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# Environmental Literacy Study -RDA Component-

## Final Report

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## Introduction

Corporate Research Associates Inc. (CRA) is pleased to present Environment Canada (EC) with this Final Report for the recently conducted **Environmental Literacy Study**. The present report includes discussion of telephone interviews that were conducted among representatives of various Regional Development Authorities (RDAs) from across Atlantic Canada. Regional Development Authorities (RDAs) were established in 1994 as the coordinating bodies charged with leading economic development at the local level. As described by the government of Nova Scotia, the primary function of the Regional Development Authorities is to integrate and coordinate the activities of all local development groups and in some cases undertake initiatives to accomplish regional goals. The RDA approach is based on regional leadership in the core areas of: community economic development, community enterprise development, business development, human resources development and communications development. Specific activities include: preparing economic planning strategies and operational plans, identifying opportunities and coordinating feasibility assessments, collecting and distributing information, building capacity, promotion and marketing, counselling business, and providing operational assistance to other organizations. RDA funding partners include the Office of Economic Development, ACOA, municipalities and Community Services.

A second component of the study involves online surveys administered to science teachers from across Atlantic Canada. The findings of that component of the study will be related to Environment Canada in a subsequent report from CRA.

At the outset of the current study it was determined that the overriding study objective of the RDA interviews was to better understand the status of the environment as an issue within the regional development community across Atlantic Canada.

Information included in the accompanying data set is based on telephone interviews with a sample of 39 officials representing different Regional Development Authorities across Atlantic Canada. All surveys were conducted between November 26, 2004 and January 31, 2005. A sample of this size can be expected to yield a margin of sampling error of  $\pm 7.9$  percentage points in 95 out of 100 samples. The 72 percent response rate is above average for a quantitative study of this type, involving questionnaires being administered during the workday to a non-general public population in Atlantic Canada.

Included at the end of the current report is a description of the study methodology adopted for the project, as well as a copy of the questionnaire utilized for this component of the Environmental Literacy Study (Appendix A).



## Executive Summary

Representatives of Regional Development Authorities (RDAs) universally believe that a healthy natural environment is important to the health of humans, the eco-system, as well as the economy. However, there is some differentiation of opinions evident. That is, while almost all RDA representatives believe the relationship between environmental health and human health is critical, only one-half of RDAs believe that a healthy natural environment is critical to economic competitiveness.

While RDAs believe there is a need for improving the environment at the local, regional, and national levels, concern about the local environment is lowest, although even at that level over three-quarters of RDAs maintain that improvements are needed. It is evident that as the area under consideration widens, concern over the environment increases in a commensurate fashion.

Most RDAs contend they are at least somewhat informed about environmental issues as they affect economic development initiatives in their region. On a related topic, most RDAs are unaware of any initiatives or services currently offered by EC to assist in addressing environmental concerns of potential investors. Indeed, less than one-half of RDAs are aware that Environment Canada has a resource person available for them.

RDA officials identified several challenges confronted when positioning the importance of environmental issues to potential investors. The most common challenge is overcoming their own lack of awareness of current government policies and processes pertaining to the environment. A few RDAs also mentioned that investors have little interest in learning about the environmental issues in the RDA coverage region, but for the most part the challenges related to a lack of knowledge about, and lack of materials covering, the environment.

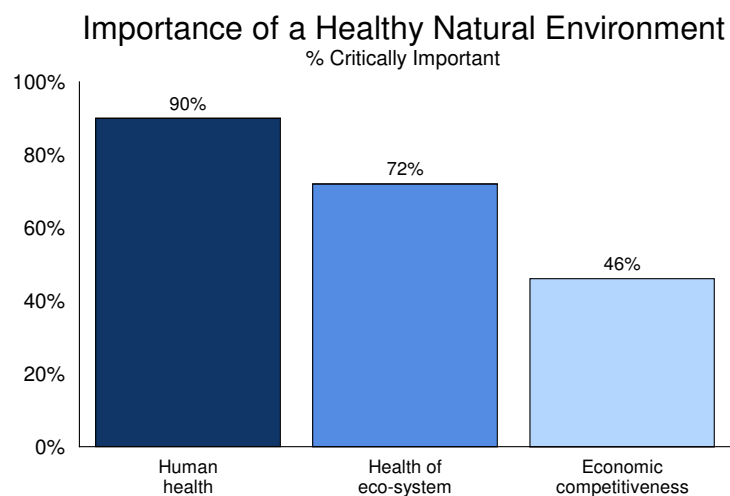
RDA officials made recommendations regarding what Environment Canada could do to facilitate economic development, with the timely dissemination of new policies and updated information as a pivotally important recommendation. Another topical suggestion is for Environment Canada to better promote its services and contacts. RDA officials would be better equipped to utilize the services offered by EC if they were fully aware of the assistance available. Implementing more contact with RDAs is also recommended, possibly in the form of workshops or personal visits. It is comforting to note that relatively few RDA failed to offer a recommendation, an indication that there is substantial interest in working with EC to provide quality information to RDA clients.

