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CPRN is a national not-for-profit research institute whose mission is to create knowledge and lead public debate on social and economic issues important to the well-being of Canadians, in order to help build a more just, prosperous and caring society.

Ageing and Skill Shortages: An Overblown Threat

Despite dire predictions to the contrary, there is no evidence that Canada faces a looming general shortage of skilled workers as a result of our ageing population.

That's one conclusion of a new report from Canadian Policy Research Networks. ***Labour Force Ageing and Skill Shortages in Canada and Ontario*** is by Julie Ann McMullin and Martin Cooke of the Department of Sociology and the Workforce Aging in the New Economy Project at the University of Western Ontario, with the collaboration of Rob Downie.

The authors review the demographic data, examine the age structures and retirement ages of different industries and occupations, isolate the relationship between skills shortages and labour force ageing and assess the impact of workforce ageing relative to a number of other factors that affect skill shortages. Finally, they investigate four "cases"

in Ontario – nursing, information technology, skilled trades in manufacturing, and the biotechnology sector.



“We conclude that workforce ageing is not the only, nor necessarily the most significant determinant of skill shortages,” says McMullin.

The authors identify four key factors affecting skill shortages:

- the age structure of the current workforce;
- the time required for training;
- the geographic mobility of workers; and

(Continued on page 2)



- working conditions that affect attracting and retaining workers.

“While these factors may combine to create certain skill shortage “hot spots” in particular industries or occupations,” McMullin says, “talk of a general skills “crisis” sparked by an ageing workforce is inappropriate. Wage levels, working conditions and education and training policies may be just as influential.”

For example, nursing occupations do not exhibit the oldest workforces, but are among the most likely to experience very high cumulative retirement rates in the next decade. Other occupations may have older profiles, but have a higher average retirement age.

“Clearly, labour market policies addressing skill shortages need to look beyond the fact of an ageing workforce to consider industry and occupation-specific issues and the whole complex of factors involved,” says McMullin.

The paper suggests several policy options to increase the ability of labour markets to meet the demand for skills, particularly in relation to labour force ageing. Among them:

- immigration policies targeting skills in short supply;
- encouraging higher rates of labour market participation by under-represented groups, like Aboriginal people and lone mothers;
- removing barriers to training and labour force participation, generally;
- promoting phased retirement and workplace flexibility to prolong participation of older workers;
- promoting life-long learning and active ageing, including training throughout working life and promotion and advancement for older workers; and
- encouraging employers to recruit an age-balanced workforce to achieve the optimal age structures for their enterprises.

“This collection of policies will help us respond more effectively to future skill shortages, and also encourage people to work longer and more productively,” McMullin concludes.



Quebec's Anti-Poverty Plan

It was a North American first, going well beyond the customary rhetoric and hand-wringing. Two years ago, Quebec’s National Assembly, under a Parti québécois government, *unanimously* passed a law to “combat poverty and social exclusion.” The law’s goal is to “transform Quebec over a ten-year period into one of the industrialized societies with the least poverty.”

The law recognizes poverty as a barrier to the exercise of civil rights and a brake on economic and social progress. It also acknowledges that those who live in poverty are the first to act to improve their situation and that of their families. And, importantly, it describes the fight against poverty as a social project that must engage Quebec society as a whole. Finally, among additional measures, it committed the government to coming up with a plan of action to achieve the law’s objectives.

In April of this year, the Quebec government, now under Jean Charest’s Liberals, introduced its anti-poverty action plan, almost a year late and amidst much skepticism from social activists and public interest organizations. As it turned out, the plan surprised many of the government’s critics with its progressive elements.

CPRN asked Alain Noël, Director of the Université de Montréal’s Centre de recherche sur les politiques et le développement social, – and who prepared an essay for us on the original anti-poverty law (*A Law Against Poverty: Quebec’s New Approach to Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion*) – to assess the Charest government’s action plan.

