

# NETWORKnews

SHARING IDEAS TO HELP IMPROVE THE WELL-BEING OF CANADIANS

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## A Vast Terrain of Opinions

tri•an•gu•la•tion *n* (1818): a trigonometric operation for finding a position or location by means of bearings from two fixed points a known distance apart

"We want to get to a certain point with our research," explains Joe Michalski, formerly a research associate with the Family Network. "To get there, we must rely on multiple reference points." That "certain point," according to Michalski, is a nuanced, timely and detailed picture of what Canadians are really thinking about policies in support of children. To get there, Michalski has employed the process of triangulation, a research methodology that brings together a combination of public opinion polling and choice deliberation techniques, to produce "Values and Preferences for the 'Best Policy Mix' for Canadian Children" for the Canadian Policy Research Networks.

The discussion paper is unique in the breadth and variety of material upon which it draws, making it a key element of the Best Policy Mix for Canada's Children project, which aims to lay the foundation for a coherent strategy for Canadian children and their families. The research, based on data gathered from a variety of focus groups and roundtables conducted by the Canadian Policy Research

Networks and information from public opinion polls, indicates that there is agreement among Canadians on the need for child-care supports, but no strong consensus on what forms those supports should take.

According to a 1998 Environics poll, 76 percent of Canadians agree with the statement: "A child-care system should be available for all families, with costs shared by government and the families themselves."

Participants in focus groups called for a flexible definition of the term "child-care system," expanding the debate beyond a simple choice of day care versus home care. They called for a full range of options that would answer parents' needs at any given time in their child's development. Focus groups and roundtables, specifically convened to discuss possible policy mixes, took the issue further, actually delving into the specifics. The resolutions at which individuals and groups arrived often required some level of compromise. The most common best mix focussed on helping parents achieve secure and continuing employment through a combination of enhanced



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parental leaves and a more comprehensive and accessible system of child care.

The collection of such a wide range of data "allowed us to go beyond black and white issues to determine what people are really thinking," states Michalski. The paper brings together the visceral and timely reactions captured by polling with the more measured and deeper considerations of prolonged discussion. "The variety of data allows us to identify areas of agreement and interpret the fault lines that appeared in the results," he explains.

**Research indicates that there is agreement among Canadians on the need for child-care supports, but no strong consensus on what forms those supports should take.**

"Canadians want policy supports to help families have choices available to them that correspond with the values and preferences of those families," says Michalski. "For example, there has always been a split over whether the government should make payments directly to parents," he says, referring to one apparent contradiction in poll results that show 50 percent of Canadians favouring payments to parents, but three-quarters supporting the notion of a child-care system for all families. "People are mistrustful of money going directly into homes.

## BEST POLICY MIX FOR CANADA'S CHILDREN



### Best Mix Update

**W**hat's best for our children and what can we do to achieve it? As the Family Network's Best Policy Mix for Canadian Children project draws to a close, the Canadian Policy Research Networks is able to help set the foundation for the development of an overarching societal strategy for children and their families.

A roundtable on the Best Mix project, held in late June, served as a valuable sounding board for project manager, Sharon Stroick. She is authoring a final report on the project, as well as a *REFLEXION* that distills the key findings and policy recommendations. Both will be released in the Fall (see "Roundtable on the Best Policy Mix for Canadian Children," page 3).

Four papers are already available with three more in press. The issues raised in "Building Better Outcomes for Canada's Children," by Jennifer Tipper and Denise Avar, are discussed in "Positive Thinking — Healthy Children, Healthy Country" (see page 8). "Values and Preferences for the 'Best Policy Mix' for Canadian

Children" by Joseph Michalski was released this summer and is the subject of "A Vast Terrain of Opinions" (see page 1).

International comparisons are made in two studies published in early 1999: *Comparative Family Policy: Eight Countries' Stories* by Kathy O'Hara and *An International Comparison of Policies and Outcomes for Young Children* by Shelley Phipps (see "Outcomes for Children: The Numbers," page 4).

*Comparative Family Policy: Six Provincial Stories*, co-authored by Jane Jenson and Sherry Thompson, will be released in the Fall. This study maps the changes in provincial policy and delivery of services. Other upcoming releases include Shelly Phipps' discussion paper "Outcomes for Young Children in Canada: Are There Provincial Differences?" and "Governance and Accountability for Child and Family Policy" by Sherry Thompson. Thompson's report includes findings from a roundtable of 26 Canadian experts from the policy, academic and advocacy communities held in Ottawa in May 1999.

If that's the only option under discussion, you find opinion becomes polarized. There will always be people who interpret this as a type of welfare. They question how much of the money will find its way to the children. But when the question is whether a child-care system *of some sort* should be available for all families, a consensus emerges." The research "triangu-

lates" these diverse sources of public input — analyzing the differences and similarities of results from the two types of information gathering — to map out a vast terrain of opinions and preferences.

**Readings:** "Values and Preferences for the 'Best Mix Policy' for Canadian Children," by Joseph H. Michalski, Discussion Paper No. F|05, May 1999.



# Roundtable on the Best Policy Mix for Children

"We were given some very clear guidance about how to organize and frame the policy recommendations we're making in the final report for the Best Policy Mix for Canada's Children project," says Sharon Stroick of the roundtable held in Ottawa on June 28. Stroick, the Best Mix project manager, discussed a draft of the study with a group of 27 participants, including academics, community representatives and government policy advisers.