Finally, perceptions of RDAs are mixed in terms of how the general public regards new laws and programs implemented to protect the environment. Slightly over one-third of RDAs indicate that residents in their particular region support the changes, and believe the new environmental laws will contribute to jobs. In contrast, one-in-four RDAs that believe there is public sentiment maintaining that new environmentally-related laws will be bad for jobs.



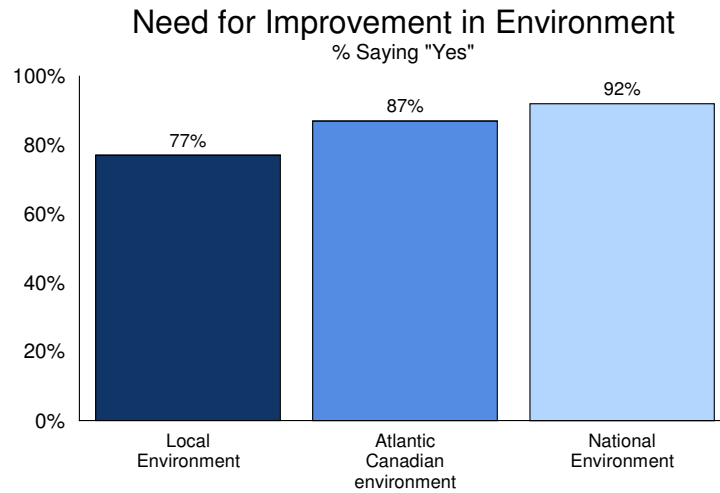
## Detailed Analysis

Representatives of Regional Development Authorities (RDAs) universally believe that a healthy natural environment is important to the health of humans, the eco-system, as well as the economy. However, there is some differentiation of opinions evident when considering if environmental health is critical for the health of each element. That is, almost all RDA representatives believe the relationship between environmental health and human health is paramount, followed by the health of the eco-system. Only one-half of RDAs believe that a healthy natural environment is critical to the competitiveness of our economy. (Tables 2a-c)

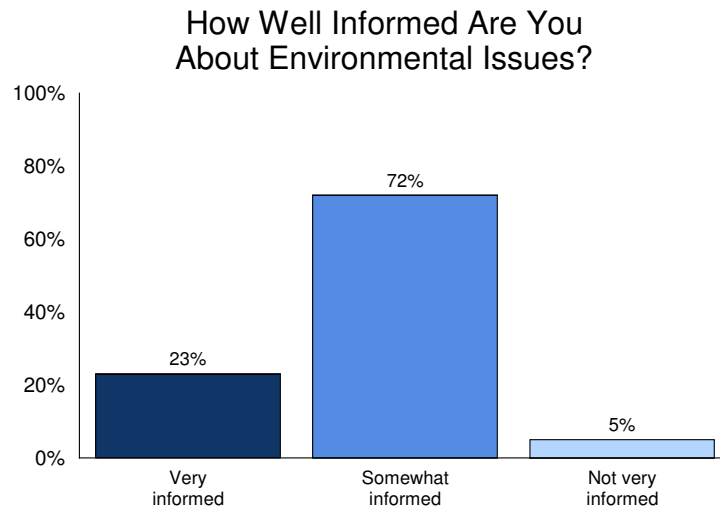


RDAs generally believe there is a need for improving the environment at the local, regional, and national levels. In comparative terms, the local environment is of the lowest concern, although over three-quarters of RDAs maintain that improvements are necessary even at that level. As the area under consideration widens, concern over the status of the environment increases, with virtually all RDAs holding the contention that there is an exigent need for improving the state of the environment at the national level. (Tables 3a-c)





Most RDAs contend they are at least *somewhat* informed about environmental issues as they affect economic development initiatives in the region. However, few RDAs claim to be *very* informed. RDAs in Nova Scotia are the most likely to be very informed on environmental issues relating to economic development. In contrast, Newfoundland RDAs are the least likely to consider themselves very informed on these issues. (Table 4)



