

*Evaluation of the Federal Grant  
Provided to the Canadian Policy  
Research Networks Inc.*

**Final Report**

*Audit and Evaluation Directorate  
Policy and Strategic Direction  
Social Development Canada*

*March 2005*

**SP-AH-216-03-05E  
(également disponible en français)**

**Paper**

ISBN: 0-662-40215-4

Cat. No.: SD34-6/2005E

**PDF**

ISBN: 0-662-40216-2

Cat. No.: SD34-6/2005E-PDF

**HTML**

ISBN: 0-662-40217-0

Cat. No.: SD34-6/2005E-HTML

# *Table of Contents*

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Management Response .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Purpose .....	1
1.2 Background .....	1
1.2.1 Canadian Policy Research Networks Incorporated .....	1
1.2.2 The Federal Grant to CPRN .....	1
1.2.3 Evaluation Criteria .....	2
<b>2. Evaluation Methodology .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Evaluation Objectives.....	3
2.2 Evaluation Methodology .....	3
2.2.1 Document and Literature Review .....	4
2.2.2 Comparative Analysis .....	4
2.2.3 Administrative Data Analysis .....	5
2.2.4 Citation Analysis .....	5
2.2.5 Online Survey .....	6
2.2.6 Key Informant Interviews .....	7
2.2.7 Case Studies .....	8
<b>3. Informing Policy.....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Sources of Information for Policy Development .....	9
3.2 Impacts on Policy Development.....	10
3.3 Perceptions of Research Quality .....	13
3.4 Summary .....	16
<b>4. Relevance .....</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1 CPRN’s Role in Policy Research .....	17
4.2 Responsiveness to Policy Needs .....	19
4.3 Overlap and Duplication .....	20
4.4 Summary .....	21
<b>5. CPRN’s Delivery .....</b>	<b>23</b>
5.1 Organizational Structure and Staffing .....	23
5.1.1 Structure.....	23
5.1.2 Staffing.....	24
5.1.3 Organizational and Staffing Issues .....	26
5.2 Activities and Outputs .....	28
5.3 CPRN’s Quality Control Procedures.....	29
5.4 Summary .....	31

<b>6. Access and Outreach.....</b>	<b>33</b>
6.1 CPRN’s Outreach Activities .....	33
6.2 Access to CPRN Research .....	37
6.3 Characteristics of Users.....	39
6.4 Summary .....	42
<b>7. Financial Sustainability .....</b>	<b>43</b>
7.1 Financing.....	43
7.2 Funding Sources .....	47
7.3 Sustainability .....	49
7.4 Impact and Appropriateness of the Grant.....	50
7.5 Summary .....	51
<b>8. Summary and Conclusions.....</b>	<b>53</b>
8.1 Key Findings .....	53
8.2 Value-Added of CPRN Research and Policy Activities .....	53
8.2.1 Success .....	53
8.2.2 Relevance .....	54
8.2.3 Delivery.....	55
8.3 Sustainability .....	56
8.4 Appropriateness of the Granting Mechanism.....	57
<b>Appendix A – Matrix of Key Questions, Criteria and Data Sources .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Appendix B – Bibliography.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Appendix C – CPRN Comments on the Draft Evaluation Report.....</b>	<b>67</b>

# *List of Charts*

<b>Exhibit 3.2.1</b>	CPRN Impact Ratings by Type of Respondent.....	11
<b>Exhibit 3.3.1</b>	CPRN Attribute Ratings .....	14
<b>Exhibit 3.3.2</b>	Opinions Of CPRN.....	15
<b>Exhibit 5.1.2a</b>	Comparison of Staffing Levels and Expenditures for Selected Research Institutes.....	25
<b>Exhibit 5.2.1</b>	CPRN Allocation of Expenditures to Research .....	28
<b>Exhibit 5.2.2</b>	Time Allocation as a Percentage of Working Time 2002/03 .....	28
<b>Exhibit 5.2.3</b>	CPRN Online Publications by Type.....	29
<b>Exhibit 6.1.1</b>	Website Visits and Downloads* .....	34
<b>Exhibit 6.1.2</b>	Links to Selected Think Tanks.....	35
<b>Exhibit 6.1.3</b>	CPRN References on University Web Sites.....	35
<b>Exhibit 6.1.4</b>	Institute References at University of Toronto .....	36
<b>Exhibit 6.1.5</b>	Media Analysis.....	37
<b>Exhibit 6.3.1</b>	Respondent Profile: Type of Respondent.....	40
<b>Exhibit 6.3.2</b>	Respondent Profile: Region by Type of Respondent .....	41
<b>Exhibit 7.1.1</b>	CPRN Revenue and Expenditures (000's) .....	44
<b>Exhibit 7.1.2</b>	CPRN Revenue Sources (000's) .....	45
<b>Exhibit 7.1.3</b>	CPRN Revenue Sources as a Percent of Total Income .....	45
<b>Exhibit 7.1.4</b>	CPRN Expenditures (000's).....	46
<b>Exhibit 7.1.5</b>	CPRN Expenditures as a Percent of Total Income.....	47
<b>Exhibit 7.2.1</b>	Project Funders by Year .....	47
<b>Exhibit 7.2.2</b>	Project Funding Sources by Year (000's)* .....	48
<b>Exhibit 7.2.3</b>	Project Funding Sources Percent by Year* .....	48



# *Executive Summary*

## **Background**

Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc. (CPRN) is a non-profit organization created in 1994, specializing in policy research and public engagement. With an operating budget of \$4.2 million (2003/04), its mission is "...to create knowledge and lead public debate on social and economic issues important to the well-being of Canadians" and its goal is "...to help make Canada a more just, prosperous and caring society". To achieve its objectives, CPRN has established four research networks - Family, Work, Health, and Public Involvement.

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Health Canada provided CPRN with a \$9 million, five year (1999/2000 to 2004/05) grant – \$7.5 million of which came from HRDC (now Social Development Canada). The funding was given in order for CPRN to create a working capital fund to help finance the operating costs of CPRN's activities.

Treasury Board Secretariat approval of the CPRN grant on March 18, 1999 required the completion of an evaluation framework by March 31, 2000 and an independent evaluation of the grant by March 31, 2004.<sup>1</sup>

## **Evaluation Objectives**

The evaluation focused on three main issues:

- the value-added contribution of CPRN's activities in informing policy making (i.e. success, relevance and delivery);
- the degree CPRN has been successful in diversifying funding sources towards financial independence (i.e. sustainability); and
- the appropriateness of the current grant funding mechanism.

## **Evaluation Methodology**

The evaluation was led by a steering committee comprised of representatives from Social Development Canada, Health Canada, Treasury Board Secretariat, the Department of Finance, and CPRN. The evaluation was conducted using multiple lines of evidence in order

---

<sup>1</sup> This CPRN evaluation is delayed – in part because of the organizational change accompanying the splitting of Human Resources Development Canada into two separate government departments (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and Social Development Canada) Treasury Board Secretariat has been advised of the delays in the completion of the work.

to provide corroboration of results identified from a variety of sources. The methodology consisted of:

- a document and literature review;
- a survey of comparative institutes;
- an administrative data analysis;
- citation analysis;
- an online survey of users (N=3643, with a total response of n=907(24.9%)<sup>2</sup>;
- key informant interviews (40); and
- individual case studies (4).

Both the methodology and the draft final report, including technical reports, were separately peer reviewed by subject area and methodological experts.

The peers' recommendations have been incorporated as part of the final report.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

### **i) Key Findings**

***The grant has supported CPRN's capacity to inform social and economic policy by allowing it to strengthen its overall operations and substantially expand its research and outreach activities.*** While the exact contribution of the grant to this increased activity cannot be determined in detail, the evaluation evidence points to the conclusion that without the grant or a core funding equivalent, CPRN could not have maintained its infrastructure and implemented its research program. Key informants confirmed that without the grant CPRN would not exist with the same nature and project scope.

***The grant has strengthened the CPRN while supporting its neutrality and independence.*** The unconditional nature of the granting mechanism supported the independence of CPRN and its research activities.

***The general nature of the grant funding mechanism does not allow linking the \$9 million grant to specific individual project or policy impacts.*** Thus, it is the general

---

<sup>2</sup> The online survey comprised a self-selected sample of CPRN clients. Because the initial population size of the online survey is unknown the results cannot be generalized statistically. Both the partial nature of the survey is acknowledged (restricted to CPRN users) as is the limited survey response (24.9%). However the survey approach has enabled the evaluation to identify that CPRN has a sizable group of policy oriented users who found CPRN's products useful (i.e. over 900 clients or roughly one-quarter of CPRN's users). In response to concerns that survey respondents may be disproportionately representing people who see CPRN's activities in a positive light, it should be noted that not all of the feedback provided was positive – in some instances a number of user responses were critical of CPRN. Overall, it is the evaluation's assessment that there are grounds for confidence in the findings more generally, based on multiple lines of evidence particularly through key informant panels, individual in-depth case-studies and citation analysis undertaken by an independent consultant.



impact of the grant which is assessed. The grant was intended to help finance the general policy research efforts of the CPRN and not specific initiatives. In this context the grant is assessed in terms of its broader impact on CPRN's operations and research program.

## **ii) Value-Added of CPRN Research and Policy Activities**

### **Success**

*The evidence points to the conclusion that CPRN has been successful in meeting its objective of informing the development of social and economic policy.* The evidence from the evaluation's online survey suggests that the greatest influence of the CPRN was on the government, academic and non-governmental sectors. More than one third of federal policy respondents (n=122) accessing CPRN materials indicated that they occasionally or regularly referenced CPRN materials and that CPRN's research has had an impact on their work. Among provincial government policy respondents the figure was 44% (n=126). Sixty-seven percent of NGO respondents (n=88), and 58% of academics (n=79) rated the impact of CPRN on their work as high or very high.

Further evidence of the CPRN's contribution to informing policy comes from in-depth evaluation case-studies. For example, key informants from the Health Human Resources Project case study concluded that CPRN's research was instrumental in framing issues and shaping thinking at the *Romanow Commission*. The Project's findings are cited extensively in Commission's report (Chapter 4) and several recommendations for the Health Council of Canada reflect the CPRN suggested roles for a national health human resource agency.

*Subsequent to the receipt of the grant, CPRN substantially increased its research activities and outputs.* Between 1999/2000 to 2002/03 total research expenditures increased 159% from approximately \$801 thousand to \$2.1 million. The number of research reports and related documents also increased. In total, 140 research reports, 111 presentations, and 92 summaries were produced. Of these 343 documents, only 20 were produced prior to the grant's approval (1998/99), while on average 58 documents per year were produced over the following five years.

