

## A wake-up call on science literacy: Canada's future depends on it. Policy Options: 74-77.

Research Area:		Year:	2006
Type of Publication:	Article	Keywords:	Innovation culture, science literacy, skill development, youth, science awareness
Authors:	Schmidt, B. Knox, K.		
Journal:	Policy Options		
Pages:	74-77		
Month:	November		

### Note:

Canada needs to develop a culture of innovation founded on science literacy, important for its people to have an informed and active role in our country's future: science literacy enables us to understand and advance the links between science, technology, innovation, the economy and our society - a required starting point is the establishment of a new federal, independently governed science literacy agency that focuses on leading and supporting the science awareness community. Many organizations have become involved in science literacy initiatives, many of which focus on engaging youth and collectively, science awareness efforts are reaching very young children, elementary and high school students, parents, teachers and educators, and, to a lesser degree, the general public - however, wide segments of the population are not benefiting from these efforts due to limited funding, a lack of coordination and a leadership void. Developing a science culture has become a global issue and other countries are rising to the challenge much faster than Canada: Germany and Ireland have established national science literacy programs, India and China have adopted federal policies related to science awareness and the United States has set national goals and objectives, where the National Science Foundation in the US allocates approximately 14 percent of its annual operating budget to science education (they spent \$800 million in 2006 alone) - by comparison, in Canada, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council spends much less of its large budget on science education and outreach

### Abstract:

Canada's future prosperity and quality of life are directly related to our ability to thrive and compete in a knowledge-based, global economy in which science and technology play a pivotal role. Other countries are racing us to the top in terms of developing science-literate societies that embrace, and will thrive in, such an economy. Canada is falling short of ensuring that our citizens, including our youth, are prepared with the science skills and knowledge that are needed to meet emerging and predicted demands. Kenneth Knox and Bonnie Schmidt see an opportunity now for the federal government to take a leadership role and set a bold course that will ensure Canada's success in the 21st century.