The roundtable group met in small group settings for in-depth discussions about how to make policy that holistically embraces topics ranging from effective parenting, income distribution, the role of neighbourhoods in children's lives, and improving outcomes for Canada's children.

The Canadian Policy Research Networks was congratulated for research that "pushes the envelope" in several key ways, including its

comprehensive approach to family policy and the identification of contradictions and voids in public policies for children.



Lynn McIntyre



Martha Friendly

Participants also stressed the need to get the messages contained in the final report to employers. "Employers need to assume greater responsibility for empowering parents to help them balance work and family life so they can both nurture and support their children, helping

them develop to their fullest," explains Stroick.

Participants asked that the final report include an important reminder to policymakers — the many policies in place for the benefit of children should be coherent

and should not work at cross purposes. Stroick gives the example of a recent policy shift in Ontario encouraging parents to join the labour force that encourages them to use informal child care arrangements rather than regulated family day care or centres. This, she argues, conflicts with the new emphasis on the importance of the educational component of care and development for children in the early years.



Nathan Gilbert and Jane Jenson

Nathan Gilbert of the Laidlaw Foundation discusses Best Mix issues with Jane Jenson, Director of the Family Network. Lynn McIntyre, Dean, Faculty of Health Professions at Dalhousie University and Martha Friendly, Co-ordinator of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit at the University of Toronto were also among the 27 roundtable participants.

Many of the participants thanked the Canadian Policy Research Networks for producing a timely and significant body of research that they will use as a vital resource in their various positions across the country.



# Outcomes for Children: The Numbers

**An International Comparison of Policies and Outcomes for Young Children** is the first study to explore the effects of government policy on children's welfare. Authored by Shelley Phipps, the study shows an association between public values, policy and child outcomes in five countries — Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway and the Netherlands.

The study reveals a strong, universal social safety net leads to the greatest reduction in child poverty

and better outcomes for children. The countries studied cover a spectrum of policy approaches. The North American approach to social policy is to target assistance mainly to the poor. European strategies use a more universal approach. More specifically, the United States mainly targets assistance to the very poor whereas Norway and the Netherlands have used a more universal approach. Canada and the United Kingdom take mixed approaches to social policy. The study concludes that countries that

target their social programs to the poor have the worst record of alleviating poverty and countries pursuing a universal strategy have "vastly superior track records."

The five countries differ significantly in terms of geography and culture. It may not always be possible to straightforwardly transfer a particular policy mix from one country to another, given differences in history, culture and circumstances. Results should be interpreted with such differences in mind.

## Effects of Taxes and Social Transfers on Poor Children

Income for households with children (aged 0 to 11)	Percentage of poor children				
	Canada	United States	United Kingdom	Norway	Netherlands

### All households with children

Before taxes, <i>without</i> social transfers	26.3	32.7	30.5	16.3	12.6
Before taxes, <i>with</i> social transfers	15.4	26.9	17.7	4.7	3.6
After taxes	16.9	29.8	23.0	6.3	7.1

### Lone-mother households with children

Before taxes, <i>without</i> social transfers	66.8	68.4	83.5	61.1	81.7
Before taxes, <i>with</i> social transfers	41.6	57.9	39.0	15.4	17.0
After taxes	42.5	60.7	46.0	14.8	33.5

Source: Adapted from *An International Comparison of Policies and Outcomes for Young Children*.

Note: This table shows these differences for poor children (as a percent of all children aged 0 to 11, where *poor* means "family equivalent income" is less than 50 percent of "country equivalent income" according to the population income distribution).

Taxes and social transfers have an impact on poverty rates. In all five countries, if families were given back their taxes, the number of *poor* children would fall, but only slightly. In sharp contrast, if social transfers were stopped, poverty rates would increase dramatically, although less so in the United

States since it provides relatively little by way of social transfer support.

Looking at lone-mother families, the levels of poor children in Norway, the United States and Canada are roughly the same based on before-tax income *without* social transfers. But taking social transfers into account, the poverty levels

drop dramatically in Norway, less so in the United States and Canada.

Two conclusions can be drawn from these statistics:

- receiving social transfers matters a great deal in the welfare of children, particularly those in single-parent households; and
- paying less taxes does not generally make for fewer poor children.

## Happiness, Health and Emotional Well-being of Children

Key: ★ = Relative levels of outcome achievement. The more ★'s, the better the outcome.

Child outcomes	Canada	United States	United Kingdom	Norway	Netherlands
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### General happiness (subjective reports)

% of Children who are "not unhappy"	★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★	-
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### Health (objective reports)

Lowest infant mortality rates	★★	★	★★	★★★★	★★★★
Fewest low birth-weight babies	★★★	★	★★	★★★★	-
"Normal" height at age 11	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
"Normal" weight at age 11	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
% children aged 0-11 with asthma	★	-	★	★★★	-
% accidents/injuries in kids aged 0-11	★	★	-	★★★	-

### Emotional well-being (subjective reports)

% kids who are cruel or who bully	★★★	★	★★★	-	-
% kids who are disobedient at school	★★★	★★★★	★	-	-
% kids who worry	★	★★★★	★	-	-
% kids who cry a lot	★	★★★★	-	-	-
% kids who are high-strung/tense	★★	★★	-	-	-
% kids who are anxious or frightened	★★	★★★★	★	★★★★	-

Source: Adapted from *An International Comparison of Policies and Outcomes for Young Children*.