*CPRN's research is viewed as high quality and objective by those accessing the material.* Approximately 92% of online survey users responding (n=907) rated the overall quality of CPRN's research and information as high, or very high and 83% rated CPRN's academic standards or rigour as high or very high. This assessment of CPRN's research was further confirmed in the key informant interviews and case studies. Nearly two thirds of respondents also assessed the CPRN as being independent of government influence and 80% rated objectivity as high or very high.

*CPRN has expanded awareness and access to its research and information in the public policy community.* CPRN's website, developed with the assistance of the grant, has become a key distribution channel for their research. Administrative data indicates that, between 2001 and 2003 monthly download activity increased by 79%, from 27,852 to 49,922 downloads per month. The citation analysis confirms CPRN has been effective

in disseminating its research results. Nearly two thirds of survey respondents reported CPRN information was sent to them regularly.

## **Relevance**

***The evaluation concludes that there is significant support for the policy research provided by the CPRN.*** CPRN is viewed as occupying an independent and neutral policy niche in the spectrum of policy research institutes that makes it a unique and valued source of information. Among respondents to the on-line survey of CPRN users (n=907), 82% agreed that the CPRN provided a unique perspective on social policy. In addition, 88% agreed with the statement that “CPRN provides new ideas for future social policy”. Only 15% of respondents indicated they could find the same research elsewhere if the CPRN did not exist. In addition, the case study analysis indicated that CPRN research has helped to frame policy discussions related to health policy, children and the not for profit sector.

***Duplication and overlap do not appear to be significant issues.*** As a general rule, CPRN undertakes distinctive research projects in a flexible manner for diverse clients and funders. CPRN has an open approach to projects and is willing to consult with multiple stakeholders at the outset of a project to define issues and assess the best approach to answer questions. Several key informants complimented this approach because CPRN is aware of others’ initiatives and avoids duplication. While its work may broadly overlap in domains where other think tanks and academic research centres have undertaken (or are undertaking) research, it does not appear to duplicate the research of those organizations. Moreover, CPRN has been a leader in encouraging informal coordination with other research institutes, in particular with the Canada West Foundation, the Canadian Council on Social Development, and the Public Policy Forum.

## **Delivery**

### ***CPRN’s Structure and Organization***

***CPRN has improved the independence and functioning of its governance and management structure.*** Since the grant’s approval, CPRN has established an independent Board Chair, broadened Board membership, and created both a Finance and Audit Committee, and a Governance and Membership Committee. These initiatives are in accordance with the recommendations of the Brown Report<sup>3</sup>, an external review conducted prior to the grant’s approval.

***There are some grounds for concern regarding the amount of time and resources CPRN devotes to conducting research, compared to administration (governance, financial administration and human resources).*** Several key informants indicated that,

---

<sup>3</sup> Robert Brown, Susan McDaniel, and George Thompson (1998) *Final Report of the External Review Committee on Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.* (Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc). This report is commonly referred to as the ‘Brown Report’, after the chair of the External Review Committee, Robert Brown.

in their judgement, the ratio of administrative to research staff at CPRN was high. Administrative data indicate that research staff account for only 41.1 percent of CPRN's total full-time staff<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, CPRN staff spend 58 percent of their time on research activities, but only 32 percent of their time is billable to research projects. CPRN states that some of the organization's administrative costs resulted from implementing the Brown Report's recommendations.

More generally, the level of staff dedicated to research at CPRN appears to be located as part of a cluster at the low end of comparator institutes. For instance, research staff comprise 63.6 percent at the Caledon Institute, 62.8 percent at the Fraser Institute, and 56.7 percent at the Canadian Council on Social Development. On the other hand, the C.D. Howe Institute (38.6 percent) and the Institute for Research on Public Policy (35.3 percent) are more closely aligned with CPRN. Overall, the evaluation evidence does not lead to an unqualified endorsement of the status quo. In light of the evaluation evidence, it would be beneficial for CPRN to examine alternative strategies with a view to assessing the potential to improve the balance between research and administration.

***CPRN attracts and maintains a high quality research staff.*** The quality of both staff and research at CPRN is assessed as ranging from "solid to exceptional". According to key informants consulted as part of the evaluation, some of the differences in the quality of CPRN research products could be attributed to the capabilities of individual network directors. One challenge faced by CPRN in maintaining the quality of its research is a high level of turnover among research staff. However, this observation is not unique to CPRN and it must be noted that CPRN has also played a role in grooming promising talent and advancing established researchers for new positions in policy and research elsewhere.

### *CPRN's Quality Assurance Processes*

***CPRN provides a high level of quality assurance for its research; however, further measures could be taken to strengthen the independence of its review processes.*** CPRN conducts a thorough quality assurance process, employing a range of methods to strengthen the quality of its research products.<sup>5</sup> These processes appear to be relatively effective as two thirds of respondents from the on-line survey of CPRN users agreed that CPRN research publications meet or exceed the standards of most peer reviewed journals<sup>6</sup>. However, one issue identified with respect to quality assurance centered on the peer review process. While CPRN has established criteria for peer reviews, the reviews are not blind, and the reviewers are often CPRN associates. The lack of an independent peer review process could raise concerns about the appearance of a potential conflict of

---

<sup>4</sup> Administrative staff also includes IT and Public Affairs as well as standard administration positions of Finance, HR & Operations.

<sup>5</sup> These methods include peer reviews, the use of experts and stakeholders during both the design and execution of research projects, steering committees and roundtables to validate conclusions and formulate recommendations. The CPRN President also provides a final quality review of completed research reports.

<sup>6</sup> Note: Only 6.4% of on-line survey respondents disagreed that "CPRN's research publications meet or exceeded the standard for most peer reviewed journals. A further 27.4% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

interest. CPRN's quality control processes might well benefit further from independent external peer review wherever possible.

### *Access to Research Products*

***CPRN translates all its documents and research products into both official languages only if the client provides funds for translation. This limits access for potential client groups.*** While translation was not specified as a requirement under the grant, the current practice at CPRN is not fully consistent with the federal government's policy of ensuring access to public documents in both official languages. Given that all Canadians contributed to the tax revenue which funded the grant arrangements, this is a source of concern in the context of the administration of public funds at the federal level.

### **iii) Sustainability**

***With respect to financial sustainability, there has been progress but further efforts are required.*** The evaluation has found that high administrative costs and low billable time pose a barrier to CPRN's ability to achieve financial sustainability. CPRN's deficit averaged \$975,000 in the four years following the receipt of the grant, compared to an average of \$839,000 in the two years prior to the grant's approval.

CPRN plans for financial sustainability comprise two phases. The first phase established infrastructure to provide the management and information systems necessary to implement financial controls and monitoring. CPRN's systems are now improved; better information is available for decision-making purposes. The next phase, as yet to be completed, will be to find a financial model that will allow CPRN to attain greater financial sustainability. Senior management has not reached a conclusion on the most appropriate model to attain this goal.

Based on the key informant interviews, some of the possible solutions to be considered include:

- ensuring all time spent on project work, including administrative time, is recorded and recoverable under particular funding arrangements;
- negotiating project funding that allow for overhead and development costs (which is a challenge in the current contribution agreement structure); and
- achieving a more appropriate balance between fixed costs and variable costs.

***While there has been some progress toward diversification, the federal government remains the dominant funding source for CPRN's operating budget.*** Subsequent to the grant, CPRN has succeeded in diversifying its funding sources. In particular it has attracted greater investments from foundations and NGOs. Funding from foundations and NGOs accounted for 12% to 26% of CPRN project funding during the 2000/01 to 2002/03 fiscal years. The federal government, however, remains the dominant source of revenue for the CPRN, accounting for 62% to 68% of project funding over the same period.

#### **iv) Appropriateness of the Grant Mechanism**

The appropriateness of the grant mechanism is examined from both the perspective of the recipient organization (CPRN) and that of the granting organization (the federal government).

*From the perspective of the CPRN the grant appears to be an appropriate mechanism to achieve the intended results.* The grant provided long-term stable funding to the CPRN. The grant afforded the CPRN sufficient flexibility to strengthen its administrative processes, expand its research programs, and respond to emerging issues as required. In short, the investments helped to increase CPRN's capacity to inform public policy.

*For the federal government, the grant mechanism is appropriate for supporting this type of relationship as it ensures CPRN's independence; however, there are lessons to be drawn.* Traditionally, federal grants, by their nature, do not involve terms and conditions nor do they impose ongoing reporting demands on recipients. The unconditional nature of CPRN's grant provided the government greater leeway to support CPRN's efforts to strengthen its organizational and research capacities without impinging, or appearing to impinge, on the organization's objectivity and independence.

This experience, however, raises issues for consideration for any future government financial assistance that may be considered. These include: the need for greater clarity and improved communications regarding expectations associated with accountability. Internal government documents indicated that CPRN expenditures were not expected to exceed \$4.5 million by the end of the 2004/05 fiscal year. This expectation was not communicated to the grant recipient by the responsible department. As a result, expectations concerning Capital fund expenditures will be exceeded by the end of the 2004/05 fiscal year. In addition, the government may wish to consider conditions related to broader government policies and regulations such as official languages.



# *Management Response*

## **The Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.**

### ***Introduction***

Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc. (CPRN) is a non-profit research organization established in 1994. A five-year grant over the period 1999/2000 to 2004/05 totalling \$9 million was provided to CPRN by Human Resources Development Canada (\$7.5 million) and Health Canada (\$1.5 million). Upon approval of the grant in 1999, the Treasury Board Secretariat required an evaluation framework by March 31, 2000 and an independent evaluation to be completed by March 31, 2004. This Evaluation has been delayed in part due to the split in the Department of Human Resources Development Canada on December 12, 2003. Social Development Canada has assumed responsibility for evaluating the grant.

Prior to this five-year grant, CPRN received annual financial support from the federal government until an External Review Committee reported in 1998 (referred to as the Brown Report) that while CPRN had met its objectives, it continued to face challenges impeding its functions and activities. The Brown Report underscored the need for a capital fund in order for CPRN to support new initiatives in socio-economic research and related activities incorporating public involvement. The federal government agreed to help finance operating costs of CPRN's activities through a grant mechanism.