His verdict: The plan’s reforms to social assistance, supportive of the working poor and their families, will benefit a large number of low-income households. The removal of the punitive aspects of the current system is also laudable. But Noël finds the plan neglects those so disadvantaged as to be unable to enter the job market. He also argues that the plan lacks the same social perspective embodied in the anti-poverty law itself. It fails to set targets, monitor progress and hold the government accountable, and it makes no provision for engaging citizens and civil society in the anti-poverty effort.

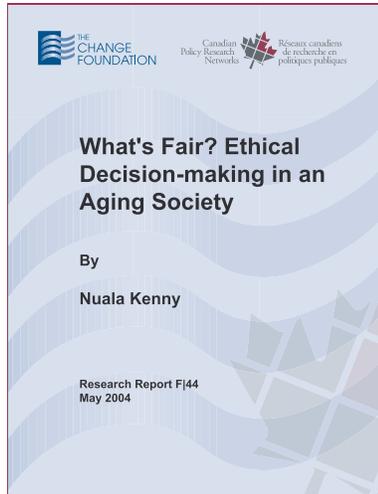
After examining the events leading to the birth of the plan, he concludes that even its progressive elements would not have seen the light of day had there been no anti-poverty law and had there not been a strong social movement in Quebec demanding reforms.

You can access or download the full text of the commentary, ***A Focus on Income Support: Implementing Quebec’s Law Against Poverty and Social Exclusion***, from our Web site.

Intergenerational Equity: Policies for all Generations

Terms like “crisis” and “unsustainability” dominate talk about our aging society today. A growing older generation, we are told, is consuming more than its fair share of resources. But aging baby boomers may not be the problem. The problem may be our frame of reference.

A joint report from CPRN’s Family Network and The Change Foundation, with additional support from the Law Commission of Canada, proposes a new framework for policies that involve sharing scarce resources across generations. In *What’s Fair? Ethical Decision-making in an Aging Society*,



author Nuala Kenny applies what she calls the “ethic of care” to the challenge of intergenerational equity.

“What all of us need, from decision-makers in our major institutions to ordinary citizens,” says Kenny, “is a new way to think of the relationship between the generations, one that unites rather than divides us.”

The “ethic of care” stresses the dignity of all persons and the good of the entire community or society. It focuses on relationships and the interdependence of citizens throughout the lifespan.

“The experience of infancy, or of aging, is not something that happens to only one generation,” Kenny points out. “These are stages in the shared experience of a lifetime. To treat them as generational events is to miss their connectedness.”

The way we frame an issue determines how we go about resolving it. Kenny argues that a focus on “child poverty,” for example, masks its connection to low-wage labour

markets, pay and employment equity, family friendly policy, high quality day care, and other measures that address parental poverty, especially women’s poverty.

Kenny starts from the position that public policy is a moral endeavour, a reflection of who we are and what we desire to be as a society. She provides some guiding principles to help us think about what is fair in an aging society:

- **Respect for persons of all ages.**
- **Meaningful autonomy** – the fullest participation possible in decisions affecting one’s health and security.
- **Solidarity** – acknowledging the sharing of risks and benefits across the lifespan by all citizens.
- **Protection of the vulnerable.**
- **Responsible citizenship** – encouraging all to participate in public policy decisions in an informed manner.
- **Accountability** – transparent accounting for decisions, their ethical justification, and consequences for present and future generations.
- **Sustainability** – concern for the needs of today’s and future generations.

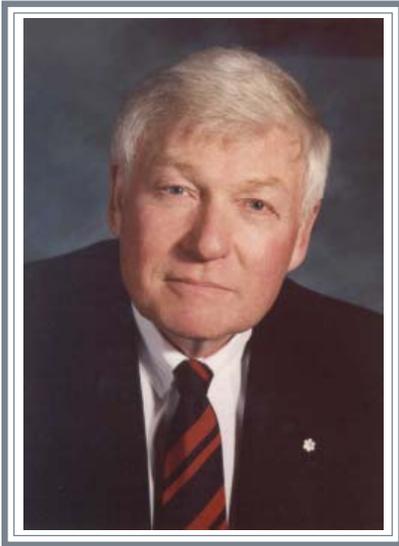
These ethical principles are intended to foster policy choices consistent with Kenny’s conception of intergenerational equity and the web of relationships that underpin it. She makes it clear, however, that they are only a starting point.