Note: Data are not available for all countries in all categories.

Examining outcomes for children from Canada and the United States, Canadian policies fare well in comparison to those of the United States, where assistance is targeted strictly to the poorest of the poor and there is no universal health care system. Outcomes for children in Canada seem consider-

ably less positive when compared to Norway, where universal cash transfers are combined with programs that make it easier for parents to join the work force. Norwegian policies are aimed at providing some support for all children. The result is that outcomes for Norwegian children are consistently as good as

— and in most cases better than — those in other countries.

**Readings:** *An International Comparison of Policies and Outcomes for Young Children*, by Shelley Phipps, CPRN Study No. F|05, 1999.

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### What factors should shape the next round of tax cuts?

While everyone likes a tax cut, governments are pulled in three directions. They have to:

- make sure that they can fund tax cuts without jeopardizing the public services that citizens value;
- ensure they have the future capacity to balance the books when a recession hits; and
- choose tax cuts that improve the health of the economy.

Tax cuts can influence growth in two ways. The first is by giving money to consumers who will spend more in the near term. The second is by enhancing incentives to work, invest and save over the medium term.

Think of the excessive tax rates in Canada as a hangover from the battle against deficits and debt. We have reached the dawn of a new era of tax cuts. But the tax reform

agenda is both wide and deep. As the public debt declines and the size of the interest bill diminishes over the next few years, we are all in the queue for tax cuts.

After the long siege of deficits and debt here in Canada, a strong case can be made for a wide range of tax reductions affecting low, middle, and high income taxpayers. Low income families face extremely high marginal effective tax rates when their income passes through key thresholds; middle income families hit the highest tax brackets at \$60,000 — just above the average family income in Canada; and high income earners are hit by surtaxes and high rates of tax on capital gains and dividends. Also, the Jack Mintz task force, The Technical Committee on Business Taxation, makes a case for reform of business taxes.

Difficult choices have to be made: choices that balance the need for social and economic infrastructure against the need to pay down the

debt against the desire for more after-tax incomes in the pockets of Canadians: and choices that balance the legitimate claims for tax relief from low, middle and high income groups as well as the corporate sector. The final decisions will determine how healthy the economy will be 10 years from now.

Most of the economists and business leaders in this country argued long and hard for a frontal assault on deficits and debt. That battle is not over yet. Any government that declares victory too soon risks losing the long-term gains from winning the prize — a country with its economic and social house in order is a country well placed to sustain economic growth and the quality of life in the 21st century.

Keep your eye on the ball.

*Judith Maxwell*

President  
Canadian Policy Research Networks

Brain drain, challenges of reinvestment, United States versus Canadian productivity are topics that kept commentators busy these past months. Throughout the summer, Judith Maxwell has contributed to the public debate with the following commentaries :

■ "Keep your eye on the ball" (see page 16 and above) was published under the title "Check priorities before we cut taxes" in **The National Post** and

■ under the title "Il ne faut pas brûler les étapes" in **Le Devoir**.

■ "A new cycle of investment begins" was published in the June issue of **Canada Watch**, a publication from York University.

■ "Averages can lie" appeared in **The Globe and Mail** and in **La Presse** under the title "Surplus budgétaires: faut-il imiter le modèle américain?" This last commentary, also sent on the

■ weekly electronic newsletter e-network, generated a lot of e-mail and was received as "an important contribution to the debate" by e-network subscribers.

To download commentaries: <http://www.cprn.org> in the President's page.

To subscribe to the electronic newsletter, send a message to [join-e-network@cprn.org](mailto:join-e-network@cprn.org)

## ON THE HILL



The spring of 1999 was a very active time for the Canadian Policy Research Networks "on the hill."

On May 25, **Judith Maxwell** spoke about **Models for Family Policies** to the **Sub-Committee on Tax Fairness for Families**. She outlined several models for family policy based on international comparisons. Currently, Canada's family policy is "in flux" with the result that this country falls short in a number of key areas. Maxwell highlighted the limited access to quality child care, the gaps created by the strong focus on targeted policies, and the limited regulatory pressures on employers.

**Kathryn McMullen** appeared before the **House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance** on April 28. She reported on **Business and Workplace**

**Strategies and the Productivity Slowdown** building on the groundbreaking knowledge summarized in **Training for the New Economy — A Synthesis Report** by **Gordon Betcherman, Kathryn McMullen** and **Katie Davidman**. She stated that organizations have been slow to adapt to organizational change and new ways of managing people with the result that expected productivity gains from technological change have not yet been realized. "High-performing" organizations adopt a set of behaviours that include a willingness to innovate, a positive attitude to change, a commitment to employees and training, and a strategic development of human resources, she concluded.

The **Final Report on Social Cohesion**, prepared with research support by Canadian Policy Research

Networks research associate **Denis Saint-Martin**, was published by the **Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology** in June 1999. (Saint-Martin is also an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Concordia University.) Using the framework developed by **Jane Jenson** in the Mapping Social Cohesion project, senators initiated a public debate on the fault lines that are weakening Canada's social fabric. In addition, the Committee cites **Training for the New Economy**, which shows that, in general, employers provide training for their highly skilled and best-educated employees, but not for those with low skill. The Committee argued that governments must respond to this market failure. **Judith Maxwell** appeared before this Committee on October 20, 1998.