### ***Overview of Evaluation Findings***

It should be stated from the outset that this evaluation of CPRN is inherently different than an evaluation of traditional government programs or projects where activities and outcomes can be assessed against their objectives and goals. According to the Evaluation, CPRN has been successful in providing value-added activities in informing policy development. The relevance of CPRN's work has been established through informed, high quality research and neutrality. CPRN's output was particularly useful to federal, provincial and municipal government policy-makers responding to the Evaluation's survey. Overall, CPRN's delivery structure in terms of governance and management has improved over the past five years, however, the Evaluation noted that CPRN maintains relatively high administrative costs.

The Evaluation highlighted two primary areas in which improvements could be made. In the area of accountability, there was an expectation on behalf of the Government of Canada that the grant expenditures not exceed \$4.5 million by the end of the 2004/05 fiscal year, which was not articulated to CPRN. Also, the translation of CPRN publications into both official languages, given the widespread use of their documents, may be an appropriate practice for CPRN. However, neither of these issues were conditions of the grant.

## ***Specialized Function: Public Involvement***

CPRN is a pioneer in facilitating citizen dialogues, some of which have been Canada-wide, on various important policy issues. CPRN plays a bridging role between research, policy, stakeholders, and the public without playing an advocacy role. CPRN has developed the ability to move policy discussions into new spaces where constructive dialogue is possible. In doing this, CPRN provides governments with a useful resource for policy development.

CPRN has created a niche for itself in an important area in which there are few competitors. In developing expertise in the area of public dialogue and related issues, CPRN is differentiated from other research institutes giving it a particular relevance in light of the broader direction toward public engagement and consultation. Citizen engagement has been increasingly recognized as a critical part of policy dialogue for governments. It can be viewed as a way of capturing the participation of citizens in decision-making and adding legitimacy to the policy process.

CPRN has a Public Involvement Network (PIN) to facilitate the citizen engagement that is important to the public policy process. PIN, since 2002, has undertaken some large-scale citizens' dialogues, such as Canada's Future, the Citizens' Dialogue on the Future of Health Care in Canada, and more. The Network functions to build support and capacity for public involvement. For instance, PIN has developed tools and methodologies to facilitate public involvement and dialogue, including a how-to manual for federal departments and agencies. It should be noted that with public involvement comes higher administrative costs.

## ***Financial Sustainability***

The Evaluation attests that a grant structure is an appropriate method for financing CPRN because it provided a new capital fund which added stability to CPRN's operations and complemented CPRN's project-based revenue. This stable, increased funding base allowed CPRN to expand outreach activities and take risks in exploring new research initiatives. The grant therefore increased CPRN's ability to conduct and expand its unique research approach, act as a neutral convenor of diverse actors in the research process, as well as build a library of publicly-available research reports free of charge.

However, the Evaluation expresses concerns regarding CPRN's efforts to diversify its funding base to improve financial sustainability. Despite fundraising efforts, CPRN continues to rely heavily on government funding. The Evaluation noted that although the grant was unconditional, the federal government expected CPRN's expenditures of the grant were not to exceed \$4.5 million by the end of the 2004/05 fiscal year. This was not a term or condition of receiving the grant, but rather an expectation that was not communicated to CPRN, and this amount was exceeded. Therefore, any expectations on behalf of the Government of Canada should be more clearly communicated in the future, and perhaps considered as a condition of a grant.



The Evaluation expressed some grounds for concern regarding the amount of resources CPRN devotes to conducting research, compared to administration (governance, financial administration and human resources). While some administrative positions were created to address financial sustainability issues raised by the Brown Report, the Evaluation suggested that CPRN assess the potential of improving the balance between research and administration. Other factors contributing to a high administrative ratio to research staff include CPRN's admired "open" approach to projects involving consultation with stakeholders at the outset of a project to define issues and assess approaches. The Evaluation indicates that CPRN does not translate all of its documents into both official languages, which is inconsistent with the federal government's policy of ensuring access to public documents. Translating reports would be beneficial yet would also result in further administrative costs.

## ***Concluding Remarks***

Although the Evaluation was not a typical assessment of activities and outcomes against objectives, it drew valuable conclusions regarding the relevance of CPRN's research outputs. CPRN, due to its specialized functions, remains an important resource for the Government of Canada in informing the policy-making process. If CPRN is to maintain its leadership role in the area of public involvement, then the financial sustainability question will need to be examined in relationship to the full complement of its research and activities. As for future funding, any further expectations of CPRN's financial accountability or output, such as translation of documents, should perhaps take the form of a term or condition to ensure clarity and conformity.

The Evaluation would not have been possible without the cooperation and participation of many people. We would like to thank members of the Evaluation Steering Committee representing the CPRN and the Departments of Human Resources and Skills Development, Health Canada, Finance, Treasury Board Secretariat, and Social Development. We would also like to express our appreciation and gratitude towards the many experts and users of CPRN material who made this evaluation possible through an online survey of CPRN users and 40 key informant interviews.

Social Policy Directorate  
Policy and Strategic Direction Branch  
Social Development Canada

### Evaluation of CPRN: Items for Action

Areas in need of improvement as identified within the Evaluation	Management response	Detailed actions to address identified areas in need of improvement including planned completion date
1) There is a need to ensure expectations regarding accountability issues by key stakeholders are communicated to grant recipients.	The “expectation” of not exceeding \$4.5 million in expenditures was an oversight by the Government of Canada who did not demonstrate clear communication to CPRN regarding this expectation.	In future funding arrangements any financial accountability issues should be clearly articulated as a term or condition before issuing the grant.
2) There is a need to ensure the broadest use of both Official Languages in published material in order to provide the broadest possible access to research products for all Canadians.	The translation of documents/publications by CPRN in both official languages is a recommendation within the Evaluation.	The translation of documentation in both official languages should be looked at closely as a requirement in any future funding arrangement by the Government of Canada and a third party.

# *1. Introduction*

## **1.1 Purpose**

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of a federal grant to the Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc. (CPRN). The \$9 million grant was provided to the CPRN for the five year period 1999/00 to 2004/05.

## **1.2 Background**

### **1.2.1 Canadian Policy Research Networks Incorporated**

CPRN is a non-profit organization created in 1994, specializing in social and economic policy research and public engagement. CPRN was established by the former head of the Economic Council of Canada, following the closure by the federal government of this and other government supported research institutes in the early 1990s.

CPRN's mission is "...to create knowledge and lead public debate on social and economic issues important to the well-being of Canadians" and its goal is "...to help make Canada a more just, prosperous and caring society". To achieve its objectives, CPRN works through four research networks - Family, Work, Health, and Public Involvement. CPRN now has over two dozen employees, a Board of Directors and an operating budget of \$4.2 million (2003/04).

### **1.2.2 The Federal Grant to CPRN**

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Health Canada provided CPRN with a \$9 million, five year (1999/2000 to 2004/05) grant – \$7.5 million of which came from HRDC (now Social Development Canada).

Prior to this long-term grant, CPRN received support from the federal government on an annual basis. In the late 1990s, CPRN established an external review committee to review the organization as a requisite for the renewal of its funding arrangement<sup>7</sup>. The External Review Committee, which released its report in December 1998 found that while CPRN had been effective in meeting its objectives, it faced many challenges.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> CPRN website: <http://www.cprn.org>.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Brown, Susan McDaniel, and George Thompson (1998) *Final Report of the External Review Committee on Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.* (Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc). This report is commonly referred to as the 'Brown Report', after the chair of the External Review Committee, Robert Brown.

These challenges included: securing funding to provide a stable environment and allow for risk taking; developing a model to finance indirect costs; and seeking greater support and participation from the provinces and the private sector. Other challenges identified in the review included broadening its accessibility and increasing public awareness of CPRN and its research.

The federal grant under review in this evaluation was provided to CPRN in order to create a working capital fund to help finance the operating costs of its activities.

### **1.2.3 Evaluation Criteria**

Treasury Board Secretariat approval of the CPRN grant on March 18, 1999 required the completion of an evaluation framework by March 31, 2000 and an independent evaluation of the grant by March 31, 2004.<sup>9</sup>

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess:

- the value-added contribution of CPRN's activities in informing policy making (i.e. success, relevance and delivery);
- the degree CPRN has been successful in diversifying funding sources towards financial independence (i.e. sustainability); and
- the appropriateness of the current grant funding mechanism.

---

<sup>9</sup> This CPRN evaluation is delayed, in considerable part because of the organizational disruptions accompanying the splitting of Human Resources Development Canada into two separate government departments (Social Development Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada). Treasury Board Secretariat has been advised of the delays in the completion of the work.

## ***2. Evaluation Methodology***

The evaluation was led by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from Social Development Canada, Health Canada, Treasury Board Secretariat, the Department of Finance, and CPRN.

Both the methodology and the draft final report, including technical reports, were separately peer reviewed by subject area and methodological experts. The peers' recommendations have been incorporated into the final report.

Further detail on the evaluation issues and methodology follow in this chapter. A more in-depth treatment of this subject matter can be found in *Evaluation of the Federal Grant Provided to the Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.: Revised Methodology Report*. In addition, separate technical reports were developed for each line of evidence undertaken. These reports are referenced, where appropriate, throughout the report.

### **2.1 Evaluation Objectives**

The objectives of the evaluation were to assess:

- the value-added contribution of CPRN's activities in informing policy making (i.e. success, relevance and delivery);
- the degree CPRN has been successful in diversifying funding sources towards financial independence (i.e. sustainability); and
- the appropriateness of the current grant funding mechanism.

A matrix of the key evaluation questions, supporting criteria, and data sources are provided in Appendix A. The ordering of the questions in this report has been modified slightly in comparison with that appearing in the *Revised Methodology Report* in order to better reflect the flow of evidence presented.

### **2.2 Evaluation Methodology**

Multiple lines of evidence were used to corroborate the evaluation results identified from a variety of information sources. Thus the methodology included:

- a document and literature review;
- a survey of comparative institutes;
- an administrative data analysis;
- citation analysis;
- an online survey of users;

- key informant interviews; and
- individual case studies.

Two external peer reviewers examined the preliminary methodology report. In response to their comments, revisions were made where feasible, to strengthen the methodology. The changes include an increase in the number of key informant interviews and a change in responsibilities for case study selection (from CPRN to the evaluation consultants). In addition, the methodology was expanded to include an examination of unsuccessful (as well as successful) research projects and a review of staffing issues related to issues of organization, structure and sustainability.

### **2.2.1 Document and Literature Review<sup>10</sup>**

The document and literature review had two goals:

- to review existing academic literature about think tanks and their roles in Canada for the development of public policy and how to measure their impact; and
- to summarize funding models for external policy research in comparable Canadian jurisdictions and internationally.

This review was completed as part of the process to develop the methodology. The review assisted in critically assessing proposed methods and in identifying key measures and information requirements.