“Some of these principles are related, others are potentially conflicting. There is no priority implied, and their application will depend on the specifics of a situation,” says Kenny.

“This isn’t a magic answer to difficult public policy choices, but it helps us focus our deliberations on the ethical issues at stake. It also assumes, rightly, that the search for a fair society is one all generations share.”



Fresh Ideas Campaign – A Champion Challenges Others



Lynton “Red” Wilson, Chair of Nortel, is passionate about education in Canada. He believes not only in the importance of access for all Canadians to a postsecondary education, but also in excellence in our universities. In consultations with CPRN’s President, Judith Maxwell, Red’s passion became the inspiration for a research paper, as

CPRN seized the opportunity to explore this most important area. Red then “stepped up to the plate” by offering a matching grant from the Wilson Family Foundation of up to \$150,000 to fund a research and dialogue program within CPRN on *Achieving Access and Excellence in Canada’s Universities*.

CPRN’s goal in this project is to be the catalyst for a national conversation on excellence in university education and research. We have identified three topics for research: measuring quality, assessing the incentive structure, and re-examining regulation. This research will include comparisons

with other countries, and generate a series of papers culminating in a final paper on policy implications. These will be disseminated widely through our Web site and through strategic use of newsletters, press releases, etc.

The dialogue side of the project will begin with a Roundtable on Measuring Quality, which will be held in conjunction with the advisory panel on post-secondary schools in Ontario, chaired by Bob Rae. A second Roundtable will be planned nearer to the end of the project, synthesizing all the findings from the program. This roundtable would attract senior decision-makers and provide them an opportunity to help shape the thinking in this final report.

Red very generously made his challenge an open-ended one. His donation will double every dollar we receive towards this project, be it individual, corporate, foundation or government sources.

The *Fresh Ideas Campaign* is raising funds to increase CPRN’s research capabilities and allow it to advance the national dialogue about who we are as Canadians and about what works in the uniquely Canadian context. If you are interested in learning more about the Campaign, please contact Neil Leslie, Director of Development at (613) 567-7500 ext. 2004 or by e-mail at nleslie@cprn.org

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- **Governance Innovation** – breaking with tradition, harnessing diversity.
- **Civic Innovation** – applying new problem solving skills to contemporary challenges.
- **Economic Innovation** – creativity makes cities “innovative milieux”.
- **Social Innovation** – participation in the arts and culture is a route to inclusion of marginalized communities and to revitalized neighbourhoods.
- **Artistic and Cultural Innovation** – cities support the arts and culture for their contribution to inclusion and innovation.

Participants outlined barriers to developing creative cities – lack of awareness among policy and planning communities and the general public, poor collaboration within and between governments, undervaluing of the contribution of the arts and culture, for example – but they also saw tremendous potential in tapping the creativity of Canada’s diverse cultural communities.

“Above all, they agreed on one overarching point,” says Bradford. “Local places provide the most promising scale for creativity and innovation, but they require adequate and sustained support from upper level governments. Creative cities are built through *multi-level and cross-sectoral collaboration*.”



Managing Used Nuclear Fuel: Citizens Speak

Canadian citizens are keen to play a role in deciding what to do with the country's used nuclear fuel. They are concerned for public safety and they want to act now to protect this and future generations. Most important, they have identified key values to guide future decisions.

These and other findings from deliberative dialogues with Canadians are detailed in **Responsible Action – Citizens' Dialogue on the Long-term Management of Used Nuclear Fuel**, an analytical report by Judy Watling, Judith Maxwell, Nandini Saxena and Suzanne Taschereau of the Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN).

The dialogues were organized by CPRN on behalf of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO). This non-profit organization was set up by the nuclear industry at the request of the federal government to advise it on options for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel. The dialogues are a key element in the NWMO's engagement with experts, stakeholders and the public at large.

