

The International Year of Planet Earth: Helping to Build Canadians' Understanding of Earth Sciences and Earth Scientists

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Summary

The International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE) 2008-2009 provides an unparalleled opportunity to communicate earth science to Canadians and to celebrate the contributions made by earth science to our society. The international theme for IYPE is *Earth Sciences for Society*, which encapsulates the close relationship between human society and the planet we live on. The theme adapted for IYPE in Canada is *Where on Earth, Where in Canada* in which WHERE stands for Water, Hazards, Energy, Resources and Environment. This serves to highlight our large resource endowment from which we derive so much economic and social benefit and our excellence in research in earth sciences. A major national challenge for students in grades 6-8 will be developed on this theme in time for the 2008-09 academic year. Students will learn about the importance of earth resources for human society and have an opportunity for creative responses to a variety of challenges. A new popular book on the geology of Canada entitled *Four Billion Years and Counting: Canada's Geological Heritage* will be published in both official languages. Lavishly illustrated, the book will tell the story of the geological development of Canada and relate it to the many societal issues that geology embraces. Geo-Time Trails will be constructed in different parts of Canada, each trail 4.5 km long, representing 4.5 billion years of Earth history and equipped with signs explaining the geological history of the area and key planetary events. A major legacy of IYPE will be an EarthSciencesCanada web site. A key segment of the web site will be on earth science careers; this will be the place for young people to go for information on careers. Fact sheets and posters and illustrations from the book developed for IYPE will be featured at the site. In addition, the WHERE Challenge will be conducted using the site, thus ensuring an initial burst of traffic. A partnership with National Parks will see development of GeoVistas: site specific information sheets that will provide new insights into the earth science behind the beautiful vistas in some of Canada's parks. Many other celebrations of the year will be held regionally across Canada and we encourage everyone to watch for local events, lectures, television features and articles in newspapers over 2008-09. We

also encourage the community to dedicate events held in 2008 and 2009 to IYPE. We greatly appreciate the enthusiasm of Canada's resource-based corporations in the development and execution of projects. Once completed, IYPE projects will provide a wide array of opportunities for Canadians of all ages to understand how Canada derives so much of its wealth from earth resources, how earth scientists work to make our lives more comfortable and safe and how earth processes may affect their lives.