## IN THE MEDIA



Government downsizing, child care, shiftwork, tax rates, and family resiliency. These were just some of the issues that kept the Canadian Policy Research Networks in the news over the past few months.

"The middle class 'cry for help' over day care." This **Ottawa Citizen** headline greeted the release of **Values and Preferences for the "Best Policy Mix" for Canadian Children**. Judith Maxwell's comments on this report were featured in dozens of newspapers across Canada, including **The Globe and**

**Mail** and **The National Post**. On July 30, Joe Michalski, the author of the report, was interviewed on **CBC Radio's As It Happens** and television's **CBC Morning**.

On July 29, Judith Maxwell discussed employment issues on **CBC Morning**.

Joe Peters' comments on his study, **An Era of Change: Government Employment Trends in the 1980s and 1990s**, appeared in newspapers in several cities, including North Bay, Niagara Falls and Ottawa. Graham

Lowe commented on employment standards in **The Edmonton Journal** on July 15. British Columbia's **The Province** reported in May on changing employment relationships, quoting from a presentation by Graham Lowe to the B.C. Human Resources Management Association.

Jane Jenson's thoughts on pluralism in Quebec society were part of a summer series, "Penser la nation québécoise," in **Le Devoir**.



## Positive Thinking — Healthy Children, Healthy Country

### What does a healthy child look like?

This is the deceptively simple question Jennifer Tipper and Denise Avard pose in their discussion paper, "Building Better Outcomes for Canada's Children," an important component of the Best Policy Mix for Canada's Children research project.

Answering this question means defining a set of positive outcomes for children — a profound shift from the traditional focus on how our children are failing and faltering in their lives. An encouraging factor is that economists, psychologists and sociologists have remarkably similar ideas about what constitutes desirable child development.

Jane Jenson, Director of the Family Network, joins Judith Maxwell and

Jennifer Tipper, who have developed these concepts with Denise



Judith Maxwell



Jane Jenson



Jennifer Tipper

Avard over the course of the Best Mix project, in a mini-roundtable discussion of this shift and what it means for children, their parents, the business community, policy-makers and our country.

**Jenson:** Why is it important that we shift our attention from traditional deficit measures — things like infant mortality, or teen suicide, or low birth-weight — to more positive outcomes?

**Tipper:** It is a somewhat naive approach to assume that only those

children that seem to be presenting "problem behaviour," or aren't

achieving certain developmental milestones, are the *only* kids that need our support. I think the positive approach is more preventative. When we focus on negative factors, we

tend to be in a reactionary mode — trying to respond *after* problems have arisen. If we raise our expectations of all children's developmental success, then *every* kid benefits, especially those who are at the greatest risk of not achieving. Also, if we provide programming and policies to all kids and families, then it's not stigmatizing for kids and families to access the types of resources or programs they need.

**Maxwell:** This concept of achieving the potential (of all children) is really important, especially in a

### What Is Smart Risk Taking?

"You want your child to be adventurous and curious, to take some risk, but you also want your child to make good choices," begins Judith Maxwell. "When children reach adolescence, they will no longer always be under the supervision of their parents — they'll be in the schoolyard, and they'll have to know to say 'no' to drugs or cigarettes. When they become sexually active, you want them to make

healthy choices. That would be one way of describing smart risk taking."

"Employers want people who will be entrepreneurial — this also involves taking risk and making good judgements ahead of time. In the work place, those skills are valued. Knowing when to take risks — and when not to — is important."

knowledge-based society. It's one economists are very familiar with because we talk about the potential of the economy to grow. Now we're talking about the potential of children to develop in themselves because we value them and also because we know that these are the citizens of the future who will vote and become workers and parents. The more we develop their potential as children, the more we will influence their capacity as adults in important ways. If we focus on the assets — and *develop* the assets — we're going to have quite a different policy stance than if we are only interested in avoiding failures.

**Jenson:** Why would policymakers be interested in the findings in this paper?

**Maxwell:** If you look at the direction in public policy around children and families over the last 20 years, there has been a tendency for policies to become more targeted on very specific circumstances or conditions. We focus on children in poverty or who have particular handicaps or disabilities and we make policies or programs that deal with those specific circumstances. Now we are missing all kinds of children who don't *quite* qualify — either their income is one dollar over the limit, or their disability is not the one described in a program. There are lots of ways to fall between the cracks. So, there is a need now to rethink the whole approach to policy. (Families) have varying degrees of need, and the question is: "How do you design a public policy framework so that all legitimate needs are recognized and responded to — to the extent that we have resources as a society?" Many children, and perhaps most families and most children, have

some needs that they can't deal with themselves that call for some kind of public policy response. We really need a new frame, it seems to me, for all the actors in society who have an important influence on what happens to support children and families. Focussing on positive outcomes is a way, I think, of bringing a lot more people to the table.

**Jenson:** Why should all Canadians — everybody from parents, to employers, to governments — be interested in the healthy development of children?