### **2.2.2 Comparative Analysis<sup>11</sup>**

Based on their similarity to CPRN in terms of scope of operations and activities, the evaluation consultants selected the following five institutes for the comparative analysis:

- Caledon Institute of Social Policy
- Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD)
- C.D. Howe Institute
- Fraser Institute
- Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP).

Each institute completed a questionnaire to facilitate the analysis.<sup>12</sup> To ensure the comparability of data, CPRN was also requested to complete the questionnaire.

---

<sup>10</sup> *Evaluation of the Federal Grant Provided to the Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.: Literature Review Technical Report.*

<sup>11</sup> *Evaluation of the Federal Grant Provided to the Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.: Administrative Analysis Technical Report.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* (Appendix A).

**Limitations and Caveats.** The survey of comparative institutes provided insights into the nature and scope of the activities and operations of research institutes similar to CPRN. The survey also informed the administrative analysis, providing key data including information on staffing levels and website statistics, among others (see 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 below).

Additional financial information such as sources of revenue, and more in-depth cost breakdowns of activities could have contributed to a more systematic comparison of the various institutes included in the study. These organizations, however, were unwilling to share certain types of information and not all of the information requested by the evaluation consultants was released by the participating institutions (including CPRN). These institutes compete with each other, and with other firms, for funding. As a result they did not release information that was considered essential to their competitive position in the marketplace (this type of information includes, for example, detailed budget information such as funding sources and per diem rates).

### **2.2.3 Administrative Data Analysis<sup>13</sup>**

In support of the evaluation, CPRN provided extensive administrative data to the evaluation consultants. This information included detailed website statistics, financial data, detailed information on time use, listing of publications, annual reports and other special reports on CPRN's operations and performance.

**Limitations and Caveat:** The evaluation consultants reported that CPRN went to considerable effort to make available all information requested. However, as detailed above (section 2.2.2), CPRN did not release information where it was considered sensitive to their position in the market.

### **2.2.4 Citation Analysis<sup>14</sup>**

This analysis included examination of print media and other sources for disseminating information, including the Internet and scholarly journals.

The evaluation consultants selected *Canadian Business and Current Affairs* (CBCA) as a key source for this line of evidence because it reports on print media viewed as representative of the media generating news (i.e. CBCA does not draw upon sources which typically reprint stories from other sources). Simple hit counts obtained from clipping services are not an appropriate metric because of the dominance of chain newspapers, magazines and wire services in the Canadian market.

To identify Internet citations, the consultants surveyed sources of links of potential interest to policy researchers. Google was also queried for the number of links to specific sites. To assess the relative influence of the various think tanks, links to the home pages

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

of the comparative institutes were retrieved. As an additional metric, the web sites of selected larger Canadian universities were also reviewed for citations pertaining to CPRN and the comparator institutes.

***Limitations and Caveats.*** The information gathered on numbers of CPRN publications, the media and citation analysis, and website statistics are informative, but conclusions about CPRN’s effectiveness or cost-effectiveness cannot be derived directly from these measures. Such an assessment requires consideration of CPRN’s approach to the marketplace and a more subjective assessment by its users of the value of the research. Simple citation counts, media references and website downloads are too easily influenced by factors (such as self-referencing or reprinted materials) that extend beyond the “value” of the research.

## **2.2.5 Online Survey<sup>15</sup>**

An online survey was undertaken to determine how CPRN is perceived by various stakeholders, and also to examine the impacts of CPRN on the Canadian policy community. The online survey was also used to examine issues such as the relevance and use of CPRN studies, products, and other activities.

The sampling frame was drawn from CPRN’s e-network database. CPRN initially started with a universe of 5,500 potential respondents. However, after cleaning the data base for duplication, files not up to date, and invalid email addresses, the actual number of valid email addresses in the data base was over 3,600. An invitation to participate in the survey was sent out to these 3,643 confirmed e-network recipients. In total, 907 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 24.9 percent.

***Limitations and Caveats:*** While the online survey provided the evaluation with information from a very broad spectrum of CPRN users both within and outside Canada, the survey results are not intended to be representative of all Canadian public policy information users. All of the individuals contacted were expected to be familiar with CPRN information and research to some extent and capable of providing feedback on the quality of CPRN’s products and the impacts CPRN’s work may have had on the individual or the organization they represent.

Thus the respondents to the online survey were not randomly selected, but comprise a self-selected sample of CPRN users. As such, there are no rigorous statistical grounds for generalizing the results beyond the set of respondents, the respondent set must be presumed to be biased (with respect to the full sampling frame), and any bias is most likely to favour CPRN. While these survey respondents may be disproportionately representative of people who see CPRN’s activities in a positive light, not all of the feedback provided was positive – in some instances a number of user responses were critical of CPRN.

---

<sup>15</sup> *Evaluation of the Federal Grant Provided to the Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.: Online Survey Technical Report.*



Concepts such as bias are relevant to the problem of generalizing from a sample to a population (the “inference problem”). A prior question would be “what is the population?”. There is no reason to assume automatically that the CPRN subscriber list was the “right” target population for the survey. The survey is part of an evaluation of how effectively CPRN serves the purposes for which it was set up, that of informing public policymaking in CPRN’s four areas of focus. The “right” population then presumably consists of those researchers and policymakers who might potentially use CPRN’s products to improve their work. Since no think tank can be everything to everybody, the existence of a large body of researchers and policymakers (perhaps even all the non-respondents) who do *not* find CPRN’s contributions useful, does *not* detract from the value of CPRN.

In sum, the partial nature of the online survey is acknowledged (restricted to CPRN users) as is the limited survey response (24.9%). Overall, it is the evaluation’s assessment that there are grounds for confidence in the findings more generally, based on multiple lines of evidence particularly through key informant panels, individual in-depth case-studies and citation analysis undertaken by an independent consultant.

## **2.2.6 Key Informant Interviews<sup>16</sup>**

The case studies provided an opportunity to raise broader issues (not project specific) relevant to CPRN. Each case study key informant guide contained project specific questions and broader questions. Not all key informants selected for the case studies were familiar enough with CPRN to provide answers to these broader questions, but most did provide this additional input.

To broaden the scope of the key informants, interviews were also conducted with senior level stakeholders who could provide additional input for the evaluation. In total over 45 interview sessions were conducted with 40<sup>17</sup> key informants.

***Limitations and Caveats.*** The key informant interviews were a rich source of information to address all the evaluation issues. Many of the key informant interviews, however, were conducted with individuals who have been directly involved with CPRN projects, either as funders or researchers and who therefore may have vested interests in the institution. To provide balance, external perspectives were also sought. Interviews were also conducted with officials of research institutions which can be considered competitors of CPRN (including, for example, representatives of institutes included in the comparative analysis – Caledon Institute of Social Policy, and the Canadian Council on Social Development).

---

<sup>16</sup> See: *Evaluation of the Federal Grant Provided to the Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.: Case Study and Key Informant Interviews Technical Report.*

<sup>17</sup> Some sessions were conducted with the same individual on more than one occasion. For example, Network Directors were interviewed at the beginning of the evaluation to obtain information on CPRN and the Network in general and then were interviewed later as part of a case study. Some interview sessions were conducted with two key informants present.

## 2.2.7 Case Studies<sup>18</sup>

Four case studies were conducted. Three of the cases were considered examples of ‘successful’ initiatives, and the last provided an example of an initiative that had not met expectations:

- Project-based Case Study: *Health Human Resources*, Health Network
- *Canadian Diversity Model*, Family Network
- *Dialogue on Canada’s Future*, Public Involvement Network
- *Changing Employment Relationships* (CER), Work Network

Case selection began with CPRN proposing approximately two candidates from each of its Networks, based on their potential for significant impact on public policy. CPRN representatives were also asked to provide examples of “unsuccessful” projects (e.g., projects that did not proceed due to lack of interest, did not get completed or published due to problems conducting the research, etc.). The intent of documenting unsuccessful projects was to demonstrate the difficulties and challenges of CPRN’s operating environment.

The evaluation consultants were responsible for the final selection of the case studies, based on the following criteria:

- Potential for demonstrable impact on informing public policy;
- Representation of at least three of the four networks;
- Representation of projects carried out directly for clients, as well as those intended for a broader audience; and
- Availability of key informants during the timeframe of the evaluation.

***Limitations and Caveats.*** Considering CPRN has generated over 100 research reports since 1998, four case studies cannot be considered a representative sample of their research. The case studies do, however, provide insights into CPRN’s research process, its operating environment and provide concrete examples of how CPRN has influenced public policy.

---

<sup>18</sup> See: *Evaluation of the Federal Grant Provided to the Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.: Case Study and Key Informant Interviews Technical Report.*

## ***3. Informing Policy***

One of the key objectives for the evaluation was to measure CPRN's impact on the development of social and economic policy. Specifically,

- Has CPRN made progress in meeting its ultimate objective of informing the development of social and economic policy?
- To what extent can this progress be attributed to funding under the grant?

Answering these questions posed a significant challenge for the evaluation. Measuring the impact of social science research, let alone that of think tanks, on policy-making has long been recognized as difficult (Weiss, 1977; Lynn 1978). This is so for several reasons, among them that the origins of policy are rarely found in a single piece of research. Most policy decisions involve multiple influences and stakeholders. Moreover, think tanks may exercise different kinds of influence at different stages of the policy-making process (Abelson, 2002). Lastly, research can have a longer rather than short-term impact on policy often by broadening the horizons of policy-makers and advisors. Those influenced by research, as well as those who craft it, may not immediately be in a position to influence policy, but may eventually move into positions of influence (Lindquist, 1990; 2001).

Such dynamics require evaluation methodologies that capture the indirect and subtle channels of influence in a contested environment (Sabatier, 1987; Lindquist, 1989). With the above caveats in mind, this chapter summarizes the evaluation evidence available to address issues of policy impact, including:

- perceptions of the importance of various sources of information on policy decision making;
- the incidence of citations of CPRN research and information in documents prepared by government employees;
- citations and use of CPRN research by academics;
- perceptions of impacts of CPRN on government policy makers, public opinion and impact on an individuals own work; and
- examples of specific links between CPRN's research public policy debates and policy decision making.

### **3.1 Sources of Information for Policy Development**

Government policy respondents to the online survey were asked to rate the influence of various sources on program and policy decisions. Based on these self-reported assessments, internal sources of information had the highest impact. The highest rated sources of influence were discussions or advice from internal staff (mean rating 3.9) and research and policy papers prepared by internal staff (mean rating 3.7). In terms of external

sources of influence on program and policy decisions, the highest impacts were for research and policy papers prepared by academics or academic journal articles (mean rating 3.3) and research and policy papers prepared by think tanks (mean rating 3.3).

