

Media Release

Study finds majority of Canadians believe climate change education falling short of expectations

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A study led by Lakehead University researchers, in collaboration with Learning for a Sustainable Future, reveals that Canadians are deeply concerned about climate change, yet only half feel they know enough about the issue.

The nationwide study, *Canada, Climate Change and Education: Opportunities for Public and Formal Education*, paints a broad picture of Canadians' understanding of climate change and their desire for more education about the issue, both inside and outside of schools. Schools and curricula, the study revealed, are falling short of Canadians' expectations for learning about climate change.

"Canadians are telling us that how we respond to climate change needs to change," said Dr. Ellen Field, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) postdoctoral fellow in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University and principal investigator of the study.

"Students, parents and teachers agreed that schools should be doing more to educate young people about climate change and that climate change education is the responsibility of the school system."

According to the study there is a lack of basic knowledge about climate change among Canadians, including many Canadian teachers.

"There is variation in teachers' level of preparedness when it comes to teaching about climate change," explained Pamela Schwartzberg, President and CEO, Learning for a Sustainable Future.

Only a third of teachers surveyed (35 per cent) reported teaching about climate change. For teachers who do integrate climate change content, most students experience one to 10 hours of instruction per year or semester on the topic.

"We need to improve this statistic," Schwartzberg stated.

While, 32 per cent of the teachers surveyed believed they have enough knowledge to teach about climate change, over half (54 per cent) indicated that they wanted more professional development on climate change education.

Schwartzberg added “Learning for a Sustainable Future has worked for over two decades to provide professional development and high-quality resources to teachers and, now more than ever, can offer solutions to act fast and deliver on the expectations of Canadian youth, teachers and the public.”

When it came to Canadian youths’ knowledge of climate change, Field explained that almost 46 per cent of students in grades seven to 12 were aware that climate change is human-caused. What the researchers were not expecting was the response from Canadian youth that they didn’t feel mitigation efforts will change the course of climate change.

“It is deeply concerning that almost half of students in junior and high school don’t believe that greenhouse gas reduction policies can have impact,” Field stated.

“In the midst of a climate crisis, the study shows the critical need for more emphasis on climate change education in schooling, and suggests possible ways forward for provinces, school boards, principals and teachers,” explained Paul Berger, Chair of Graduate Studies & Research in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University and supervisor of the project. “This study is a major contribution at a crucial time for action”

The study was supported with funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSRHC).

To read the Full Report, Executive Summary and view the Video please visit:

<http://www.lsf-lst.ca/en/cc-survey>

About the Canada, Climate Change and Education: Opportunities for Public and Formal Education Study

These are some of the findings of a survey conducted between October 5, 2018 and January 31, 2019 on behalf of Lakehead University and Learning for a Sustainable Future. Educators, students, parents and members of the general public were surveyed from the LegerWeb platform and responses from a further 1,120 teachers were collected through a link hosted on the Learning for a Sustainable Future website. A total of 3,184 completed surveys were analyzed. Margin of error is not reported for this type of survey, but in other types of surveys with this sample size Leger Research Intelligence calculated that the margin would be ± 2.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

About Lakehead University

Lakehead University is a fully comprehensive university with approximately 8,500 students and over 2,000 faculty and staff at two campuses in Orillia and Thunder Bay, Ontario. Lakehead has 10 faculties, including Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Graduate Studies, Health & Behavioural Sciences, Law, Natural Resources Management, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Science & Environmental Studies, and Social Sciences & Humanities. *Maclean’s 2020 University Rankings*, once again, included Lakehead University among

Canada's Top 10 primarily undergraduate universities, and in 2018, *Research Infosource* named Lakehead Research University of the Year in its category for the fourth consecutive year. Visit www.lakeheadu.ca.

About Learning for a Sustainable Future

Founded in 1991, Learning for a Sustainable Future (LSF) is a Canadian charity whose mission is to promote, through education, the knowledge, skills, values, perspectives and practices essential to a sustainable future. Working with business, governments, school boards, universities, communities, educators, and youth across Canada, LSF acts as a connector, a resource, and a facilitator for change. LSF's innovative programs and strategic partnerships are helping reshape education policy and transforming learning methods, helping students learn to address the increasingly difficult economic, social, and environmental challenges of the 21st century. www.LSF-LST.ca

For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Pamela Schwartzberg
President and CEO
Learning for a Sustainable Future
1-877-250-8202
cc-survey@LSF-LST.ca

Ellen Field
SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow and Contract Faculty
Faculty of Education
Lakehead University
efield@lakeheadu.ca

Paul Berger
Chair, Graduate Studies and Research in Education
Faculty of Education
Lakehead University
paul.berger@lakeheadu.ca

Jaclyn Bucik
Media, Communications and Marketing Associate
Lakehead University
705-330-4008 ext. 2014
jaclyn.bucik@lakeheadu.ca