

Triad of Ecological Ruin

The Royal Bank of Canada, the Nature Conservancy, and the Multicultural Industry

BY TIM MURRAY

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To read the Royal Bank (RBC)'s website, one might confuse this commercial Goliath with the Sierra Club or Friends of the Earth. A bank that in 2006 had a net income of \$4.6 billion presents itself as the Jolly Green Giant of corporate Canada. Its "Environmental Blueprint" is 12 pages in length and talks of RBC's commitment to climate change, biodiversity, forests, indigenous peoples, and our water supply." And it boasts that it has been named one of the world's top 100 sustainable companies, the first Canadian bank listed on the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, and is Canada's most respected corporation for the fourth year in a row.

President and CEO Gordon M. Nixon stated that RBC's corporate responsibility can be seen in, among other things (how we) "support environmental sustainability". One problem. Mr. Nixon is the same man who spoke in favor of an RBC report in October of 2005 to raise immigration levels from 260 to 400,000 immigrants annually. The environmental cost of our *current* level of a quarter million immigrants a year, not to mention the levels Mr. Nixon advocates, is manifest.

Urban growth has devoured up to one-fifth of the country's Class 1 farmland, threatened perhaps more than two-thirds of its endangered species, and paved over wetlands. What propels this urban growth was suggested by a \$3 million federally commissioned report submitted in 1997 by UBC's Dr. Michael Healey entitled "Prospects for Sustainability." It called for an immigration moratorium and Population Plan to rescue the ecosystems of the Fraser Valley and similar regions across Canada from immigrant-driven growth. He pointed out the federal Department of Immigration and federal Department of the Environment were working at cross-purposes. Today it is guesstimated that perhaps 70 percent of all housing units built in the sprawling extensions of Canada's major cities are occu-

pled by immigrants, but in Greater Vancouver that figure is more like 85 percent. Inter-provincial migration cannot be the convenient scapegoat for sprawl that immigrationists contend it is if the facts are faced. Its 1.08 percent annual population growth, the highest of all G8 countries, clearly has Canada's biodiversity up against the ropes, while Kyoto targets simply cannot be met. Population growth and rising greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions go hand in hand.

The absurd hypocrisy of RBC's stated "environmental objective" can be found in the proclamation that it is "committed to continuing to reduce our environmental footprint," while lobbying to have the government import 400,000 additional "footprints" each year through Pearson and Vancouver International airports. In its "Environmental Blueprint" it states that it will "not engage in new financing activities with corporations operating unsustainably in tropical rainforests or High Conservation Forests (etc.)," and speaks of comprehensive environmental risk management policies. However, it doesn't say anything of deforestation in London, Ontario or any other of Canada's growing centres to build the new housing developments the bank finances. Apparently clearcuts are fair ball in Canada because they are not a cause celebre or in the media spotlight, but whether it is in the jungles of Borneo or a forest grove in the GTA, carbon sequestration is equally important to the planet. Nor does RBC invoke their vaunted "environmental due diligence" in stopping the sprawling subdivisions they underwrite from covering farmland.

They talk only of their determination to "direct a significant portion of our philanthropic efforts to environmental causes." The Nature Conservancy of Canada is a perfect example of the Royal Bank's "philanthropy." By steering money to the Nature Conservancy (NC) for each client who switches to electronic bank statements, NC provides RBC with ecological dispensation, the PR brownie points—or greenie points—it needs to mask its *raison d'être*. That is, of course, providing loans to developers and home buyers so that they can keep on building the sprawling subdivisions that are exterminating the wildlife that the Nature Conservancy supposedly cares about. It is a symbiotic relationship. The Nature Conservancy gets a big-time corporate bag man to collect donations, and RBC buys credibility as an institution that cares about the environment.

The Royal Bank would like to be seen as it sees itself,

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as the Dr. Jekyll of corporate environmental responsibility, but its position statements are so much green window dressing, an archive of deception, for at night this “green” corporate citizen becomes a Mr. Hyde who wreaks havoc on biodiversity and the atmosphere by underwriting and pushing for rapid, unchecked economic and population growth.

The benefits of runaway population growth to the major lending institutions are self-evident. More people, more demand. Demand for car loans, credit lines, and mortgages. Recently a credible argument was made that the Royal Bank was primarily interested in expanding its client base. (Canadian Immigration Reform, 1/2/08) “It’s about importing potential RBC clients...Canada’s financial institutions realize that future client growth, thus profits, resides in immigration. No CEO wants to be in charge when share prices decline or remain stagnant.”

on Royal Bank Scholarships for New Canadians there is only a Chinese face presented to the reader, while on the Application checklist page, of the six young people pictured, three are “people of colour.” Applicants are asked to write an essay on how “new immigrants have contributed to this country...” No negative impacts are entertained.

