

# Prosperity depends on changes to education system

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT

The Herald  
Almost 40 Halton Hills residents turned up at Georgetown District High School Monday night to give the federal government their ideas of what will make Canada more prosperous.

The meeting was one of 150 being held across Canada as part of the federal government's 'The Prosperity Initiative: Community Talks' designed to give Canadians some influence in the development of a national strategy on competitiveness and learning.

"This national strategy to improve competitiveness is like a jigsaw puzzle," said the evenings moderator, Pamela Purves. "Every community has a piece of the puzzle which is important to the whole puzzle."

Last night's meeting, which was co-hosted by the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce and the Halton and Peel Industries Training Advisory Committee (HAPITAC) is the 10th one she's been at and all

have been well-attended she said.

Last night's attendance of 39 people was slightly lower than the 50 or more attendance level in other towns but Halton Hills residents weren't short on ideas.

David Wright, the Executive Director of HAPITAC said several issues were raised, including concern about the economy, the value of the Canadian dollar, concern about the relationship between education and business and concern about Canada's attitudes toward competitiveness.

"One issue that came through very clearly was that people want the government to be more fiscally responsible with their policies," he said. "People believed there was a lack of planning behind the government's approach to solving problems."

Many were also concerned that the current high value of the Canadian dollar was affecting Canada's export market and wanted to see it lowered, he said.

Training and education was

another hot topic of conversation.

"People in attendance felt there needed to be a more coordinated effort between business and education," recalled Mr. Wright. "They felt business should work more closely with education to ensure that education stays current."

Finally, the issue of Canadian's attitudes was discussed.

"Many felt there needed to be a change of attitude towards the technical and scientific fields," said Mr. Wright. "Too much focus is on the high-end jobs such as in the medical and law profession and not enough focus is on the trades in science and technology."

Ms. Purves said changing the attitude of Canadians has been a common theme at all the Community Talks she's been at.

"We've heard over and over from the groups that Canadians have to change their attitude toward themselves and that they have to work harder and be more committed to learning."

Cross-sector cooperation between

government, business, education and labor is another theme re-occurring at the meetings, she said.

All the comments from each community gathering are written down by government employees at the meeting and compiled into a summary report.

This summary will be sent to everyone who attended the meeting.

The process will end in March, said Ms. Purves, and then the formation of regional meetings will begin.

After this, all the comments and suggestions will form the basis of a government document on Canada's prosperity and how it can be improved to be released this fall.



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## Medical schools need women

Ontario may face a shortage of family physicians who deliver babies if medical schools neglect to make the field more appealing to female students, a University of Toronto study has shown.

Two family physicians who teach in the U of T department of family and community medicine conducted a survey of the department's residents last year and found that half planned to include obstetrics in their practice: eighty-six per cent of the men, but only 30 per cent of the women.

"Since more women enrol in family medicine (60 per cent) than men, this could mean that in the future there will not be enough family physicians willing to deliver babies and provide ongoing care," said Dr. Anthony Reid, assistant professor in family and community medicine.

As more women continue to

enrol in family medicine programs with fewer of them choosing not to provide maternity care, the numbers of doctors performing deliveries may be reduced. A decline in the numbers of family physicians attending births has been attributed to lifestyle issues, lack of confidence in their skills and malpractice fears. A common theory is that women are more likely to structure their practices to allow time for their own family responsibilities.

"Training programs must address the factors that would facilitate women's involvement in maternity care," said Reid.

In a study published in Canadian Family Physician, Reid and Dr. June Carroll suggest that family practice residency programs can play a part in encouraging residents to consider including obstetrics in their practices. Respondents in their

survey who said they plan to practice obstetrics have likely attended more births during their residency and gave a higher rating to training received from family practitioners than obstetricians in their program.

"Our findings made us aware that training would be improved by increasing family medicine experience, teachers' sharing of patients, increasing continuity of care, involving residents more in decision making and management, adding more family medicine role models and addressing lifestyle issues, especially for women," said Reid.

The U of T department of family and community medicine is one of the largest in North America, with about 80 residents each year distributed among eight Toronto hospitals.

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