Most RDAs are unaware of any initiatives or services currently offered by Environment Canada to assist in addressing the environmental concerns of potential investors (66%). A small number of RDAs mentioned information available through the Internet (8%), press releases (5%), and environmental assessments (5%). (Table 6)



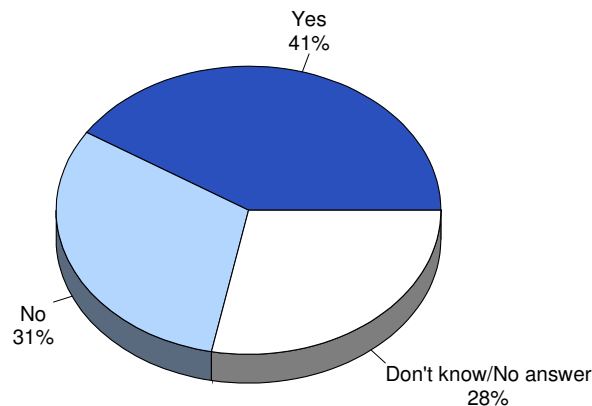
RDA officials identified several challenges or hurdles faced when positioning the importance of environmental issues to potential investors. The most common challenge is overcoming their own lack of awareness of the current government policies and processes related to environmental issues. A few RDAs also mentioned that investors have little interest in learning about the environmental issues in the RDA coverage region, but for the most part the challenges related to a lack of knowledge about, and lack of materials covering, the environment topic. (Table 5)

### Challenges in Speaking With Potential Investors



Less than one-half of RDAs are aware that Environment Canada has a resource person. Awareness is lowest in New Brunswick and Newfoundland. (Table 7)

### Does Environment Canada Have a Resource Person?

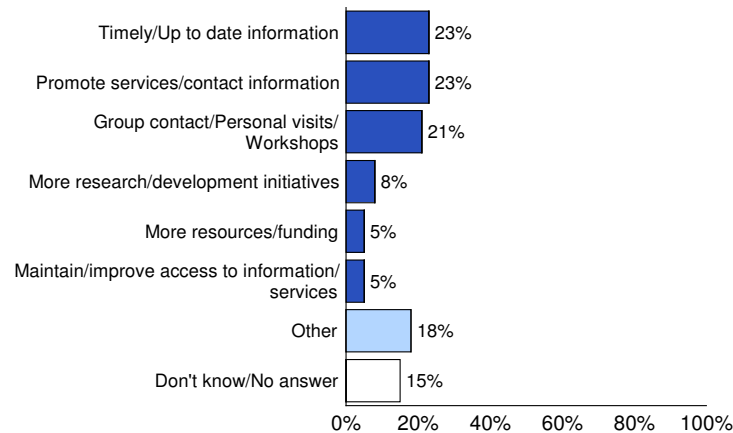


RDA officials have several recommendations regarding what Environment Canada could do to facilitate economic development. The timely dissemination of new policies and updated



information is one of the top recommendations. Another popular recommendation is for Environment Canada to better promote its services and contacts. RDA officials would be better equipped to utilize the services offered by Environment Canada if they were fully aware of the assistance available, and the proper channels to obtain that assistance. Implementing more contact with RDAs is also recommended, possibly in the form of workshops or personal visits. Few RDA failed to offer any recommendations, an indication that there is substantial interest in working with Environment Canada to provide quality information to RDA clients. (Table 8)