The underlying assumption of the literature is that due to its aging population, Canada will soon depend on immigration to grow its labour force and will have to compete for talented immigrants in the global marketplace. Unfortunately, few are talented, as mass immigration is providing us with a superfluous population that generates GHG, crowds out wildlife habitat, and, according to a Statscan report of May 2006, depresses wages and displaces jobs, including those of recent immigrants. And the so-called “skills shortage” is really, in the words of one “Pax Canadiana,” “a shortage in counter help at fast food restaurants,”



What is critical to the understanding of RBC’s immigration politics is that the origin or complexion of immigrants is as important as their number. Canada must, CEO Nixon contends, “unleash the power of diversity if it wants to improve productivity and increase its standard of living.” (The notion that one must have a diverse and heterogeneous society to achieve high productivity should come as news to the Japanese and Chinese.)

Presently 80 percent of Canada’s visible minorities are immigrants and almost 75 percent of them are visible minorities, who constitute 17 percent of the population. RBC wants to tap into this talent pool, hire and promote it and capture its business. It offers scholarships only to those born outside Canada. Most telling is that on the home page

with Canadian engineering grads working them.

One must also question the nature of the “diversity” that RBC champions. Just as it has co-opted the language of environmentalism with its liberal use of words like “sustainable,” “footprint,” and “green,” the jargon of multiculturalism has been insinuated into corporate discourse. In a company committed to “building and maintaining an inclusive and respectful workplace,” it is natural that every office needs a “Multicultural Calendar” like the one advertised in one of its links. In the month of January alone, 11 dates are set aside for *equal* commemoration, from Guru Gobind Singh’s birthday on the 5th to “Pongal” on the 14th to the First of Muharramon on the 20th. But this kind of diversity is decorative. It is the fig leaf concealing

a more calculating plan. RBC's diversity is much more focused than the United Nations. The kind of multiculturalism they have in mind is more like that of Richmond, B.C.—a monoculture.

RBC, you see, is in pursuit of a more narrow, lucrative demographic—the South Asian population. Now 3 percent of the country, South Asians, as the fastest growing minority in Canada, will double that percentage within the decade. By 2017, they will reach two million, equivalent to the number of Chinese-Canadians. The prospect of four million Canadians of South Asian and Chinese origin, augmented perhaps by even higher immigration levels, has RBC salivating. Clients of these cultural backgrounds save more, and take out more and bigger more mortgages than other groups. Bank branches located in Asian enclaves flourish. Simply put, Chinese and South Asians are a boon for the banking business. (cf. *insideToronto.com* Jan.17/08) It is not likely, then, that the Royal Bank will be calling for a repeal of the White Paper of 1966 and a return to traditional immigration patterns. In a sense, RBC's immigration agenda is the inverse of the White Australia policy, but under a politically correct banner: "The Nearly All Asian Canadian Mass Immigration Policy," better expressed in code language: "Diversity."

From this unflattering portrait a question emerges: What is the genesis of growth in Canada? It is not initiated by Ottawa. It is orchestrated by the big banks like RBC and big businesses who work with and pressure government to deliver population policy that will create the profits they want. A look at the political contributions made by the six biggest banks from 1982 to 2003 reveals just what they want from

government. RBC really doesn't care a rat's backend for Official Multiculturalism. That's a smokescreen. Otherwise they wouldn't have contributed all that dough to the Reform Party and its successor, the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance. No, their bottom line is population growth (read economic stimulus) and low corporate taxes. A tax policy customized for Chartered Banks and not for Food Banks. And the Liberal and Conservative Parties they've paid off so generously have delivered with the Grafkin-Angus Report that recommends just that. Meanwhile, food banks in Ontario have grown 14.3 percent since 2001.

RBC and its corporate competitors are not beneficent enterprises. Chip off the green paint and the statements about corporate social responsibility and it's still an organization that is about making profits for its shareholders and pursuing the obsolete and lethal paradigm of economic growth. But RBC does not work alone. It lobbies Ottawa for mass immigration at absurd levels and a growth rate, which will accelerate the destruction of our environment, then cloaks its malevolence by green pronouncements, trivial green corporate practices, and an unseemly arrangement with a high profile conservation group who lends the bank legitimacy in return for hush money. This group accepts the bank's money in return for saying nothing about the fact that immigration is eclipsing the wildlife it claims to be the guardian of.

The collusion of big banks, environmental groups, and the government's Multicultural Industry is a partnership in crime. RBC, Nature Conservancy, Multicultural-Immigration.

A Triad of Ecological Ruin. ■