**Maxwell:** We value children in their own right. But we also value children for what they will *be* — as citizens, workers, parents and volunteers in their communities. The business person on Bay Street may not make a connection directly between what is happening at the preschool or elementary school level, and the qualities of the people whom they wish to hire in 10 or 20 years time, but what we can see in the work that Jenni and Denise have done is a remarkable symmetry between the qualities — the markers that are identified as being important for children to achieve and what employers have defined as the capacities they wish to have when they are hiring people to work for them. The curiosity of the child, the willingness to experiment and the capacity to deal confidently with others are exactly the skills the employer is looking for in terms of teamwork and the ability to work with others, to take risks and be entrepreneurial.

**Jenson:** It struck me that by flipping the question and refocusing it

*Continued on page 11*



## What Is a Healthy Child?

"Defining a set of age specific positive outcomes for Canadian children will serve as a marker to guide us, collectively," write Jennifer Tipper and Denise Avard in "Building Better Outcomes for Canada's Children." "It has the potential to serve as a type of 'glue' binding us together in our quest to help all children achieve their developmental potential."

In their paper, Tipper and Avard identify five outcome statements intended to serve as a point of departure for further discussions on the issue of building better outcomes for children:

- Optimal physical well-being
- Learning readiness
- Secure attachments and identity
- Social engagement and competence, and
- "Smart" risk taking.

"We're not saying that every child has to achieve the same level, or the same developmental outcome as any other child, but rather healthy kids are those who are going to experience those outcomes to some extent and in some varying degree, depending on their unique circumstances. We recognize that certain children will need different resources and programming to help them achieve their own developmental potential," concludes Tipper. "We're not asking for cookie-cutter kids."



## Talking about the World of Work

"With this Issue Guide, we want to enrich our understanding of where people stand on work issues — and more importantly, *why* they think the way they do," explains Joe Michalski, a senior research associate with the Work Network.

"Adapting to the Changing World of Paid Work," the second Issue Guide for The Society We Want Public Dialogue Project was introduced this summer. The guide recognizes that Canada is experiencing major changes in both the workplace and the nature of work itself. It encourages participants in the dialogue process to discuss three viewpoints people face as they struggle to cope with the challenges of the paid work environment:

**Security** — The society we want will ensure that paid work provides economic security.

**Meaningful Work** — The society we want will provide personally meaningful paid work.

**Healthy Balance** — The society we want will help workers achieve healthy and balanced lives.

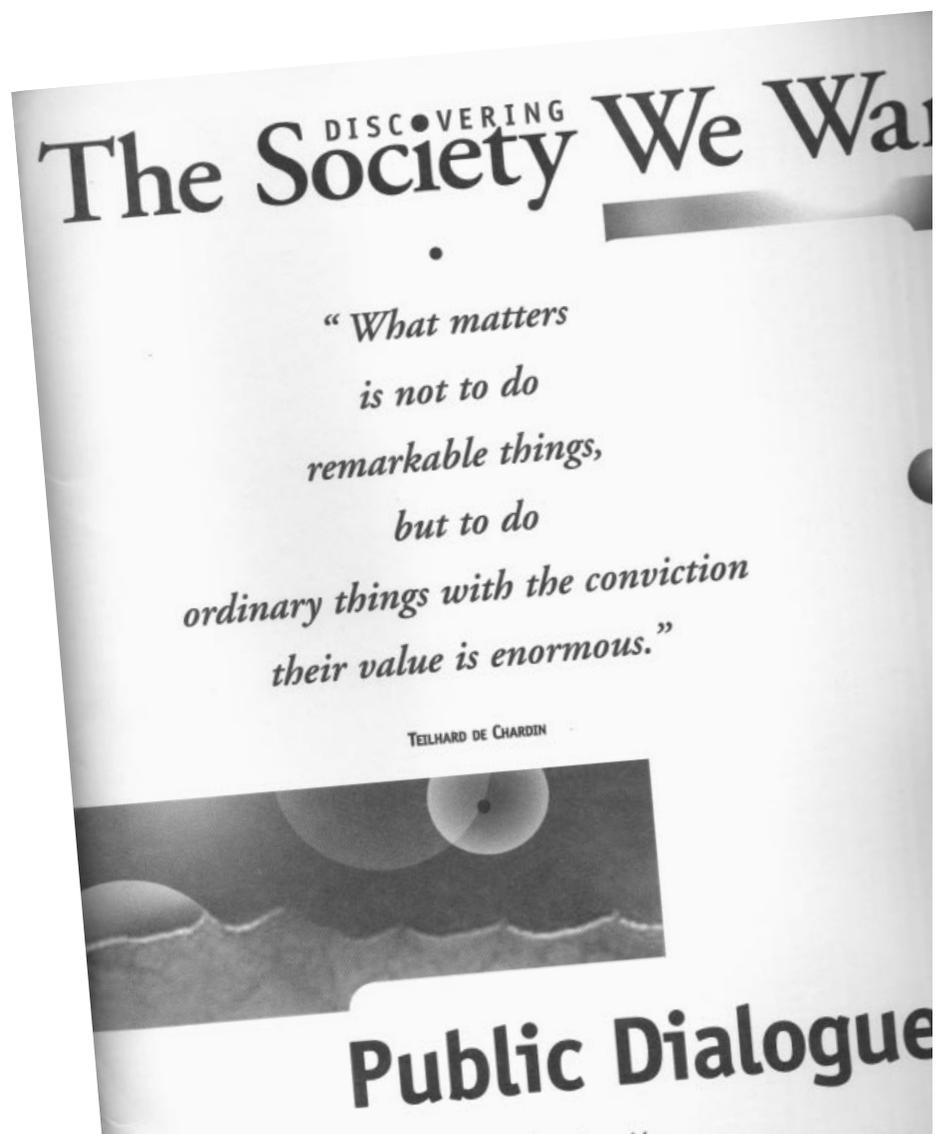
According to Michalski, the guide was carefully crafted to "frame the issues in a way that allows participants to examine — and discuss — all sides of the issues relating to work. We don't want to lead people down one path or another. Rather, we want to genuinely engage them in a full discussion of

the issues. The guide specifically requests and requires that participants engage with the materials in a deep and reflective way, revealing the contradictions and subtleties that people struggle with."