Canada's 22 commercial nuclear reactors produce 13 % of our electricity. They are expected to produce 3.6 million used fuel bundles over their anticipated lifetimes. Today, these are safely stored in licensed facilities at the nuclear generating stations. The fuel remains hazardous for a very long time. Canada, like other nuclear countries, is seeking an acceptable method of storing it for the long-term. That choice, says the NWMO, must be "socially acceptable, technically sound, environmentally responsible and economically feasible."

"The engagement of citizens is essential," says Elizabeth Dowdeswell, NWMO President. "Effective public policy is built upon an understanding of what really matters to Canadians. We need thoughtful deliberation and dialogue."

A representative sample of 462 Canadians took part in dialogues in 12 cities across the country, in both official languages. Citizens from all walks of life gave up a Saturday or Sunday to discuss what principles should guide decisions about used nuclear fuel over the long-term.

"The citizens' dialogues are not intended to supplant expert advice," says Judith Maxwell, President of CPRN, "They tell us what values Canadians believe should govern our decisions regarding used nuclear fuel."

Those values are:

Responsibility – live up to our responsibilities and deal with the problems we create.

Adaptability – develop and apply new knowledge as it emerges.

Stewardship – our duty to husband resources and leave a sound legacy to future generations.

Accountability and Transparency – to rebuild trust.

Knowledge – a public good for better decisions now and in the future.

Inclusion – we all have a role to play.

"The first three address how rights and responsibilities should be shared across generations," says Maxwell. "The last three address how decisions are made and who should be making them. The values are not mutually exclusive and often reinforce each other."

Citizens want to take responsibility and act now on waste created in generating electricity they have used. But they also want to make it possible for future generations to revisit today's choices in the light of new knowledge and technologies.

Citizens advocate a holistic approach to the challenge of managing used nuclear fuel. They support conserving energy use, exploiting alternative energy sources and, fully assessing the costs and benefits of all types of energy.

They are keen to ensure that they receive the information they need to contribute to decisions about the long-term management of used nuclear fuel. They want an independent body, with expert and citizen representation, to see that information is provided and that government and industry do their part.

"Perhaps most important, participants strongly endorsed the NWMO's engagement approach and see it as a model for future decision-making," says Maxwell.

"We have listened and learned," says Dowdeswell. "Citizens have contributed important insights. The values they expressed will guide NWMO's further work and be reflected in our ultimate recommendations for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel."



Tracking and Managing Health Care Wait Times

CPRN's Health Network recently helped organize a colloquium on wait times for the Canadian Medical Association, the Association of Canadian Academic Healthcare Organizations, the Institute of Health Services and Policy Research, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

The colloquium brought together those involved in wait list measurement, monitoring and management:

- To explore the underlying factors that drive waiting times for health services;
- To share research and experiences with wait time measurement/management among a broad cross-section of stakeholders;
- To identify the policy implications of improved wait time measurement/management from the perspective of payers, providers and patients.

Some 80 participants spent two days reviewing Canadian and international initiatives and discussing what needs to happen next in Canada. *The Taming of the Queue: Wait Time Measurement, Monitoring and Management,*

a report by the former Director of CPRN's Health Network, Cathy Fooks, summarizes the information and key messages from those discussions. It concludes with a summary of proposals for best practice.

