

Ten Surprises of the 21st Century

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1. **A Century of Disruptions:** The magnitude and frequency of the disruptions which will occur throughout the century will surprise us and catch us unprepared.
 - The use of nuclear weapons in a regional war.
 - The further disintegration of the social fabric of every society.
 - The use of biological weapons by terrorists.
 - The havoc of a 5' rise in sea levels, due to melting polar ice.
 - The worldwide shortage of capital caused by one disruption after another.
 - Items 2-9 below.
2. **Life Beyond Earth:** The confirmation of life beyond our Earth will excite and confound life on the Earth. This will add greatly to surprise #1.
3. **The 150 Year Life:** Due to the ability to replace diseased cells and organs by ones we have grown in a lab, the length of life will gradually expand to 150 years by 2100. The questions of when to end one's life, how to make psychological and organizational room for younger generations, how to cope with double and triple "sandwich generations", the obligations of one generation to another will become pressing and disturbing issues.
4. **Bio-computers:** Bio-computers will perform many roles better and cheaper than "the real thing", from fixing plumbing, to cleaning out our arteries, to filing tax returns. As a result, there will be a massive shift in what society thinks is a "good" job-away from doctor, lawyer, accountant, plumber to philosopher, entertainer, and who knows what else.
5. **The Dominion of Western Canada:** Quebec will stay. However, frustrated by the inability of the Governments of Canada, Quebec and Ontario to cope with the new global realities, the four Western provinces and the two Western territories will create a new country-the Dominion of Western Canada.
6. **A Post-Westphalian World:** At every level, from individuals to the whole globe, sovereignty-self-contained independence-is eroded. Sovereign levels of governments (local, provincial, federal, global) are replaced by a global network of nested and interpenetrating governing systems. No person or government has the right to just do what they want, without considering the affects of such behaviour on the whole planet.
7. **Second Order Governments:** The long-held view that it is "the job of governments to govern-to decide for us" will fade away. Canada will be the first country to elect a party which is committed to the view that the role of governments is the second order work of designing and facilitating systems and processes which encourage and enable persons, families, communities, corporations and whole societies to become self-governing.

8. **Post-Industrial Societies and Economies:** Public wakes will be held to mark the end of the Industrial Age. We will grieve it and let go of the fragmentation of living which comes from making production and consumption the highest meaning in life. The Post-Industrial Society will revolve around the growth and maturation of persons. The overriding commitment will be that each person becomes fit to live with and participates in co-creating a world fit to live in. Every business, school, church and government will be judged by their capacity to contribute to this higher purpose. Each will struggle to learn to new roles as post-industrial communities. The business of business will no longer be business.
9. **The Rediscovery of Home and Community:** We will no longer have to leave home and community to go to work to create wealth, go to school to learn, go to the mall to acquire goods, go to the hospital to heal, and go outside to play. For the first time in three hundred years all these central human functions will be done from home. This will greatly facilitate new commitments to families, communities and re-knitting the social fabric.
10. **The End of Universities:** The demand for higher learning will force governments to end the monopoly held on higher learning by universities and colleges. Higher learning will be treated as any other commodity or service—as long as the standards are met, any group can offer any educational experiences. Costs will come down and choice will proliferate.
11. **Bio-Robots:** There will be intelligent personal robots; not mechanical devices with artificial intelligence, but bio-robots, bred and modified from existing beasts to serve as companions. There will be some form of bio-control to keep them loyal. This will raise the deep-seated fear of “bio-beasts,” e.g. Frankenstein.
12. **A 7/24 World:** Virtually all activities will be continuous—seven days a week, 24 hours a day. It will be possible to make a contribution to work going on in any place in the globe, from any place on the globe, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day.
13. **The Capacity of Human Persons for Mature Behaviours:** Given all that the 21st Century will bring, we will be surprised by the capacity of human persons and human organizations to grow into new forms of truly adult maturity which are required to meet these conditions. All in all, the century will be one of deepening hope as it becomes clear that we can learn our way into fundamentally new ways of living together.
14. **The Personal Character of a Knowledge Society:** In order to be used, information must be digested into knowing, believing and behaving. This process is inherently personal and communal. Reliable knowledge is always a product of a community of persons. This inherently personal nature of knowledge-based societies will be a pleasant surprise to those who chafe under the fragmented and mechanistic sensibility of Industrial societies.

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