Overall the results indicate that there is no single source of external influence on government policy decisions. Among potential external sources, research information prepared by think tanks ranks highly, with 46 percent of the government policy respondents to the online survey rating their influence as high or very high. The results suggest that a think tank with a strong empirical or academic approach will have more influence than one that is seen as being an advocate of certain policies or positions. Papers by academics or journal articles were considered highly or very highly influential by 42 percent of the government policy respondents; only 17 percent rated research and policy papers prepared by advocacy groups as high or very high.

## 3.2 Impacts on Policy Development

Online survey respondents were asked to rate the impact of CPRN on government decision makers, public opinion and their own work.

Respondents ranked CPRN's impact on public opinion lower than its impact on decision makers or on the respondents' own work. The lowest ratings were for CPRN's impact on public opinion (the average rating was 2.9<sup>19</sup>). In fact more respondents rated CPRN's impact on public opinion as low or very low (30 percent) than rated the impact as high or very high (18 percent).

A much greater percentage respondents (34%) rated CPRN's impact on government decision makers as high or very high (average rating 3.2). While this impact estimate is fairly close to the self-reported impact by federal policy respondents, a more accurate estimate of the influence CPRN has had on Canadian government respondents involved in policy may be derived from the ratings of impact on their own work, as described below.

Overall, the highest impact rating was on the respondent's own work, 50 percent of respondents rated CPRN's impact as high or very high (mean rating 3.5; Exhibit 3.2.1). Respondents from NGOs and academics provided the highest ratings for CPRN's impact on their own work. Over two-thirds of the NGO survey respondents, 67 percent, rated CPRN's impact on their own work as high or very high (mean rating 3.8), for academics 58 percent rated the impact as high or very high (mean rating 3.7). Among government policy respondents, the federal policy respondents provided the lowest ratings for the impact of CPRN on their work, mean rating 3.1; provincial policy respondents had an average rating of 3.3. Despite the lower ratings, the findings indicate a high level of impact on government employees involved in policy, including:

- 27% of federal policy respondents rated CPRN's impact on their work as high and 5% as very high.

---

<sup>19</sup> Based on an impact rating of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

- 35% of provincial policy respondents rated CPRN’s impact on their work as high and 7% as very high.

In sum, slightly more than 100 federal, provincial and municipal government respondents who were involved in policy research or decision making (n=287) reported that they were highly or very highly influenced by CPRN research and information they had used in the past year.

<b>Exhibit 3.2.1 CPRN Impact Ratings by Type of Respondent</b>								
	<b>Federal Policy</b>	<b>Provincial Policy</b>	<b>Municipal Policy</b>	<b>Academics</b>	<b>Think Tanks</b>	<b>NGOs</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Impact on your own work</b>								
Very low	6.6%	4.0%	2.6%	1.3%	4.2%	0.0%	1.9%	2.8%
Low	17.2%	9.5%	5.1%	3.8%	16.7%	5.7%	5.7%	8.4%
Moderate	44.3%	44.4%	43.6%	36.7%	45.8%	27.3%	36.0%	38.5%
High	27.0%	34.9%	35.9%	38.0%	29.2%	44.3%	39.0%	36.4%
Very high	4.9%	7.1%	12.8%	20.3%	4.2%	22.7%	17.4%	13.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Mean Rating***	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.7	3.1	3.8	3.6	3.5
Sample Size	122	126	39	79	24	88	264	122

\*\*\* Based on a rating of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

Source: *Online Survey Technical Report*, page 22.

Many government policy respondents who reported that CPRN had had a high or very high impact on their work indicated that CPRN’s research was used to provide a framework for policy discussions or had enhanced their understanding of issues. The most common comments were that CPRN’s research was used in background papers, to support or backup research conducted internally, for discussions of policy or presentations, or used to demonstrate the usefulness of a particular methodology.

This type of impact is illustrated by the following quotation: “The influence on my work is not always directly related to changes of policy, but rather affords a broader picture within which to make decisions.” A few of the comments provided very specific examples of CPRN’s impact on policy development. These impacts included the following:

- “As a human resources professional in a large public sector organization, I have found the CPRN research and material on *Work and Job Quality* very valuable. I have gained very practical insights that have helped us develop strategy around implementation to improve the quality of our workplace.”
- “Because of my association with CPRN, I was able to put forward policy options for government that were evidence-based, and absolutely credible. In fact, the current configuration of the Department of Family and Community Services in NB is based on principles drawn from CPRN work.”

- “In the development of Canada's *National Plan of Action for Children*, policy research from CPRN had a significant impact on family related policy.”

Academics who reported that CPRN had had a high or very high impact on their work indicated that they used CPRN extensively in their own research, as teaching material, or as a general resource they directed their students to use.

The case studies and key informant interviews provided considerable insights on how CPRN influences social policy debates and policy development. Most key informants stated that finding direct linkages between CPRN's research and policy changes would be difficult. Where CPRN is most effective is in influencing the way policy makers think about problems. Key informants indicated CPRN has been very effective at bringing forward the social agenda on many issues, for example, the idea that the government should make social as well as economic investments in children's policy. CPRN's work has made policy makers more sensitive to some issues. One example cited was CPRN's *Employment Relationships* study which attracted attention to job quality.

CPRN does not often typically actively seek to advance a specific policy. CPRN's senior management emphasized that CPRN doesn't make policy, it is more involved in the process, having input to the policy debates. CPRN provides the background information required to make policy but not the actual policy itself. CPRN does not want to be seen as an advocate for specific policies since it may affect their status as a neutral evidence-based research institute.

Despite the difficulties for institutions such as CPRN to influence policy, the case studies and key informant interviews provided numerous examples of how CPRN had influenced the dialogue on policy and some examples of a more direct impact on policy development. For example, CPRN's Health Network completed the *Health Human Resources* project under contract to the *Romanow Commission*. According to key informants from the *Romanow Commission*, the project helped shape the thinking at the Commission by framing the issues and by influencing the Commission that a key priority for the Health Council should be health human resources.

Other examples include:

- Three provinces have based their policy relevant to child development on CPRN's *Best Policy Mix for Children*. This study also had an impact on the federal government's changes to tax policies.
- CPRN's study, *Changing Employment Relationships* (CER), has had broad impacts including a significant influence on the design of Statistics Canada's *Workplace and Employee Survey*.
- CPRN's work on non-profit organizations made policy makers see them as employers when previously they weren't really considered a segment of the labour market. CPRN's work on the non-profit sector has also encouraged HRDC to conduct a feasibility study to see if there is a need for a non-profit HR sector council.

Another indication of CPRN's impact on policy comes from an examination of the degree to which CPRN materials are referenced by others. The online survey provided evidence that CPRN's research and information are cited in documents prepared by government:

- 28% of federal policy respondents occasionally referenced CPRN materials in documents, 8% regularly.
- 34% of provincial policy respondents occasionally referenced CPRN materials in documents, 10% regularly.

The results show that CPRN's academic clients make considerable use of CPRN information and research. Academics from CPRN's network were even more likely than policy makers to reference CPRN research and information:

- 47% of the academic respondents referenced CPRN information or research occasionally in the previous 12 months, 36% regularly.
- 43% used CPRN information or research in their courses occasionally in the previous 12 months, 24% regularly.

### **3.3 Perceptions of Research Quality**

CPRN received high ratings from their "interested" users for the quality of their research and related measures (See Chapter 2, Section 2.2.5 for a description of the online survey respondents). Survey respondents were asked to rate CPRN's research or information on a series of attributes using a five-point rating scale where 1 was very low and 5 was very high. The distribution of the rating for each attribute and the average rating is provided in Exhibit 3.3.1.

- 92% rated the overall quality of CPRN's research and information as high or very high (mean rating 4.3).
- 85% rated the thoroughness and comprehensiveness as high or very high (mean rating 4.1).
- 83% rated CPRN's academic standards or rigour as high or very high (mean rating 4.1).

Respondents were also asked to provide an aggregate rating for other think tanks they had used in the previous 12 months. The average ratings were lower than those provided for CPRN, however, respondents also stated that the quality among the referenced think tanks varied substantially and it was difficult to provide a meaningful overall rating. While the actual ratings may not be meaningful to discuss, the main message of this analysis is that there are think tanks that do not consistently produce high quality research and information. CPRN is among the think tanks that do.

**Exhibit 3.3.1  
CPRN Attribute Ratings**

	<b>1 (Very Low)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5 (Very High)</b>	<b>Mean Rating</b>
Relevance	0.3%	1.3%	11.6%	44.3%	42.5%	4.3
Overall Quality	0.3%	0.3%	7.3%	56.2%	36.0%	4.3
Ease of accessing research reports/ information	0.7%	2.6%	14.4%	44.0%	38.4%	4.2
Understandable to readers	0.3%	1.1%	12.0%	55.0%	31.7%	4.2
Thoroughness/comprehensiveness	0.1%	1.1%	14.0%	56.2%	28.6%	4.1
Academic standards/rigour	0.1%	0.8%	16.0%	56.5%	26.5%	4.1
Provides new perspectives/insights	0.8%	2.3%	21.8%	49.7%	25.3%	4.0
Objectivity	0.5%	1.7%	18.0%	59.4%	20.3%	4.0

Based on attribute rating of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

Source: *Online Survey Technical Report*, page 15.

To further assess perceptions of CPRN’s research, online survey respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements about CPRN (Exhibit 3.3.2). The results support the ratings discussed above. For example:

- 66% of respondents agreed CPRN’s research publications meet or exceed the standards of most peer-reviewed journals (mean rating 3.8).
- 72% disagreed that CPRN’s research was too academic (mean rating 2.2).

As will be discussed later in Chapter 4, CPRN’s neutrality is a key feature of their niche as a provider of social policy research. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (62%) agreed with the statement “CPRN is independent of government influence” a further 28% provided a neutral or mid-point rating, and 11% disagreed with the statement. The rating of CPRN’s objectivity was higher, 80 percent of online survey respondents rated CPRN’s objectivity as high or very high (Exhibit 3.3.1).



