

Canada's Greatest Asset



By David Delaney

Many people think the limits of economic growth and population growth are like walls we might run into. When we see that we're getting close to the walls, we'll slow down and figure out how to avoid a crash. The reality is far more hazardous. We are like a thoughtless retired person without a pension who lives too lavishly on capital. We consume greatly more than the income generated by our natural capital, consuming the capital as well as the income. The capacity to produce sustainable income-- food, materials, energy--disappears with the natural capital necessary for its generation. Day by day the proportion of capital in our consumption increases. The decrease of our income is invisible while we think of the capital we consume as income. When we reach the limits of our natural capital, the Earth's support for our presence will decrease relatively suddenly to an astonishingly low level compared to the largesse we have become used to. The

Earth's human population is at a great disadvantage relative to our unfortunate retiree. Human numbers will still be increasing even as total food production starts to decrease rapidly.

Canada will soon be caught up in the resulting long emergency, as James Kunstler calls it. As the world passes some critical threshold in its consumption of natural capital--probably at the worldwide Hubbert's peak of oil production--the long emergency will start with a series of global recessions and depressions that will evolve into something like the great depression of 1929-1939. But the long emergency will last for many decades of continual contraction of the economy and the population of the world. How will Canada fare in the long emergency?

Canada still has great stores of natural capital which may not be exhausted when the long emergency starts. These assets, and our relatively small population, might allow us to make a transition to a sustainable economy without the rapid compression of population that most nations will experience. We can not be sure whether Canada has exceeded the level of population that will then be sustainable, but we must be close to exceeding it. **Prudence dictates that we stop increasing our population, and even reduce it.** This brings us to Canada's greatest asset: a population with a natural tendency to decrease.

Canadian women, except for the children of recent immigrants, now have on average only 1.5 children each. Since each woman must have on average 2.1 children to keep a population from shrinking, Canada's population would contract if it were not for immigration. The growth maniacs and some special interests want to increase immigration to offset and even reverse this healthy tendency of our population. I hope those who read this will do something to oppose them. Immigration should be stopped.