

Issue Three: *Globalization—Positive or Negative?*

What is globalization? Does the term mean that all countries of the world are becoming the same? Does it mean the integration of economic, political, and cultural systems around the world? Does globalization mean that we will be able to find the same stores and restaurants in every part of the world? Does it mean that individual countries will not be able to make business and trade decisions on their own but will have to consult other countries? If these are the realities of globalization, what kinds of impacts will it have on the way we live? Indeed, the concept of globalization raises many questions and controversial issues.

Some argue that globalization is a *positive* development that will give rise to new industries and more jobs in developing countries. Others say globalization is *negative* in that it will force poorer countries of the world to do whatever the big developed countries pressure them to do. Another viewpoint is that developed countries, including Canada, are the ones who may lose out because they are involved in **outsourcing** many of the manufacturing jobs that used to be done by their own citizens. Outsourcing refers to obtaining goods by contract from outside sources. This is why you may find that many of your clothes have labels indicating they were made in developing countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, China, or the Philippines,

where they can be produced at lower costs. Critics of outsourcing feel that no one wins with this practice. Workers in Canada and other developed countries may lose their jobs, while those doing the work in poorer countries get paid much less while working in poor conditions. What can be done about these realities?

Global trade gives Canadians access to many products, such as fruits, that cannot be produced here. Global trade means that produce such as bananas, mangoes, oranges, and kiwi fruit are relatively inexpensive and available year-round in our grocery stores. This implies that farmers in developing countries have an opportunity to produce and sell more goods and make a better living. Some people in developing countries, however, feel that the wealthier countries purchasing the products are the ones who make all the production and trade rules, which they must abide by, thus reducing their chance at fair competition in the world marketplace. In addition, this forces developing countries to produce export foods wanted by the wealthier developed countries instead of producing local foods to feed their own populations. The development of orchards and plantations by multinational companies in the poorer countries of the world often means that there is reduced land available to produce local food supplies. What can be done about these issues? Will more emphasis on **fair trade** make any difference?





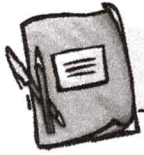
Factors related to globalization can also cause workers to migrate from their homelands in poorer countries to other more developed countries to find work. These migrant labourers may leave their families and live temporarily in another country, thus disrupting the family and social fabric of their home communities. Most of their earnings may be sent home, reducing the benefits their employment could have in the country where they are employed. Often, foreign workers immigrate to another country and, because they live in their own neighbourhoods, continue to follow their religions and customs, and even follow their own laws: they are sometimes accused of not being willing to adapt to and accept the ways of their new country. Often, newcomers complain that they face racism and discrimination, are poorly treated, and cannot live the way they would like to live in the more developed countries to which they have immigrated. This raises questions as to the role of **human rights**, as a consequence of globalization. Should we consider the rights of workers and the responsibilities of new immigrants in our shopping practices? Does it matter?

Many developing countries need new industries and the jobs these industries would bring if they are to improve their economies through globalization; however, people in developing countries do not want to lose their own culture and identity in the process. Many fear that increased globalization may lead to the loss of control over economic and political decisions and may also threaten their traditions, languages, and cultures. With the predominance

of American pop culture, as well as political and economic influence around the world, many developing countries see globalization as a form of **Americanization** that is undermining the fabric of their traditional societies. In addition, many developing countries do not have stringent rules about environmental protection. Consequently, industries that establish themselves in developed countries can avoid the use of expensive pollution control equipment, resulting in serious air, water, and soil pollution that would not be acceptable in Canada and other developed countries. Should we be concerned about the social and environmental impacts of globalization? Do pollution and destruction of the environment in distant lands affect us here in Canada?

There are many arguments for and against globalization. As citizens in a developed country, do we need to be aware of the impact our purchases of food, clothing, and other items may have on people and the environment in developing countries? Should we be asking ourselves why many items produced in developing countries are so much less expensive than goods produced in Canada? Are we familiar with the living and working conditions of the workers in poorer countries that produced these items? Do we know how much they get paid for their labour? Are we familiar with their lack of protection and benefits in the workplace? Are we aware of the environmental impact of production in developing countries? Should we support those companies and stores that promote fair trade even if it may mean slightly higher prices? What is our responsibility? What are the potential impacts of our choices? What does "the high cost of low prices" really mean?





## Learning Activity 4.4

### Globalization—Positive or Negative?



1. Complete the following organizer comparing different features, terms, or issues of globalization with an assessment of the pros and cons.

| Feature, Term, or Issue | Overview and/or Definition | Pros | Cons |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|------|------|
| Globalization           |                            |      |      |
| Outsourcing             |                            |      |      |
| Fair Trade              |                            |      |      |
| Human Rights            |                            |      |      |
| Migrant Labourers       |                            |      |      |
| Americanization         |                            |      |      |

### Learning Activity 4.4: Globalization—Positive or Negative? (continued)

2. Explain in your own words what is meant by the expression “the high cost of low prices.”