**Exhibit 3.3.2  
Opinions Of CPRN**

	<b>1 Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5 Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Mean Rating</b>
I can easily find the CPRN research and information that interests me on their website	0.7%	4.4%	7.6%	45.8%	41.4%	4.2
CPRN provides new ideas for future social policy	0.7%	2.4%	9.2%	51.3%	36.4%	4.2
CPRN provides a unique perspective on social policy that sets it apart from other think tanks	0.6%	4.0%	13.6%	46.8%	35.1%	4.1
CPRN's research publications meet or exceed the standards of most peer-reviewed journals	0.3%	6.1%	27.4%	49.5%	16.6%	3.8
CPRN is independent of government influence	1.5%	9.1%	27.6%	42.5%	19.4%	3.7
If CPRN did not exist I could find the same research elsewhere	13.8%	47.8%	23.2%	10.5%	4.6%	2.4
CPRN's research is too academic	13.1%	58.9%	21.1%	5.3%	1.5%	2.2

Based on a rating of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Source: *Online Survey Technical Report*, page 18.

Information gathered from the on-line survey, key informant interviews and case studies provided consistent evidence that CPRN's research is perceived as being of very high quality. Based primarily on the key informant interviews conducted for the case studies, there are elements in most CPRN projects that contribute to this positive finding, including:

- consulting experts early on to frame questions and testing them out with experts and stakeholders as a project evolves;
- rigorous recruitment/reference checks carried out on the outside contributors;
- conducting a thorough literature review;
- consulting with stakeholders during the project;
- peer reviews;
- roundtables to discuss reports and to formulate or validate conclusions and recommendations; and
- internal reviews and a review of reports by the President.

The key informant interviews conducted with individuals not involved with the case studies suggested the quality of the research undertaken by CPRN is strongly influenced by individual Network Directors. While research quality is generally viewed as high, key informants rated CPRN's research as ranging from "solid" to "exceptional". The individuals

who made this distinction attributed the difference almost entirely to the abilities of the individual Network Directors.

Other key informants stated CPRN's interpretation and use of information was "leading edge". In their view the term "leading edge" did not apply to methodology, but to how information is translated into new paradigms for looking at social policy issues and deriving innovative solutions.

### 3.4 Summary

*The evidence points to the conclusion that CPRN has been successful in meeting its objective of informing the development of social and economic policy.* The evidence from the evaluation's online survey suggests that the greatest influence of the CPRN was on the government, academic and non-governmental sectors. More than one third of federal policy respondents (n=122) accessing CPRN materials indicated that they occasionally or regularly referenced CPRN materials and that CPRN's research has had an impact on their work. Among provincial government policy respondents the figure was 44% (n=126). Sixty-seven percent of NGO respondents (n=88), and 58% of academics (n=79) rated the impact of CPRN on their work as high or very high.

Further evidence of the CPRN's contribution to informing policy comes from in-depth evaluation case-studies. For example, key informants from the *Health Human Resources Project* case study concluded that CPRN's research was instrumental in framing issues and shaping thinking at the *Romanow Commission*. The Project's findings are cited extensively in Commission's report (Chapter 4) and several recommendations for the Health Council of Canada reflect the CPRN suggested roles for a national health human resource agency.

*CPRN's research is viewed as high quality and objective by those accessing the material.* Approximately 92% of online survey users responding (n=907) rated the overall quality of CPRN's research and information as high, or very high and 83% rated CPRN's academic standards or rigour as high or very high. This assessment of CPRN's research was further confirmed in the key informant interviews and case studies. Nearly two thirds of respondents also assessed the CPRN as being independent of government influence and 80% rated objectivity as high or very high.

## 4. Relevance

This chapter responds to the following key evaluation questions:

- Is there a continued need for the CPRN, as a source of policy research, given the availability of other government and non-governmental policy-research sources?
- Are the areas that CPRN targets as a priority for its research appropriate to the needs of policy makers? Has CPRN adopted a forward looking agenda?
- Does the CPRN have safeguards in place to avoid overlap and duplication with other like organizations, and to maximize coordination of research and dissemination?

### 4.1 CPRN's Role in Policy Research

Evidence from the literature review provides insights into the emergence of think tanks in Canada and internationally as well as the policy making conditions which contributed to CPRN's establishment (Appendix B).

If there was considerable concern in the early 1970s about the state of policy research in Canada, this was largely erased by the early 1990s. There had been a great proliferation of think tanks in Canada, complemented by an equally dramatic increase in the number of university-based policy-oriented research centers. Indeed, when the national finance continued to deteriorate in the early 1990s, and the government announced that it would close the Economic Council, the Science Council, the Law Reform Commission, and the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security in 1992 as part of a broader round of cutbacks, the Minister of Finance pointed to the great number of think tanks that had emerged during the last two decades (Abelson and Lindquist, 2002).

The other major development in the operating environment of most Canadian think tanks revolved around the federal government's 1994/95 *Program Review*. During this process, concerns emerged that the policy capacity of the Canadian public service had been compromised due to expenditure restraints and that the focus of senior officials had shifted from policy to management and restructuring issues (Anderson, 1996; Lindquist and Desveaux, 1998; Bakvis 2000). To rebuild and develop a more forward-looking capability in the public service, the Clerk of the Privy Council announced the *Policy Research Initiative*. This initiative consisted of efforts to renew expertise within departments, to encourage collaborative scanning and horizontal development across departments, and to encourage productive relationships with think tanks and academic researchers outside government. The Policy Research Secretariat was established and several roundtables, conferences, publications and other initiatives were set in motion to work with think tanks and academics. It was in this environment that the early funding arrangements for CPRN were put into place.

As previously mentioned, CPRN was established following the elimination of the *Economic Council of Canada*. One objective was to provide a new approach towards policy research, one that would be less bureaucratic and require less annual economic forecasting and traditional economic research. As it evolved CPRN moved more squarely into the realms of health, work, and social policy, and developed a special niche in the area of systematic public engagement.

The online survey of CPRN users indicated considerable agreement among respondents that CPRN now occupies a relatively unique niche in the public policy community. This was demonstrated when they were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements about CPRN, including:

- 82% agreed that CPRN provided a unique perspective on social policy that set it apart from other think tanks (mean rating 4.1<sup>20</sup>). Less than 5% disagreed with this statement and only 14% provided a neutral or mid-point rating on the scale.
- 88% agreed with the statement “CPRN provides new ideas for future social policy (mean rating 4.2).
- Few respondents, 15%, agreed they could find the same research elsewhere if CPRN did not exist, 62% disagreed with this statement.

The key informant interviews largely supported the online survey results. When key informants were asked what makes CPRN unique, most stated CPRN occupied a neutral space. The high quality of its research combined with a more neutral stance was viewed as providing CPRN’s research a high degree of credibility among all types of stakeholders. In the opinion of some key informants, this enabled CPRN to bring together very diverse individuals together to discuss topics in an environment that is viewed to be neutral.

The importance of CPRN’s neutrality also showed-up in the comments provided by survey respondents. Several respondents commented on CPRN’s neutrality as a key feature of the organization. Respondents indicated that CPRN was less biased or politically motivated and their conclusions were evidence-based. As one respondent stated, “I have found it very easy to access, offers refreshing ideas, promotes a viewpoint but not an ideology.”

While most respondents agreed that CPRN is neutral and unbiased, this was not the opinion of all respondents. A small minority of respondents expressed concerns that CPRN was too closely linked to government.

Almost all the key informants who provided an opinion agreed there was a need for CPRN. Key informants felt CPRN “filled a void”, mainly because CPRN is considered somewhat unique among think tanks. While any one of CPRN’s main attributes may not make it unique, the combination did. As described above, the most common attributes or reasons mentioned by key informants for the need for CPRN were:

---

<sup>20</sup> Based on a rating of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

- operates in a neutral space;
- focus on social policy;
- its consultative process, ability to bring individuals with diverse views together;
- builds on a strong empirical base of information; and
- provides a bridge between academic research and policy information/needs.

Some key informants, while stating there was a need for CPRN, also clarified that this did not imply CPRN was the only institute worthy of support or that there wasn't a need for other institutions. Many other think tanks provided an important perspective on issues and were also unique in the manner in which they met the needs of policy makers or informed public policy debates. Even among CPRN's users there was a high incidence of using other think tanks for policy research. The online survey indicated that 81 percent of the respondents used information from one or more of eight other think tanks listed in the survey in the past 12 months.

How many think tanks are required? Day (2000) provides a tabulation showing an average of about two think tanks per million in European countries (range was one in Germany to almost four in Austria). On that basis, Abelson (2002) provided a selected profile of think tanks in the United States and some 28 Canadian think tanks of which 24 are still operational. On a comparison basis, Canada has, at best, adequate capacity in some perspectives. It is important to note that only a few are focused on a broad range of government policies that have a national focus.

## 4.2 Responsiveness to Policy Needs

The relevance of CPRN's research to policy needs rated among the highest rated attributes examined in the online survey (overall quality received a similar rating). Eighty-seven percent of respondents rated the relevance of CPRN's research and information as high or very high (mean rating 4.3<sup>21</sup>). Although respondents from other think tanks and federal policy respondents provided the lowest average ratings in this regard (4.0 and 4.1 respectively), the main difference was in the percentage providing a very high rating versus a high rating. Among the federal policy respondents, very few, less than 3 percent, provided a rating of low or very low for CPRN's relevance.

Among key informants interviewed, there was a high degree of agreement that CPRN is responsive to the needs of policy makers. Of course CPRN does not meet the needs of everyone, for example, key informants noted CPRN has definitely shifted from the previous economics-based issues it was once affiliated with and moved firmly to a social policy agenda. Within the policy areas CPRN has selected as its research focus, however, most key informants believed CPRN was very responsive to the needs of policy makers.

Key informants generally agreed CPRN was forward looking as well as responsive to the needs of policy makers. Key informants attributed this to many factors including

---

<sup>21</sup> Based on an attribute rating of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

the President's ability to anticipate new policy directions within the government. Other reasons included CPRN's capacity to formally and informally consult with senior policy decision makers and the consultative nature of CPRN's research process. CPRN was also viewed by key informants as being responsive in providing information in a timely fashion. CPRN does not have a set schedule for meetings and adapts itself to policy makers' schedules. This flexibility would appear to be an area of improvement since the Brown Report (Brown et al., 1998) had cited problems with the timeliness of CPRN's research.

Several key informants stated that the best test of whether CPRN meets the needs of policy makers is that they come to CPRN to undertake projects. This appears a reasonable indicator where CPRN is selected to conduct research outside of a competitive process. It is more difficult to assess the extent to which CPRN is fulfilling an unmet need when it conducts projects won through competitive bidding processes.

