by varying emphasis on social, economic and environmental considerations, the bottom line is that all sectors have a vested interest in becoming more efficient and adopting a long range perspective.

Given the important connections between health, education, responsible citizenship and quality of life, educating about health as early as possible is imperative to ensuring sustainable implementation of programs.

The lack of sustainability in the current health care system, if left unchecked, will have dramatic repercussions across sectors, for all citizens. By using a sustainability lens the Symposium was able to produce informed, realistic recommendations for policy development and sector specific action. Sustainability in Canadian healthcare is less about ‘fixing’ a broken system and more about a collaborative, inter-sectoral response to the “ongoing deterioration in the economic and social conditions that promote health” (Black & MacKinnon, 2011:1). It is about shifting the emphasis from an end-of-the-pipe focus on



illness to a broader and more inclusive perspective on health and well being. This approach is in accordance with the sustainability principle of “moving upstream” in one’s thinking, because “it is easier to anticipate and prevent than to clean up after the fact”. (Ontario Round Table on the Environment and Economy “principles of sustainability”). As the recommendations presented in this document indicate, emphasis on prevention and consideration of the social, physical, natural and organizational environment has never been more critical. Prevention must include addressing the root causes of health problems caused by the release of toxins into the environment, including those from consumer products developed in the name of “cleaner, whiter, and safer” choices.

The way forward begins with responsible citizens who are capable of supporting enduring solutions that connect the economy, the environment and society. This includes responsible corporate and industrial citizens. Examining the problems of health care through a sustainability lens provides a fresh perspective that yields creative ways of achieving the long-term health and wellbeing of all Canadians.

APPENDIX A: What's Worth Knowing: Health and the Environment Symposium Speakers

Dr. David Bell

Conference Chair, Chair of the Board,
Learning for a Sustainable Future

Don Drummond

Matthews Fellow and Distinguished Visiting
Scholar in the School of Policy Studies at Queen's
University

Dr. Gerald Farthing

Deputy Minister, Manitoba Education

Dr. Arlene King

Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ontario Ministry
of Health and Long-Term Care

Bruce Lourie

President of the Ivey Foundation and best sell-
ing author of *Slow Death by Rubber Duck: How the
Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Life Affects Our Health*

Diana MacKay

Director of Education, Health and Immigration
Programs at the Conference Board of Canada

Eli Bamfo

Environmental Health & Safety Specialist, Chart-
wells a Division of Compass Group Canada

Dr. Harvey Skinner

Dean of the Faculty of Health at York University

Dr. David Sheridan

Conference Facilitator, Shercon Associates

APPENDIX B: What's Worth Knowing: Health and the Environment Symposium Follow Up Survey Data Analysis

Over 100 people attended the What's Worth Knowing: Health and the Environment Symposium on November 16, 2011 in Toronto, Ontario. On November 25, participants were sent an email inviting them to complete an on-line follow-up survey. 30 people completed the survey.

The survey contained 8 questions. Most questions used a 5 point Likert Scale with response anchors of 1 (Poor) and 5 (Excellent). Some required ranking and others a yes/no response. Participants were asked to provide qualitative feedback for a number of questions. Below is a summary of responses.

1. Quality of Symposium

83.3% of the respondents rated the Quality of the Symposium as 4 or 5.

Suggestions for improvement included: more input from key stakeholders, increased opportunity to ask questions to presenters, receiving the group discussion questions before the conference to allow for substantive participation, and making the symposium longer.

2. Usefulness of Symposium to Respondent or Respondent's Company/Organization/School

60% of respondents rated the Usefulness of Symposium to Respondent or Respondent's Company/Organization/School as 4 or 5.

Some participants provided information regarding the types of follow-up activities they will be undertaking as a result of their attendance at the What's Worth Knowing: Health and the Environ-

ment Symposium. These included: collaboration with contacts, pursuing a project with LSF, presentations to colleagues, promoting “Slow Death by Rubber Duck”, monitoring health cost media articles with an emphasis on responsibility in personal health care in one’s classes, and sharing the story of their experience and the information they learned with their School Coordinating Committee and their School Health Coordinator.

3. Quality of Speakers

97% of respondents rated the Quality of Speakers as a 4 or 5.

4. Usefulness of Background Paper for Participation at the Symposium

63% of respondents rated the usefulness of the Background Paper as 4 or 5.

5. Quality of Small Group Sessions

70 % of respondents rated the quality of Small Group Discussions as 4 or 5.

6. Importance of Presentations, Small Group Sessions and Networking

Respondents were asked to rate the presentations, small group sessions and networking as the Most Important, Important or Least Important part of the Symposium. Of interest here is that 15 respondents (50.0%) of the sample rated the presentations as the Most Important. Comparatively, 12 respondents (40.0%) rated the small-group sessions as the Most Important. Networking was regarded by 16 respondents (53.5%) as Important.

7. Suggestions for Follow-Up Activities

Respondents were asked through an open-ended question to provide suggestions for follow-up activities that LSF should undertake. Fifteen responses were provided. These included:

- establish a yearly symposium on sustainability themes
- create a quarterly newsletter on the events that have occurred since the symposium as well as information on health care vs. illness care systems;
- create a network where individuals share their follow up activities with other conference participants for feedback;
- advance a health promotion policy with input from education stakeholders;
- extend the focus of LSF to health care workers and social service providers, not just educators;
- publish a follow-up document which summarized the outcomes of the symposium.

8. Interest in Participation in an Online Forum with Other Symposium Participants

60% of respondents were interested in participating in an on-line forum.

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