Colloquium Presentations

- Davies, M. (2004), *Taming of the Queue: Perspectives from a Health District*. Dunbar, M. (2004), *QE II Orthopaedic Surgery Wait List Project*.
Glasgow, K. (2004), *Driven by Data, Consensus & Concern*.
Glynn, P. (2004), *Toward Timely and Appropriate Surgical Care*.
Hurst, J. (2004), *OECD Project on Waiting Times For Elective Surgery*.
Marshall, J. and J. Lott (2004), *Waiting from the Hospital Perspective. A Successful Approach to Understanding and Addressing the Problem*.
McGowan, T. (2004), *Improving Access to Cancer Care in Ontario: A Four-Point Strategy*.
McPhail, M. and M. Colledge (2004), *A Canadian Medical Association International Stakeholder Study*.
Noseworthy, T. (2004), *Improving Management of Waiting Times in Western Canada. Priority Setting and Maximum Acceptable Waiting Times*.
Ries, N. (2004), *What's Law Got To Do With It? Legal Mechanisms and Accountability in Health Care*.
Sanmartin, C. (2004), *Waiting for Health Care Services: The Views and Experiences of Canadian Patients*.
Stewart, M. (2004), *Wait List Management of Diabetes in Capital Health*.
Webster, G. (2004), *Towards Standardized Definitions of Wait Times and Measurements Considerations*.

In Search of a Cure for Wait Lists

Reducing waiting lists for essential medical procedures is everyone's stated priority. In the recent federal election it was prominent among the current government's election promises.

It is clear that Canadians are also anxious to see the problem resolved. A Statistics Canada report in July found that 29% of Canadians who received specialized care reported that they had to wait too long for it. They waited four times as long as those who said their waits were acceptable.

In an op-ed article in the *Globe and Mail*, CPRN President, Judith Maxwell welcomes the attention to waiting lists, while suggesting that the federal role in the issue is far from clear.



She reviews a number of initiatives across the country, as well as experience abroad, to conclude that while there is no perfect model, there is room for optimism. She draws certain lessons from her survey – the importance of local solutions, the fact that physicians have provided the impetus for change, and that each wait list management system needs to be tailored to the clinical problem in question.

The federal contribution in all this is harder to discern, apart from the important indirect role of ensuring that stable funding arrangements are in place, and the catalytic role of supporting research and knowledge transfer.

Arts and Culture: Key to Creative Cities



Creative cities are vital to meeting our community and national economic and social goals. By happy coincidence, the conditions that foster creative cities also foster economic innovation, social inclusion, democratic engagement and environmental sustainability.

Four new papers from CPRN underline the key role of the arts and culture in that enterprise, especially in today's knowledge economy.

As Neil Bradford puts it, "the lifeblood of the arts is creativity, imagination, experimentation, and appreciation of difference. These are precisely the habits of mind and modes of expression required of all sectors, from business and government to communities, in building creative cities in Canada today."

Bradford is CPRN's Research Fellow in Cities and Communities and the author of two of the four papers released by CPRN. The papers summarize the state of our current knowledge about creative cities, review current examples of approaches to creative cities here and abroad and lessons to be drawn from them, and identify public policy challenges and future research needs.

Three of the papers – *Creative Cities Structured Policy Dialogue Backgrounder* by Bradford, *Creative Cities: What Are They For, How Do They Work, and How Do We Build Them?* by Meric Gertler of the University of Toronto, and *Creative Cities: Principles and Practices* by Nancy Duxbury of the Creative City Network of Canada – provided the basis for a structured policy dialogue, held in Ottawa in June 2004. The dialogue brought together users and producers of urban policy knowledge and demonstrated the importance of community-based networks of urban expertise.

Dialogue participants addressed the following questions:

- What makes a city creative?
- Why does it matter if a city is creative?
- What do we know is working?
- What can we learn from those cities making progress?

In the fourth paper, *Creative Cities: Structured Policy Dialogue Report*, Neil Bradford draws together the key ideas and conclusions arising from those discussions.

An important distinction emerged between creativity and innovation, the former perhaps more utopian, the latter more pragmatic. But creativity is essential to innovation.

"While artists and cultural producers may not be directly involved in innovation," says Bradford, "their work can steer the process in exciting and previously unimagined directions."

Participants agreed that creative cities express their uniqueness and authenticity in three principle settings: the arts, commerce and in community.

"Creative cities excel in bringing together 'people, place and investment' in ways that tap the contribution of *all* their population," Bradford says. "And it is this creative inclusiveness that makes them the magnets of the knowledge economy."