The results of this public dialogue process will be used by the Canadian Policy Research Networks to complement its large-scale survey work on the Changing Employment Relationships project. "The survey will reach managers and union representatives," Michalski explains. "The Society We

Want work guide allows the public voice to speak to many of the same issues." The goal? "We want to get this information — a deeper understanding of where the public stands on these issues — to policymakers at both the federal and provincial levels."

For more information or to order a Public Dialogue Kit, contact Rhonda Ferderber, [rferderber@cprn.org](mailto:rferderber@cprn.org) or Miriam Wyman, [mwyman@cprn.org](mailto:mwyman@cprn.org)





## Audrey Salahub: Public Dialogue Champion

"Here's the exciting part about the public dialogue experience," begins Audrey Salahub. "People come in with straight and narrow ideas. By the end of a two-hour session, their thinking has broadened dramatically. They've talked and listened to one another — and they've learned."

Salahub worked together with Anne George, The Society We Want's outreach co-ordinator in British Columbia. Since March 1999, she has helped organize 40 public dialogue groups to discuss the health care system. She also moderated some of the sessions.



Audrey Salahub

Salahub brought an excellent set of organizing skills from her position as the project co-ordinator for the British Columbia Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society.

She has worked with public dialogue groups from many corners of British Columbia. "Anne and I have organized participants from fitness clubs, wellness clubs, a regional government health board, parent advisory boards from local public schools, a group of street-walkers, and a collection of people who frequent a local soup kitchen. And I always begin each session in the same way," she explains. "I always ask all of the participants to share a personal story about them-

selves and their health — any experience they care to share. It's amazing what happens. Once people start talking about themselves, their families and their communities, the health care system becomes *their* issue."

Salahub has found that she's had a good response from people regarding their participation in the public dialogue process.

"When I made phone calls telling groups about The Society We Want and the Public Dialogue Kit, I told them that this

was a way to ensure that their voices would be heard. People in British Columbia are very concerned about their health care. It was easy for me to talk to them about something that is touching their lives personally. They *wanted* an opportunity to express what was happening to their families and communities. Some groups had major goals as to what they wanted to say and what they wanted governments to hear. Each group was different but main themes constantly resurfaced. People are quite distraught over waiting lists for surgery, for example."

As part of her own learning process, Salahub joined a group from her church as a participant in one of the public dialogues. "I heard a lot of stories from people I knew — some difficult, some joyful. I discovered that my own experience with health care was limited. That group brought together people of different ages. It was important to hear the experiences of the older members. It reinforced, for me, the need to keep a universal health care system alive and well."

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in a positive way, you're debunking a number of myths about childhood, children and parents and the proper place of children in Canadian society — and the way we think about it.

**Tipper:** It is an important shift to look at children as vital, important contributors to the community. When we begin to offer them that respect, it also enables us to make that positive shift to look at childhood not simply as a bumpy road that we need to smooth out so that we get the "perfect" adult but rather to see that children are valuable pieces of our society. Childhood is worthy of our attention so that it's an enjoyable, healthy time of a person's life.

**Readings:** "Building Better Outcomes for Canada's Children," by Jennifer Tipper and Denise Avard, Discussion Paper No. F|06, April 1999.

# Office News

## Celebrating Our Achievements — Staff Retreat



The "Blues Brothers" (a.k.a. Joe Peters, Terry Albert and Joe Michalski) sit surrounded by the efforts of their brainstorming.

Growth and change were the key topics at a retreat for the staff of the Canadian Policy Research Networks held in Kingston, Ontario, in early April. "We brainstormed about where we're going and why and what changes we can make to achieve our goals," states Kathryn McMullen. "It was a great

opportunity to build collegiality, which is particularly important in a virtual organization like ours where people are spread out across the country." And there was some fun in there too: "We also celebrated all of our achievements, recently recognized in the Brown Report," adds McMullen.

### WE'VE MOVED!

**The Family Network**, including **The Society We Want**, has moved! In July, they joined the offices of the Canadian Policy Research Networks in Ottawa at:

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### Sponsor Corner

**The Lawson Foundation's** mission is "to enrich the quality of life in Canada through grants to registered charitable organizations." When supporting projects, the Foundation looks for the following: innovation, communication and networking, leveraging, evaluation, and regional and national perspective. Key program areas include: "The Beginning Years," addressing the early language and cognitive development of healthy children aged 0 to 4 and prenatal support to parents; and "Healthy Communities," supporting community-based, patient-centred care in cancer and diabetes. More information can be found on the web site at <http://www.lawson.ca>. The Lawson Foundation is a sponsor of the Best Policy Mix for Canadian Children project.