CPRN's research agenda is planned out in advance for its November Board meeting. Senior management stated CPRN attempts to keep a balance between being proactive and reactive in its research agenda. Since clients come to CPRN with research they want done it is difficult for CPRN to plan with certainty the number and types of projects CPRN will undertake in a given year. Over the years, about 50 percent of CPRN's research has been planned, about 50 percent opportunistic.

CPRN's requirement to obtain project funding for each new initiative may keep the organization responsive to the needs of policy makers, but it can also be time consuming. Moreover, the ability to get a project funded strongly suggests relevance to policy makers' interests but the failure to obtain funding does not necessarily mean a given project is not important. CPRN has had numerous unsuccessful projects. These endeavours generally fall into three categories:

- projects abandoned during the development stage due to lack of interest or sufficient funding available;
- projects initiated but abandoned during the early stages of the project because CPRN was unable to find the right researcher to undertake the background paper; and
- later phases of multiphase projects did not proceed.

The first category is the most common. Failure to obtain funding often occurs because CPRN has misread the level of interest or intended funders may have overestimated the level of interest within their own organizations. The second category of unsuccessful projects, those that are abandoned after funding has been approved, are less common, but can be very costly for CPRN in terms of resources utilized.

### **4.3 Overlap and Duplication**

CPRN informally coordinates its research activities with some other institutes, especially with the Canada West Foundation, Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), and the Public Policy Forum (PPF). CPRN has also worked on joint projects with other institutes. Some key informants indicated that, while there may be a need for more

collaboration between think tanks, the perception of competition for contributions and grants may make this a challenge. There also has to be a basis or foundation for cooperation, a sharing of values and a common approach to the research, some value added for both institutions.

Key informants complemented CPRN on its open approach. CPRN was viewed as willing to consult with multiple stakeholders at the outset of a project to define the issues and develop the best approach to answer the questions. This process helps ensure that CPRN is aware of other initiatives and avoids duplication and CPRN is able to take advantage of the learning others have obtained from similar projects.

The survey of comparative institutes indicated some overlap between the selected think tanks and CPRN in terms of broad issue areas, but not in terms of specific topics. The low likelihood of overlap and duplication was further supported by the literature review. Think tanks are incredibly diverse organizations. They emphasize different values and substantive focus and have different means and degrees of interest in directly influencing policy debates. They can rely on very different forms of policy inquiry, levels of analysis and types of research. Many will have very different ideas of their intended audiences and the extent to which they seek media impact (Lindquist, 1993). Indeed, the fact that many think tanks may conduct policy inquiry in a particular field with many government agencies, university researchers, and other think tanks is not necessarily duplication or overlap because each institute will contribute a unique perspective to the debate (Lindquist, 1999). A key challenge for all think tanks, then, is to define their niche in a credible, consistent way, and for observers to develop an understanding of their contribution.

When the question of possible overlap with research being undertaken by other institutes was raised, several key informants felt this was not an issue in the case of CPRN. The fact that another institute is conducting research on a similar topic should not preclude CPRN from undertaking a project on the same subject. Each organization brings a different perspective and a different approach to a policy issue. CPRN is viewed as a neutral evidence-based research institute with few peers in this regard. For this reason many key informants felt that in most cases overlap or duplication of effort would be a perception not a reality.

## 4.4 Summary

*The evaluation concludes that there is significant support for the policy research provided by the CPRN.* CPRN is viewed as occupying an independent and neutral policy niche in the spectrum of policy research institutes that makes it a unique and valued source of information. Among respondents to the online survey of CPRN users (n=907), 82% agreed that the CPRN provided a unique perspective on social policy. In addition, 88% agreed with the statement that “CPRN provides new ideas for future social policy”. Only 15% of respondents indicated they could find the same research elsewhere if the CPRN did not exist. In addition, the case study analysis indicated that CPRN research has helped to frame policy discussions related to health policy, children and the not for profit sector.

*Duplication and overlap do not appear to be significant issues.* As a general rule, CPRN undertakes distinctive research projects in a flexible manner for diverse clients and funders. CPRN has an open approach to projects and is willing to consult with multiple stakeholders at the outset of a project to define issues and assess the best approach to answer questions. Several key informants complimented this approach because CPRN is aware of others' initiatives and avoids duplication. While its work may broadly overlap in domains where other think tanks and academic research centres have undertaken (or are undertaking) research, CPRN does not appear to duplicate the research of those organizations. Moreover, CPRN has been a leader in encouraging informal coordination with other research institutes, in particular with the Canada West Foundation, the Canadian Council on Social Development, and the Public Policy Forum.



# 5. CPRN's Delivery

The chapter examines CPRN's governance and organizational structures, delivery (activities and outputs) and quality control processes with the objective of responding to the following questions:

- Is the CPRN appropriately structured to achieve its objectives?
- Does the CPRN employ an appropriate balance of research and other activities in order to maximize its usefulness (including timeliness) to policy makers?
- Does the CPRN employ adequate strategies to ensure that its research and other outputs maintain a sufficiently high standard of quality to meet the needs of policy makers?

## 5.1 Organizational Structure and Staffing

### 5.1.1 Structure

CPRN is governed by a Board of Directors selected to be representative of Canada's regions and the organization's various participant groups. Currently there are 13 Board members who hold office for a four-year term, renewable for a second term. CPRN's President is also a member of the Board.

CPRN's research is organized under four Networks reporting to the President - Family, Work, Health, and Public Involvement. The non-research units of CPRN reporting to the President include Development, Public Affairs and Administration.

#### Role of the Board

The role of the Board has changed substantially since 1999 and is in line with the recommendations made by an external evaluation committee prior to the grant's approval (Brown et al., 1998). For example, an independent chair was created and broader membership was achieved by adding members from the private sector, the Ontario Government, and the Atlantic Provinces. The Board established the Finance and Audit Committee and the Governance and Membership Committee. As a result of these changes, the Board has now adopted a stronger governance role independent of the President.

#### Family Network

The Family Network was implemented to support CPRN's mission to help make Canada a more just, prosperous, and caring society. The research seeks to identify the "best policy mix" for Canadians at every stage of their lives, from infancy to old age, working from a broad definition of the enabling conditions (adequate income, effective families, and supportive communities) necessary to provide well-being to all kinds of families.

Considerations of policy range from social policy to citizenship, communities and good governance.

### **Public Involvement Network**

The Public Involvement Network evolved from CPRN's early work in public engagement. As a result of this experience and the widespread interest and acceptance of CPRN's research based on public consultation, CPRN perceived a need for more such research. The Public Involvement Network (PIN) was established in May 2002, to match public policy issues with effective public engagement. Although relatively new, the Network formalized CPRN's previous research experience in the field and signalled CPRN's intent to strengthen their citizen engagement activities.

### **Health Network**

The Health Network carries out research and analysis on issues facing Canada's health care system. The Network produces, analyzes and disseminates health research to promote improvements in the performance of Canada's health system. In this way, the Health Network is intended to support CPRN's mission of creating knowledge and leading public debate on issues important to the well-being of Canadians.

### **Work Network**

The Work Network explores issues related to the labour market and workplace change. The Network has made research contributions to public discussions of emerging work issues, policy development, the "learning and work nexus" and employer's best practices. The Network's focus is on how job conditions and work environments influence outcomes important to workers, employers, and public policy.

A major initiative undertaken by this Network has been CPRN's *JobQuality.ca* project. This initiative was a response to a perceived lack of comprehensive information on employment conditions and work environments in Canada. The *JobQuality.ca* project attempts to fill this gap by providing comprehensive, public, and user-friendly information on the quality of work in the Canadian labour market.

## **5.1.2 Staffing**

At the time the evaluation was conducted, CPRN had 28 staff positions<sup>22</sup>, including the President. The President's Office consists of the President and two assistants.

CPRN's ratio of research to non-research staff is relatively low (Exhibit 5.1.2a). CPRN forms part of a cluster at the low end of comparator institutes, along with the C.D. Howe Institute and the Institute for Research on Public Policy. Several key informants also

---

<sup>22</sup> Not all positions are currently staffed due to the staff turnover.

indicated that the ratio of administrative to research staff was high and suggested that it should be lower. Others questioned whether the amount CPRN spends on overhead and non-research staff expenditures was an effective use of the organization's revenues.

<b>Exhibit 5.1.2a Comparison of Staffing Levels and Expenditures for Selected Research Institutes</b>						
	<b>CPRN</b>	<b>C.D. Howe</b>	<b>Fraser</b>	<b>CCSD</b>	<b>Caledon</b>	<b>IRPP</b>
<b>FTPYs</b>						
Research FTPY	11.5	8.5	27	8.5	3.5	6
Non-Research FTPY	16.5	13.5	16	6.5	2	11
Total FTPY	28	22	43	15	5.5	17
Percent Research Staff	41.1%	38.6%	62.8%	56.7%	63.6%	35.3%
<b>Expenditures</b>						
Salaries (000's)	\$2,200	---	\$3,500	\$1,350	---	---
Total Budget (000's)	\$4,200	\$2,500	\$6,500	\$2,100	\$650	\$2,700
Percent of Budget - Salaries	52.4%	---	53.8%	64.3%	---	---

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 19.

CPRN's senior management believes that the organization is not overstaffed<sup>23</sup>. Some administrative positions were created in response to the Brown Report (Brown et al., 1998). For example, a Senior Vice-President of Operations was hired to support the President and a Director of Public Relations was hired to raise CPRN's public profile. The Board also directed CPRN to improve its information systems in order to have up-to-date financial and other performance data on CPRN's operations. These changes were considered an essential component of CPRN's progress towards financial sustainability. According to one Board member, CPRN's systems have improved significantly and superior information is now available for decision-making.

### **Administration of Grants and Contributions**

The one activity most commonly reported by CPRN staff was the constant search for funding and the management of the funding arrangements. CPRN staff indicated that the effort required to manage numerous grants and contributions was very time consuming. Key informants outside of CPRN who had recent experience with managing grants and contributions tended to share this view. Individuals who had managed a few large single donor grants or contributions, and held the opposing view, noted that because CPRN deals with multiple agreements its experience may be different.

The focus on an 'unsuccessful' case study highlighted some of the non-recoverable costs associated with implementing a research project. Developing a new project is a time

<sup>23</sup> CPRN contracts with approximately 40 external researchers a year to produce papers and reports. This increases overhead costs (i.e. staff and time) to administer these contractual relationships and manage the external researchers. The evaluation was unable to obtain data required to compare the level of contracting between the various research institutes.

consuming process and involves very senior level personnel to market the product. This process adds significantly to the workload of CPRN Network Directors and to the organization's costs. This is because developmental costs are not typically included directly in project budgets. Additional costs can be incurred if initial support for a project vanishes or if CPRN has to invest further to prepare a competitive proposal.