Dialogue participants argued that involvement in the arts and culture helps develop a community's creative capacities. Specifically, they drew connections between creativity and successful cities in the following areas:

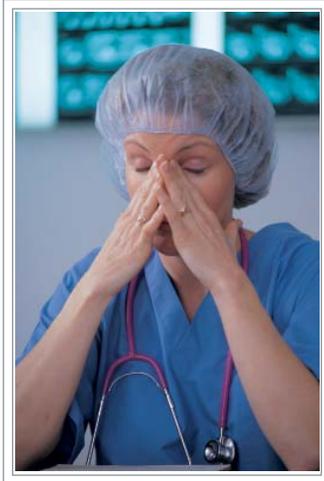
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Improving Work Life for Nurses

In all the talk of improving health care delivery in Canada the shortage of nurses, on whom so much change depends, figures prominently.

Primary among the reasons for the shortage are working conditions. Heavy workloads, long hours, unsafe environments and high stress explain why nurses are among those employees most likely to report that their workplace is unhealthy. They're also reasons why an adequate supply of nurses is not forthcoming.



eye to identifying policy-level factors hindering or helping progress. That report is now available.

Our Health, Our Future: Creating Quality Workplaces for Canadian Nurses – A Progress Report on Implementing the Final Report of the Canadian Nursing Advisory Committee, by Lisa Maslove and Cathy Fooks, is based on a scan of the literature on implementation, a

survey of relevant organizations, interviews with key informants and a roundtable to review initial findings.

The report finds signs of improvements in the quality of nursing life, but “these changes are not widespread.” It outlines some of the barriers to change, as well as factors that foster it. It concludes that improving the quality of work for nurses should not be seen as distinct from reforms designed to improve the quality of care. Clearly, there are strong positive links between a healthy workplace for nurses, the supply of nurses and the experience of patients.

Time to Reform Employment Insurance

Like so much else in our social policy apparatus, the federal Employment Insurance program is out of step with today’s social realities.

CPRN’s president, Judith Maxwell, makes this point in ***Beyond EI***, a presentation to the House of Commons Human Resources Committee, May 2004.

Maxwell argues that today’s EI program, responding as it does to the post-war risks of cyclical and seasonal unemployment, is not appropriate for the new risks of the 21st century. Those risks derive from global competition and resulting pressure on wage levels, the shift to a service economy, new technologies, and new family roles without adequate public supports.

The new risks are: a low wage economy, insecure employment relationships, growing skill requirements for good jobs, persistent unemployment that is structural, not seasonal or cyclical.

Maxwell provides evidence of the impact of these new risks: the fact that 2 million adults work for less than \$10/hour; real minimum wages are 15-25% below 1975 levels; a high dependence on charity; unmet demand for affordable housing. In short, *the problem is not unemployment, but low-wage employment.*

Maxwell calls for both employers and governments to change their policies to take account of these new realities and makes some suggestions.

In August 2002, the Canadian Nursing Advisory Committee (CNAC), set up by the Conference of Deputy Ministers of Health to advise it on implementing the National Nursing Strategy, published its report, *Our Health, Our Future: Creating Quality Workplaces for Canadian Nurses*. The CNAC report detailed 51 recommendations for improving the work life of nurses. A year later, national nursing organizations expressed their unhappiness over the lack of action on those recommendations.

Last winter, the Office of Nursing Policy at Health Canada asked CPRN’s Health Network to review progress on implementing the CNAC recommendations with an



On the Net and In the Media – September 2004

The number of discrete visitors to www.cprn.org continues at a healthy rate of 514,000 a year. Downloads of CPRN publications are at an all-time high, reaching 712,000 for the year ending August 31, 2004, up 10% from a year ago. Our special Web site on workplace indicators, www.jobquality.ca, had almost 100,000 visitors in the past 12 months, up 7% over last year.