The staff of the Canadian Policy Research Networks on the steps of the Donald Gordon Centre in Kingston. Back row (left to right): Terry Albert, Joe Michalski, Graham Lowe, Sherry Thompson, Louise Séguin-Guénette, Judith Maxwell, Joe Peters, Gisèle Lacelle, Katie Davidman, Kathryn McMullen. Front row (left to right): Retreat facilitators, Brin Sharp and Monty Doyle, Trish Adams, Rhonda Ferderber, Joanne Lauzon, Denis Coté, Sharon Stroick, Annette Wilcox, Elisabeth Richard.

## Jane Jenson, New Director of the Family Network

**Jane Jenson** was warmly welcomed as the new Director of the Family Network by those present at the Roundtable on the Best Policy Mix for Children held in Ottawa on June 28. The timing of this debut, following her appointment on June 15, is significant, according to Jenson. "The Best Mix project is coming to an end and now my task is to identify new directions for the Family Network," she states. "The roundtable provided many ideas for future work and new projects that we'll be building on. There's lots of activity at both the provincial and federal level around the issues of children and family and the Canadian Policy Research Networks will continue to be a vital part of policy discussions in these areas."



Jane Jenson

Jenson is also excited about the potential contribution of the Best Mix project. "It's concluding just as the federal government is considering a children's budget planned for early 2000 and working with the provinces to develop the national children's agenda. The study on the Best Mix project is well timed and will make a significant contribution to this process."

Children's and family issues have long been part of Jenson's agenda. "The issue of the reconciliation of work and family interests me immensely, especially from the perspective of the problems parents

face in fulfilling their child-rearing responsibilities while earning a living," she explains. "I firmly believe the family plays a vital role, as much in each individual's life as in society in general, in maintaining and consolidating social cohesion. This is all the more true now, at the dawn of the third millennium, as we face very stimulating and important social challenges."

Ms. Jenson's achievements as a

professor and researcher reflect her wide social involvement. An Anglo-Quebecker by background and a political scientist by training, she is currently Professor of Political Science at Université de Montréal. With co-author Mariette Sineau, she has recently published *Qui doit garder le jeune enfant?* in France. An English version is currently in press.

In her report published by the Family Network in 1998, *Mapping Social Cohesion: The State of Canadian Research*, Jenson analyzed the widespread belief that the social fabric of our society is deteriorating. Jenson highlighted the fact that whenever societies are faced with the challenge of living in an age characterized by a rapid pace of economic and social change, the issue of social cohesion emerges to haunt the debate. "It is important to have well-functioning institutions, public as well as private, that can respond to new challenges," maintains Jenson. A second report, *Comparative Family Policy: Six*

*Provincial Stories*, written by Jenson in collaboration with **Sherry Thompson**, research fellow with the Canadian Policy Research Networks will be published in the near future.

**Judith Maxwell** is delighted to see Jane Jenson join the Canadian Policy Research Networks team: "She will certainly stimulate family policy research. She will be able to explore new approaches and galvanize researchers and socio-economic players around projects of great import for the future," Maxwell concludes.

**Linda Duxbury**, Professor at the School of Business, Carleton University, has joined the Work Network as a research fellow. An accomplished trainer and speaker in the area of supportive work environments and work-life balance, she brings a rich and varied background to the Canadian Policy Research Networks. She has recently completed major studies on: human resources and work-family issues in the small business sectors; balancing work and family in the public and private sectors; and career development in the federal public service. Among many other topics, she is currently researching the impacts of e-mail, portable offices, cellular telephones, telework and the compressed work week.

**Evert Lindquist** has also joined the Work Network as a research fellow. Director of the School of Public Administration in Victoria,

his research agenda has touched on many topics including government transitions, cabinet decision making and budgetary processes. He is the editor of a forthcoming book concerning government restructuring and the career public service in Canada. His recent research has focussed on business plan and performance reporting by the federal government, evaluating alternative recruitment strategies for improving policy capacity in governments and how overlap and duplication is managed across governments.

**Joe Michalski** has accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Sociology at Trent University. Joe will continue his affiliation with the Canadian Policy Research Networks as a senior research associate for the Work Network. He has worked extensively with The Society We Want public dialogue initiative developing a new Issue Guide on the changing world of paid work.

**Joe Peters** was recently named Manager of Information Services. In this position, he is responsible for designing a new computer systems network that will support in-office and virtual work arrangements. This position was created following a recommendation in the Brown Report calling for improved use of technology both internally and externally.

**Sherry Thompson**, most recently a research fellow with the Family Network, has accepted a new position as Senior Planning and Policy Consultant with Alberta Health. A specialist in the interrelationship of social and fiscal policies and assessing the impact of policy choices on families and children, she is collaborating with Jane Jenson on a report entitled *Comparative Family Policy: Six Provincial Stories*.

## PUBLICATIONS

**These reports are also available free of charge on the Internet at <http://www.cprn.org>**

**Labour Market Changes and Family Transactions**, by Joseph H. Michalski and Mary-Jean Wason. CPRN Study No. F|07. 1999. 142 pp. \$9.95.

