

# TAKE A STAND: CANADA



People  
and the  
Planet

Lessons for a Sustainable Future

## INTRODUCTION

The environmental and social issues surrounding population growth are complex; from the way we use our resources, to the implications of our changing climate, to the effectiveness of population policies. Sometimes, it is easier to think through an issue when you are asked to “take a stand,” or form an opinion on it. No two people think about these issues exactly alike. An individual’s stance depends on their life experiences, their knowledge base, and their personal situation. Because of this, there are many perspectives on population-related issues and it is valuable for students to consider their stance while also weighing the opinions of others.

## MATERIALS

- Signs: “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “?,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree” (provided)
- Masking tape

## PROCEDURE

1. Before class, tape the five signs up around the classroom.
2. Explain to students that you will be reading several statements to them, and that they should stand in front of the sign that most closely represents their reaction to the statement.
3. After each statement, they will have time to offer their own opinions and discuss their views. Be sure students know that they will be asked to share with the class why they are standing where they are. They are also free to move to a different sign if/when their opinions change after hearing their classmates’ views.

### CONCEPT

Dialogue and debate on social and environmental issues related to population growth are helpful in clarifying personal opinions.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Formulate their own opinions on social and environmental issues related to population growth.
- Articulate their thoughts on statements that deal with issues surrounding population and the environment.
- Write a position paper defending their stance on a statement using evidence to support their claims

### SUBJECTS

Social studies (geography, civics), science (Earth and environmental), English language arts

### SKILLS

Debating, values identification, communicating, decision making, researching, defending a position using evidence, writing

### METHOD

Students articulate their thoughts on issues related to population and the environment, then research a specific issue and write a position paper using evidence to defend their stance.

Try to give equal time to representatives of different sides of the issue and solicit remarks from as many students as possible. Do not let your own opinions show, but you may pose additional questions to help students articulate their thoughts.

4. You may want to use some of the following techniques to keep the debate on track:
  - a. To show respect for viewpoints different than their own and to practice active listening, have students paraphrase the opinions offered by others before they speak their own opinion.
  - b. To stay focused on content, not personalities, assign students a position that they must try to defend, even if it does not mesh with their personal values.
  - c. Use your discretion in choosing statements that you feel students have enough information on to form an opinion and that fit best with your curriculum guidelines.
5. Have students record their locations for each of the statements read. After the exercise, students should pick one statement that they are most interested in and research both sides of the issue. After researching, students should take a stance and write a position paper defending their stance with evidence.

## ALTERNATE PROCEDURES

1. If you'd like to ensure that your students are able to make educated opinions, provide them with the statement(s) you'll be discussing a day or two ahead of the activity in class. Let them use this time to look into the issue(s) so they can make an informed choice and gather useful facts to support their opinions.
2. Alternatively, the statements can be used as a pre- and post-evaluation to see how students' knowledge has grown as a result of a unit of study.

## STATEMENTS

1. Because we live in one of the richest countries in the world, we should welcome all those from other nations who wish to live here.
2. Arable land should never be used for housing, businesses, or other non-agricultural uses – only for growing crops because we need all available farmable land to produce food.
3. The Earth can support over 7 billion people now and will be able to support any number of humans in the future.
4. In a real economic crunch, creating jobs is more important than preserving environmental quality.
5. Laws to increase fuel efficiency should continue to get stricter, even though these vehicles might cost the consumer more.
6. We shouldn't be too concerned with climate change – Earth's climate has changed many times in the past.

7. Because our population has reached 7.6 billion people and continues to grow, we need to expand land area available for living and growing food by cutting down rainforests.
8. In an effort to feed a growing population, people in developed countries should drastically reduce the amount of meat they consume.
9. Governments in countries with fast-growing populations should make laws to limit the number of children that couples can have.
10. Any new construction or other project that threatens the quality of our country's drinking water should be prohibited.
11. Funding for education in science and technology should be a priority over sports in schools.
12. Science and technology will ensure that food production and energy stores keep up with the demands of a growing population.
13. People in this country should be required by law to recycle and compost their trash.
14. Any endangered species' habitat should be protected and not developed for any reason.
15. To lower our use of energy and levels of air pollution, we should spend more money on improving our public transportation systems than on our highways.
16. Wealthy countries, who emit the most CO<sub>2</sub>, should be required to pay less developed countries that are impacted by climate change so that they can adapt as necessary.
17. Remedying events of the past (the mistakes of our parents and grandparents regarding the environment or the oppression of indigenous people) is the responsibility of present generations.
18. The federal and provincial governments must increase their investments in indigenous communities in order to improve their quality of life.

## ASSESSMENT

Students write a 3-5 sentence reflection on the activity. They can include something new they learned, something they were surprised about, a way in which their opinion changed, etc.

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY

Have students create and debate statements that relate to environmental or social issues in their own community.

**TAKE A STAND: CANADA**  
**SIGNS**

Strongly  
Agree

Agree

????

Disagree

**Strongly  
Disagree**