We now have 73 publications registering 5,000 downloads or more! Recent “best-sellers”, include Julie Ann McMullin and Martin Cooke (Work Network),

Labour Force Ageing and Skill Shortages in Canada and Ontario, Ron Saunders (Work Network), *Passion and Commitment Under Stress*, Cathy Fooks and Lisa Maslove (Health Network), *Rhetoric, Fallacy or Dream? Examining the Accountability of Canadian Health Care to Citizens*, Julia Abelson and François-Pierre Gauvin (Health Network), *Engaging Citizens: One Route to Health Care Accountability*, Frances Abele (Family Network), *Urgent Need, Serious Opportunity: Towards a New Social Model for Canada’s Aboriginal People*, Nuala Kenny

(Family Network), *What’s Fair? Ethical Decision-Making in an Ageing Society*, and Mary Pat MacKinnon (Public Involvement Network), *Public Dialogue and Other Tools for Citizen Engagement*.

CPRN has also received unprecedented attention in the mass media, with more than 500 media mentions over the past 12 months. In particular, the Public Involvement Network’s citizens’ dialogue on Ontario’s budget options, the Work Network’s work on vulnerable workers and the Family Network’s social architecture series and research on cities were the focus of exceptional interest.

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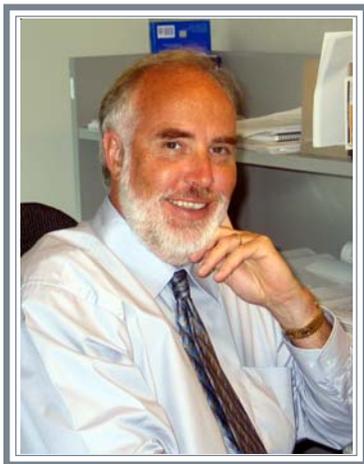
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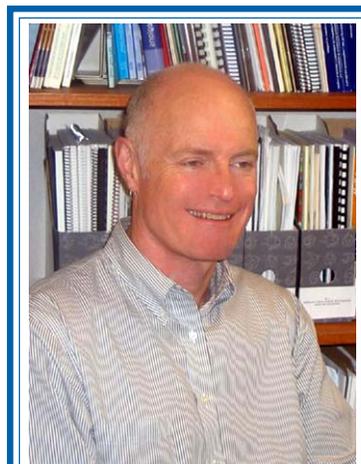
People



Neil M. Leslie joined CPRN in June 2004 as Director of Development. Neil has been a professional in the field of fundraising since 1981 and worked for a variety of organizations from small non-profit agencies to provincially based operations such as

Easter Seals and the Foundation for Research into Children's Diseases. Neil held the positions of Fundraising Director and then Executive Director of Operations for Christie Lake Kids.

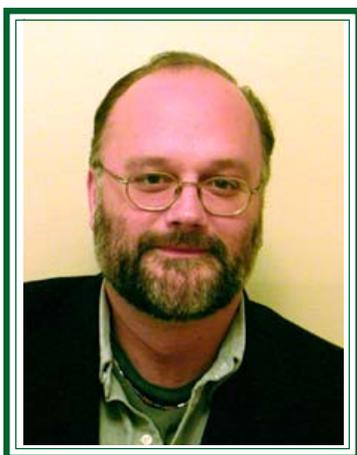
Neil will bring new direction to the *Fresh Ideas Campaign* and will develop other fundraising initiatives.



David I. Hay was appointed Director of the Family Network in July 2004. Previously he was Manager of Reports and Analysis for the Canadian Population Health Initiative at the Canadian Institute for Health Information where he was responsible for coordinating knowledge exchange and public engagement

strategies for CPHI. David led the research, writing and production of CPHI's national population health report, *Improving the Health of Canadians 2004*.

David has many years of experience researching and writing in the areas of population health, well-being, and social development in the private, public and non-profit sectors.



Tom McIntosh was also appointed Director of the Health Network. He is currently Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Regina, and Research Faculty at the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Unit (SPHERU), at the

University. He joined the university after working as Research Coordinator for the Romanow Commission.

Tom brings to CPRN great policy savvy plus experience working with a wide cross-section of researchers across the country. He also boasts a considerable record of written contributions ranging from labour market policy to federalism and health care reform.