### Most Important Thing Environment Canada Can Do

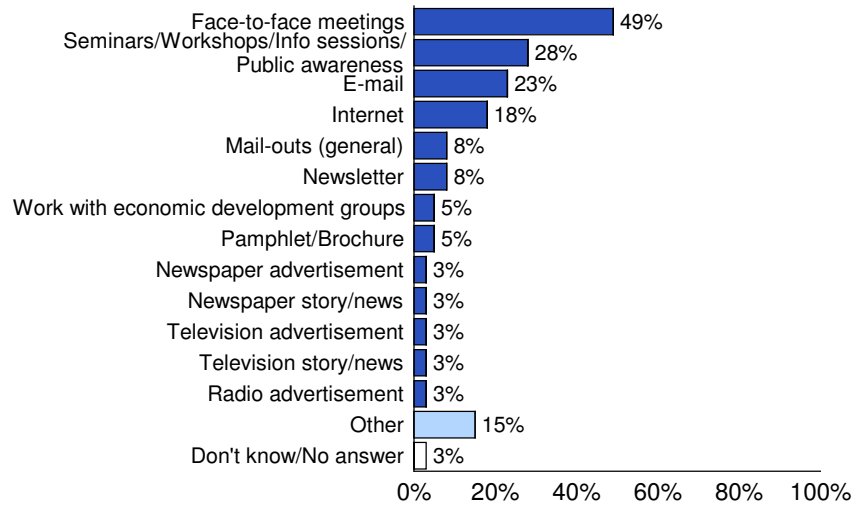


Regarding how Environment Canada should provide information to Regional Development Authorities, officials have a strong preference for personal interactions. Face-to-face meetings are the most popular choice, preferred by one-half of RDAs. Seminars and workshops are also suggested as effective channels for providing information. Indirect contact suggestions include e-mail, mail-outs and newsletters. Mass media options such as newspaper, television, and radio were mentioned by only a small percentage of RDAs. (Table 9)



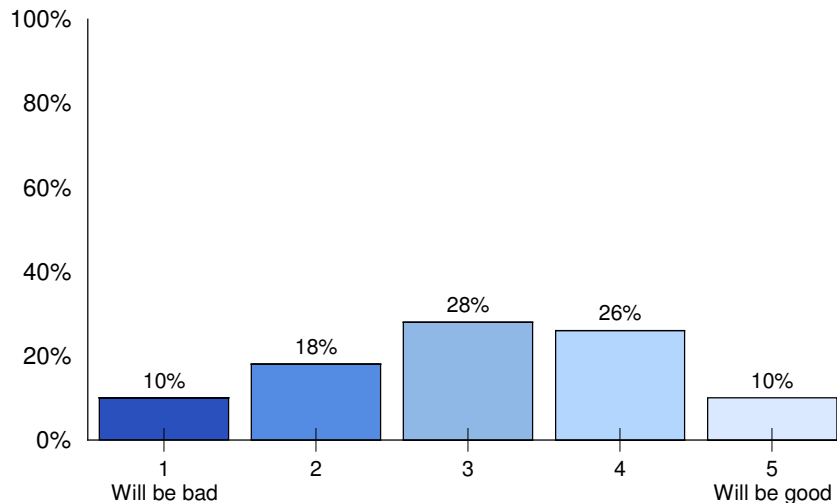


### Best Method for Environment Canada to Provide Information



Finally, perceptions of RDAs are mixed in terms of how the general public regards new laws and programs implemented to protect and preserve the environment. Slightly over one-third of RDAs indicate that residents in their particular region support the changes, and believe the new environmental laws will contribute to jobs (derived as a score of four or five on a five-point scale). However, there is also a sizable percentage (28%) that believes there is public sentiment which maintains that new environmentally-related laws will be bad for jobs (scores of either one or two). The remainder either indicate a neutral position, or say they have no opinion concerning the disposition of residents on this issue. (Table 10)

### Impact of Environmental Law and Programs



## Study Methodology

### Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire for this study was designed by Corporate Research Associates Inc., in consultation with representatives from Environment Canada.

### Sample Design and Selection

A list of 52 Regional Development Authorities was derived by CRA for this Environment Canada-sponsored study. CRA attempted to conduct a census of the full list of Authorities, and was successful in contacting all but one office.

### Survey Administration

The survey was conducted by telephone between November 26, 2004 and January 31, 2005, from Corporate Research Associates' data collection facilities in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The interview length averaged just over 9 minutes, with a completion rate of 1.5 per hour. All interviews were conducted by fully-trained and supervised interviewers, and a minimum of 10 percent of all completed interviews were subsequently verified. Respondents were offered the choice to complete the survey in either English or French.

### Completion Results

Among all eligible respondents contacted, the response rate was 72.2 percent. Response rate is calculated as the number of cooperative contacts (39), divided by the total of eligible numbers attempted (54). This 72 percent figure is above-average for studies of this type, where no incentive is offered.

The final disposition of all telephone numbers called is shown below in the Professional Marketing Research Society's *Standard Record of Contact Format*.



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## Completion Results

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<b>TOTAL NUMBERS ATTEMPTED</b>	<b>55</b>
Not in Service	1
<b>TOTAL ELIGIBLE NUMBERS</b>	<b>54</b>
Qualified Not Available	6
<b>TOTAL ASKED</b>	<b>48</b>
Gatekeeper Refusal	6
Respondent Refusal	2
Qualified Respondent Break Off	1
<b>COOPERATIVE CONTACTS</b>	<b>39</b>
Completed Interviews	39

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