

RSC/CAHS Expert Panel on Early Childhood Development March 2010

The project announced today, “Early Childhood Development,” is being undertaken jointly by the Royal Society of Canada (RSC: www.rsc-src.ca) and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS: <http://www.cahs-acss.ca/>). The joint effort of the two national academies reflects the breadth of expertise that is needed to fully explore the relevant issues and to assess the evidence for a variety of possible actions to address the issues. An expert panel has been chosen to review and evaluate the relevant scientific evidence; the co-chairs and the members of this expert panel have been selected by senior committees of both the RSC and the CAHS. The RSC and the CAHS will oversee the conduct of panel activities; manage the peer review of the draft final report; and assist the co-chairs and panel members as necessary during the conduct of their work.

Among the many public-service roles of national academies around the world, one of the most important is the preparation of expert assessments on critical issues of public policy. The RSC has a long record of issuing definitive reports of this kind, and the CAHS began to issue similar reports beginning in 2004. These reports are prepared either on the initiative of the RSC or CAHS, or in response to specific requests from governments or other parties. These activities are analogous to those of the national academies in the United States the United Kingdom, France and other European countries. Such reports are designed to be balanced, thorough, independent, free from conflict of interest, and based on a deep knowledge of all of the published research that is pertinent to the questions that have been posed.

RSC: The Academies of Arts, Humanities and Sciences of Canada is the senior national body of distinguished Canadian scholars, artists and scientists. The RSC was founded in 1882 with the following mandate: “The object of the Society shall be to promote learning and intellectual accomplishments of exceptional quality. The Society recognizes remarkable contributions in the arts, humanities and sciences, as well as in Canadian public life.” The RSC now consists of nearly two thousand Fellows, men and women who are selected by their peers for outstanding contributions to the natural and social sciences, the arts, and the humanities. There are three Academies of the RSC: Academy I is the Academy of the Arts and Humanities; Academy II is the Academy of Social Sciences; Academy III is the Academy of Science.

The Canadian Academy of Health Sciences was founded in 2004 as a non-profit organization composed of fellows selected from diverse disciplines both within and external to the health sector. The Academy’s fellows, elected on the basis of outstanding professional achievement and commitment to service, are volunteers who commit their time and expertise to provide assessments and advice on difficult public policy challenges of concern to all Canadians in the areas of health and health care. Election to fellowship in the Academy is an honour that embodies a commitment to serve in Academy endeavours on behalf of the

Canadian public. The Academy's work is designed to assure the mobilization of appropriate expertise, the integration of the best science and the avoidance of bias and conflict of interest, the latter being a frequent dynamic that confounds solutions to difficult problems in the health sector.

The additional information provided herein identifies the co-chairs and members of the panel as well as the preliminary terms of reference for this project. The panel report is expected to be completed and released to the public in late 2011.

Questions about this project may be directed to:

Dr. Clyde Hertzman, MD, PhD, FRSC, FCAHS (panel co-chair), University of British Columbia: clyde.hertzman@ubc.ca
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**RSC/CAHS Expert Panel on Early Childhood Development
Panel Composition**

The expertise of the panel members encompasses the following areas of research specialization: early child development, child psycho-social maldevelopment, mother-infant interaction, socioeconomic adversity and neurobiological responses, the epidemiology of neglect, abuse and violence against children, health consequences of early teenage substance abuse, and the genetic basis of human behaviour disorders.

CO-Chairs:

- **Michel Boivin, PhD**, Professor of Psychology and Tier I Canada Research Chair in Child Social Development, School of Psychology, Laval University:
http://www.psy.ulaval.ca/ecole/personnel_enseignant/Boivin.htm

Director of the Research Unit on Children's Psycho-Social Maladjustment (GRIP), Laval University, and leader of the Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development (SRC-ECD), a pan-Canadian consortium on ECD knowledge mobilization.

- **Clyde Hertzman, MD, PhD**, Professor of Health Care and Epidemiology in the School of Population Health and Tier I Canada Research Chair in Population Health and Human Development, University of British Columbia: <http://www.chspr.ubc.ca/about/faculty/hertzman>

He is Director of the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), College for Interdisciplinary Studies at UBC, and a Fellow of the Experience-based Brain and Biological Development Program, the Successful Societies Program of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. He is also the President of the Canadian Council on Early Child Development.

Panel Members:

- **Ronald Barr, MD**, Head, Department of Developmental Neurosciences and Child Health, Professor of Paediatrics, Tier I Canada Research Chair in Community Child Health, and Director of the Centre for Community Health Research, University of British Columbia:
http://www.cfri.ca/our_research/researchers/search_researchers/researcher_detail.asp?ID=10
- **Thomas Boyce, MD**, Professor of Paediatrics, Sunnyhill Health Centre Leadership Chair in Child Development at the Human Learning Partnership, UBC and the Centre for Community Health Research at BC Children's Hospital, University of British Columbia:
<http://www.cfis.ubc.ca/faculty/directory/boyce.html>
- **Harriet MacMillan, PhD**, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, David R. (Dan) Offord Chair in Child Studies, McMaster University:
http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/ceb/faculty_member_macmillan.htm
- **Candice Odgers, PhD**, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Social Behaviour, University of California, Irvine.
- **Marla Sokolowski, PhD**, Professor of Biology, Tier I Canada Research Chair in Genomics and Behavioural Neurology, and Senior Fellow of Massey College, University of Toronto:
<http://www.csb.utoronto.ca/faculty/sokolowski-marla-b>
- **Nico Trocme, PhD**, Professor of Social Work, Philip Fisher Chair in Social Work, Director of Center for Research on Children and Families, McGill University:

<http://www.mcgill.ca/crcf/people/ntrocme/>

Statement of Purpose for this Expert Panel:

It is generally accepted that adolescent and adult mental health, effective function, and well-being are the outcomes of a complex interaction of biological, social and environmental factors. Acting pursuant to a request from the Norlien Foundation of Calgary, Alberta (<http://www.norlien.org/>), the Royal Society of Canada and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences have established jointly a panel of experts to consider this important issue. The following is a statement of the Preliminary Terms of Reference for this project, as approved by the RSC and the CAHS and by the Foundation. These terms of reference will be further reviewed and may be refined at the first meeting of the Expert Panel.

Questions proposed to the Expert Panel (Preliminary Terms of Reference):

1. Are there identifiable adverse childhood experiences such as abuse, neglect, chronic poverty, family dysfunction, chronic illness, family addiction and/or mental illness, which affect brain structure and function and lead to poor mental health and unhealthy behaviours, such as addiction, in the adolescent and adult? Are there moderating factors that alter the effects of these experiences alone, and how do they produce their changes?
2. What is the evidence for the effectiveness of a variety of interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of environmental influences (including social, political and chemical/biological) on the developing child? To what extent are such interventions being implemented in Canada?