Cynthia Williams will begin a two-year assignment through the Interchange Canada program with the Canadian Policy Research Networks. Cynthia will join CPRN as a Senior Research Fellow in the Family Network. Her research will focus on social policy issues in the areas of poverty, families, and communities as well as

the related governance and citizenship challenges. Her office will be in the School of Policy Studies at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, B.C. where she will also be a Visiting Fellow.

Cynthia has served on the Board of Directors of CPRN for the past two years, and has gained the respect of everyone on the Board and staff. She will be a great source of intellectual rigour and policy smarts for CPRN and the Family Network in the next two years.



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RBC has one of the leading community care programs in Canada and is a founding member of the Imagine program. The company is committed to donating at least one per cent of its annual net income before taxes to charitable causes. In 2003, RBC invested more than \$36 million in communities across North America.

RBC values diversity in the workplace and in the community. That's why RBC Financial Group, through its charitable arm, the RBC Foundation, is generously supporting a new project of the Family Network, the 'Diversity Gateway', which will launch on September 24, 2004.

The Diversity Gateway is a place for exploring Canada's evolution as a pluralist democracy that respects diversity, values linguistic duality, and recognizes the culture and rights of Aboriginal people. Statistical profiles, historical overviews of key policy fields, and research notes, provide quick access to CPRN's research and learning on the "Canadian diversity model". Additional segments on youth and diversity, as well as diversity at work will be added in the coming year.



Diversity Gateway

Canadian Policy Research Networks is pleased that RBC is committed to continuing its support for a second year, allowing us to enhance the Web site further.

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A Society for All Ages

While ageing can often lead to disability and loss of independence for individuals, it does not have to mean that for a society. But everything depends on our capacity as a society to anticipate coming challenges and make them into opportunities.

CPRN's recent report *Labour Force Ageing and Skill Shortages in Canada and Ontario* demonstrated this clearly. Martin Cooke and Julie Ann McMullin found that there is no reason to expect a widespread shortage of skills across the country.

They then examined a wide cross section of industries and identified the ones that are most vulnerable to skill shortages. The industries which could become local hotspots are those that employ a large group of employees nearing retirement age, use skills that require relatively long periods of training, and do not have a tradition of managing retention and recruitment effectively.

Their conclusion is that good work force planning, improving working conditions and good human resource policies can prevent skill shortages from occurring in the local hotspots. For example, we have to begin to see the Aboriginal population as one of our few untapped sources of well-trained workers. And more older workers want to work part-time (in the old job or even a new one), while drawing part of their pension.

Similarly, the OECD has advised member countries to diversify the risks of pension bankruptcy by adopting a mix of both public and private pension plans (which Canada already does) and to gradually raise the age of retirement (which is still a point of serious contention here).

Health care is another sector expected to face challenges from an ageing population, yet there are solid pieces of research that show that good prevention strategies on the demand side are possible. These strategies are based on a range of tools – increasing palliative care capacity for people who are terminally ill; creating effective drug utilization systems to prevent adverse drug reactions; substituting community-based preventive care for institutional care; and implementing effective care-giving supports for both patients and care-givers.

These adaptive changes in the health care system and in our approach to care-giving have long been advocated, but they are always down the priority list. The urgent keeps crowding out the important. What Canada must do is give people more choices so they can maintain their independence as long as possible.

As a society, we have trouble taking preventive action. Just look at the crisis in the school system when the baby boom children were ready to start school in the 1950s.



Individuals and families are good at making adaptive changes in their lives. Societies and systems are not. They have a tendency to hit the wall. Unfortunately, when that happens, it is ordinary people who pay the price.

So don't dig your heels in when people begin to talk about "new" ideas like gradual retirement, a higher age of retirement, allocating scarce money to palliative and community-based care, building supportive housing and paying care-givers. Think about these changes as ways in which societies adapt – they are preventive steps which benefit both the elderly and the working-age population.

In effect, our goal should be to become "a society for all ages," a society that does not look after one generation by creating deficits for future generations.

Judith Maxwell
President