This in-depth, qualitative study probes the manner in which families adapt to labour market changes from the point of view of the family unit. The Canadian Policy Research Networks interviewed all members over the age of five in 25 families living in Surrey, British Columbia, to find out how they balance the demands of work and home life. The study goes beyond the limited information of employment or non-employment statistics by looking at the reasons that underlie the choices that individuals and families make with respect to labour force attachment. Part of a larger research program documenting the ways families are coping with the consequences of government spending cuts and devolution, the study underlines the importance of child care, flexible work arrangements, external support, life skills counselling and more secure employment in helping Canadian families cope.

### **Project Funders:**

Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada  
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce  
Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, General Social Survey Project, Statistics Canada  
Ministry of Children and Family Services, Government of British Columbia

**Building Better Outcomes for Canada's Children**, by Jennifer Tipper and Denise Avard. Discussion Paper No. F|06. April 1999. 43 pp. Free of charge.

"What does a healthy child look like?" This discussion paper asks that difficult question and, in responding to it, maps out a new approach to supporting healthy child development in Canada — one based on multidisciplinary thinking — and focuses on the markers that show children are healthy, rather than the signs that children are falling behind, such as smoking, teenage pregnancy and poor eating habits. The paper draws on a wide range of literature and distills the results of a workshop held in 1998 at which some 16 experts in a variety of fields from across Canada identified five key positive developmental outcomes covering childhood from pre-birth to early adulthood: optimal physical well-being, learning readiness, secure attachments and identity, social engagement and competence, and "smart" risk taking. The paper is part of the Best

Policy Mix for Canada's Children project, which aims to lay the foundation for a coherent strategy for improving child outcomes in Canada.

**Values and Preferences for the "Best Policy Mix" for Canadian Children**, by Joseph H. Michalski. CPRN Discussion Paper No. F|05. May 1999. Free of charge.

This discussion paper combines findings from a variety of focus groups and roundtables conducted by the Canadian Policy Research Networks with data from public opinion polls done in the past 20 years, as well as a poll conducted by Environics in 1998. The objective was to consult as wide a range of information as possible to paint an accurate and detailed picture of Canadians' values and preferences with respect to child-support policies. The paper is part of the Best Policy Mix for Canada's Children.

**Project Funders:**

The Atkinson Charitable Foundation  
Health Canada  
Hospital for Sick Children Foundation  
Human Resources Development Canada  
Laidlaw Foundation  
Lawson Foundation  
The provincial governments of British Columbia, Ontario and Saskatchewan

**Discovering The Society We Want — Public Dialogue Kit. Issue Guide: Adapting to the Changing World of Paid Work.** 1999. Tool kit and Issue Guide available at no cost.

The Guide looks at three issues that people face as they struggle to cope with the challenges of the paid work environment: job security, meaningful work, and achieving a healthy balance between work and other parts of their lives. The kit contains everything needed for both the volunteer discussion leader and for participants. The Canadian Policy Research Networks will be publishing results of groups in newsletters and future research reports. The goal is to bring the deeply held values of Canadians to the policy decision-making process.

**Project Funders:**

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## Keep Your Eye on the Ball

It is true that incomes have grown more slowly in Canada than in the United States in the 1990s. It is also true that Canadians pay more tax. But we should not leap to the conclusion that the well-being of Canadians is so much worse. We have to probe a little deeper. We need to ask why incomes have grown more slowly, what the Americans will be doing with their extra income, and what factors should be taken into account before we launch a major round of tax cuts.

### Why have incomes grown more slowly in Canada?

Canada has spent the past decade getting its fiscal house in order — something vigorously supported by financial and business leaders in Canada in the early 1990s. When governments cut spending and raise taxes, they slow the growth in employment and income. Canadian governments have done this to get rid of public sector deficits (mostly done) and to reduce the public debt (just beginning). Remarkable progress has been made, and the goal is within our grasp.

But we aren't there yet. Interest payments on the net federal public debt of close to \$600 billion soak up 27 cents of every dollar we pay in taxes. The total interest bill is still \$44 billion. The true "fiscal dividend" can be collected once that bill has declined to acceptable levels. In the meantime, as my tennis

partner says, keep your eye on the ball.

### What will Americans do with their higher incomes?

First they will buy more health insurance. And the 43 million Americans who do not have insur-



ance coverage (the last estimate I saw) face personal bankruptcy if they get seriously ill. Then they will pay for private schools and universities for their kids, since they have no faith in the public education system in the United States. Then, if they still have money to spend, they will buy a house in an (expensive) exclusive district, possibly with private security guards, to protect them from the violence associated with inner-city life.

The bottom line is that Americans have more money, but they do not

necessarily have a better quality of life — in the form of personal safety, clean air and water, reliable public services, and social infrastructure.

These dimensions of quality of life are important to Canadians today, but they are also the essential foundation for future productivity growth in the knowledge-based sectors, which economists quite rightly identify as the job creators of the future.

One of the side effects of the fiscal correction has been painful cuts to health, education, and other public services. The cuts have driven doctors, nurses and researchers to take jobs in the United States, where the privately endowed institutions offer higher pay and much better working conditions.

Canadians see our social infrastructure as a national asset. They are appalled by the cuts in public services and by the growing signs of inequality and distress evident in the centre of many Canadian cities. The last thing in the world they want to create are the burned-out, no-go areas that scar far too many American cities. And now they are signalling that they have seen enough spending cuts. Polling data by Ekos Research Associates shows that 90 percent of Canadians want governments to maintain or increase existing public services, up from 75 percent in 1995.

**Continued on page 6**