



*Peter Hale, Kelly McBride, Steve Lee, Edward Hale*

### 3. The Environment

Many participants insisted that environment and ecological concerns must remain paramount. Economic development should proceed with a much longer view to ecological issues. Promoting sustainable development was identified as imperative to human security. A general view surfaced that supporting local civil society initiatives (as opposed to mega projects) often produce a more cost-effective result for sustainable development. Canada should promote and accelerate the implementation of commitments for sustainable development made at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

### 4. Education

Access to education, including informal education, was considered by many as crucial to human security and economic development. Therefore, many participants suggested that Canada should support education responsive to the needs of the marginalised and put emphasis on providing students with skills to meet basic human needs. Moreover, education should aim at generating income for the poor, diminishing thus the income distribution gap in the region. It was suggested that educating women could help them

assume a greater leadership role and contribute to improving gender equality. Initiatives to enhance greater mobility for students and to improve higher education were also encouraged. Corporate business influence over education was frequently criticized and calls to minimize it made. The necessity to understand the local cultural and socioeconomic context in order to develop good programs was stressed time and time again.

#### **Focus on Education: Education and the Free Trade Area of the Americas**

On July 13, 1999, the Canadian Initiates for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA) brought together youth, educators, government and other organizations to raise awareness about the Inter-American Program of Education and the Americas Summit Process in general. The consultation also provided an opportunity for Canadian organizations involved in education to debate the key documents developed for the Hemispheric IDEA Conference (September 29-October 3, 2000, Quito, Ecuador). In the course of the day-long meeting participants discussed youth perspectives, corporate influence in schools, globalization and youth organizing, and the IDEA process.