### **Internal versus External Researchers**

Currently there is no set "model" under which the Networks operate; the Network Directors largely determine how each will operate, including the extent to which internal versus external research resources will be used. There was little agreement on which model is the most appropriate financially or which is best for CPRN as an organization. Historically, about half of CPRN's research reports have been authored by staff and half have been externally authored.

The direction from CPRN's Board has been to reduce fixed costs as much as possible. Finding the right balance between internal and external resources is critical. The use of external resources provides flexibility, allowing CPRN to respond to emerging opportunities and avoiding unnecessary staff costs when revenues are low. The drawback, however, is that mark-ups on the costs of the external researchers are typically not allowed under grants and contributions.

### **5.1.3 Organizational and Staffing Issues**

*Staff Turnover.* A number of key informants raised issues concerning staffing. Of particular concern was staff turnover at the senior levels. CPRN has experienced a number of departures at this level in the last couple of years, two Network Directors within just a few months. Changeovers at this level present a number of challenges for CPRN (revenue generation can be challenged by lengthy recruitment processes and where personnel require time to establish themselves in the marketplace).

Senior staff depart CPRN for a variety of reasons. Some staff came to CPRN for a fixed term and returned to their previous positions, such as academic posts. At least one informant cited the security of a government pension as the reason for a return to the public sector. Several key informants remarked that the work pressures are quite substantial. Another important issue was the amount of time spent on finding funding and the administration time associated with grants and contributions. There was very little time for personal development or for staying current with the literature in specific fields of expertise.

CPRN senior management stated it was never planned to have tenured research positions at CPRN. When hiring a senior researcher, CPRN asks for a three to five year commitment. Five years is ideal and three years is considered sufficient. A minimum commitment is required since it can take six months to a year to find suitable candidates and up to a year for new Network Directors to establish themselves in their position. These time-consuming processes can adversely affect CPRN's revenues in the short term.

When Directors stay until the end of their term, CPRN can plan for a replacement in advance and the transition can occur relatively smoothly.

The literature indicates that staff turnover also provides benefits. Turnover is a condition that think tanks have to manage and if managed properly allows them to tap into new expertise as priorities and projects evolve (Lindquist and Desveaux, 1998). Think tanks are sites for attracting and grooming promising talent. Moreover, as Canadian think tanks have matured, former public servants and political leaders have been invited to contribute their expertise as “senior fellows”. Public servants have been rotated to take assignments with non-profit and university-based think tanks as part of broader executive development strategies. CPRN has had several senior government executives who have joined the organization on an assignment basis.

**Quality of Staff.** Key informants expressed the difference between CPRN producing “solid” research and “exceptional” research was largely due to the capacities of individual Network Directors.

Key informants also expressed high praise for the CPRN President’s capacities as a manager, a researcher and communicator, as well as her ability to keep CPRN at the forefront of social policy issues.

**Succession Planning.** Concerns were raised by a few key informants, about the future of CPRN when the current President decides to leave her position as many felt there was no succession plan.

Succession planning was raised in the Brown Report (Brown et al., 1998) and has been discussed by the Board. There was general agreement that hiring two individuals at a senior level in one small organization is not a viable option, therefore the type of succession planning that might occur in a larger organization was not feasible for CPRN. The current President has made a commitment to the Board to provide one year’s notice in advance of an intended departure and to be available to assist with the transition.

This issue is not unique to CPRN. Leaders are crucial to the success of think tanks, and are typically remarkable individuals. Not only are these leaders a “rare talent” but, over time, they inevitably come to *personify* think tanks (Lindquist and Desveaux, 1998; Lindquist, 1989). This creates a challenge when it comes to leadership succession. Such individuals are usually well paid for the purposes of recruitment and retention, but think tanks cannot afford to have more than one on the payroll. Succession is often a difficult and sometimes precarious moment for think tanks. There is a litany of examples in Canada where think tanks have come close to failure in their history (e.g. the Canadian Council on Social Development, C.D. Howe Institute, Institute for Research on Public Policy, and Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives) (Lindquist, 1989; Dobell, 2003).

For CPRN the key observation is that there is a plan. The current agreement between the President and the Board provides the Board with sufficient time to implement a formal selection process.

## 5.2 Activities and Outputs

*Activities.* CPRN's major activities can be divided into research and administration. The latter include governance, financial administration and human resource functions.

Using expenditures as a metric, CPRN's research activities have increased substantially in the years following the receipt of the grant. From 1999/2000 to 2002/03 total research expenditures rose from approximately \$801,000 to \$2.1 million, an increase of 159 percent (Exhibit 5.2.1).

<b>Exhibit 5.2.1</b>			
<b>CPRN Allocation of Expenditures to Research</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total expenditures \$</b>	<b>Research et al * \$</b>	<b>%</b>
1999-00	1,117,081	800,601	71.7%
2000-01	3,395,353	1,828,037	53.8%
2001-02	3,604,969	1,932,520	53.6%
2002-03	3,843,336	2,069,810	53.9%

\* Based on Functional study: Includes research, networking, facilitation, website, synthesis, dissemination, roundtables; Excludes administration and fundraising activities.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 23.

The proportion of expenditures for research and related activities has been consistently 54 percent of the total expenditures since 2000/01, with administration and financial management accounting for 46 percent. The relatively constant administrative share of the budget suggests management requirements increase in tandem with the level of research activity (no economy of scale).

It is evident CPRN's research staff devote a high proportion of time to activities other than project work. In addition to basic management activities, research staff also spend a significant amount of time developing new projects and on marketing and outreach. This results in a low percent (32%) of time spent on billable project work (Exhibit 5.2.2).

<b>Exhibit 5.2.2</b>	
<b>Time Allocation as a Percentage of Working Time 2002/03</b>	
Research activities	58%
Billable time	32%
Development time	16%
Outreach	10%

Note: The above figures include research staff only, not administrative staff.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 24.

This low level of billable time creates a significant problem for CPRN's ability to achieve financial sustainability. Similar to contracts, grants and contributions do not typically allow overhead as a cost item. Since most of CPRN's ability to recoup overhead is based on internal staff rates, it is imperative that either the per diem rates and/or billable time are

adequate to meet the organizations financial requirements. If the billable time of research staff is only 30 percent, then per diems have to be extremely high to compensate.

**Outputs.** CPRN has made a substantial commitment to web-based publishing with an emphasis on downloadable research reports, summaries and presentations (Exhibit 5.2.3). These products most closely represent the new research undertaken by CPRN and available on their website.

The number of presentations, reports and summaries available for download is quite significant. In total there were 140 research reports, 111 presentations, and 92 summaries. Of these 343 documents, only 20 were produced prior to the grant year and 31 in the same year the grant was received. Since 1998, the number of presentations, reports and summaries increased, peaking at 87 in 2002, largely due to an unusually high number of presentations in that year (44), and dropping to 55 in 2003.

CPRN provided the evaluation with information on all products related to their website (including counts of the e-network, *Urban Nexus* and *Social Cohesion Nexus*). Excluding new clippings and press releases, there were 665 products available online which were produced between 1999 and 2003. Download activity is also useful to examine because it reflects not only volume but also relative interest in the materials produced (CPRN's download statistics are examined in Chapter 6).

<b>Exhibit 5.2.3</b>								
<b>CPRN Online Publications by Type</b>								
<b>Type</b>	<b>Pre-1998</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>Total</b>
Presentation	0	8	6	13	24	44	16	<b>111</b>
Research Report	9	14	24	12	31	28	22	<b>140</b>
Summary	11	9	17	8	15	15	17	<b>92</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>343</b>

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 26.

### 5.3 CPRN's Quality Control Procedures

In general, CPRN conducts a thorough quality assurance process, employing a range of methods to strengthen the quality of its research products. These methods include involving experts and stakeholders at the design phase and throughout a project and using steering committees, peer reviews and roundtables to validate conclusions and formulate recommendations. The CPRN President also provides a final review of completed research reports to ensure the quality of CPRN's products. However, CPRN's quality review processes are not fully standardized and quality control remains primarily the responsibility of the Network Directors.

The case studies provide detailed examples of CPRN's quality control procedures. The *Dialogue on Canada's Future* project, undertaken by the Public Involvement Network (PIN) employed the following procedures to ensure the quality of the research:

- The project was managed by a Steering Committee composed of representatives from each of the six funding organizations, the PIN Director, and the President of CPRN, as chair.
- Another group, called the Partners Group, was responsible for reviewing drafts of the workbook and report. This group was composed of the Steering Committee members, as well as one to three additional representatives from each funding organization.
- Deliverables were reviewed by the PIN project team, the President, Viewpoint Learning of the United States (who had developed the project's methodology) and the Partners Group;
- A peer review was conducted by a panel of individuals from three different backgrounds: an academic, a business policy expert, and a government representative. These individuals were all asked to review and comment on the workbook/methodology and the report. The background research papers were also peer reviewed by academics and a polling expert.

The CPRN report "*The 'Canadian Diversity Model': A Repertoire in Search of a Framework*" provides another example of the quality control process for a research synthesis paper:

- Internal review by CPRN staff not involved in writing the report, including verification of the sources and proofreading. In addition the report was reviewed by the President.
- A peer review by three external reviewers. The reviewers were selected by a member of the CPRN staff who was not responsible for writing the report.
- A roundtable held on the topic of the paper also played a part in the quality control procedure as it provided an opportunity to test and challenge the ideas presented by the authors.

A minority of the online survey respondents identified a need for CPRN to be more inclusive. This included a broader participation in roundtables, a more open process for choosing contributors and to include different perspectives. The issue was also raised with respect to CPRN's peer review process, as the reviewers are often established CPRN associates.

CPRN's Peer Review process raised a further concern. While this process appears adequate to provide a high level of quality assurance and is used for all research reports excluding commentaries and other types of publications. While CPRN has established formal written criteria for the peer review process, the peer reviews are not blind reviews and, as previously mentioned, the reviewers are often CPRN Associates. In addition to concerns about inclusion, the lack of an independent peer review process could raise questions about the appearance of a potential conflict of interest.



## 5.4 Summary

***CPRN has improved the independence and functioning of its governance and management structure.*** Since the grant's approval, CPRN has established an independent Board Chair, broadened Board membership, and created both a Finance and Audit Committee, and a Governance and Membership Committee. These initiatives are in accordance with the recommendations of the Brown Report, an external review conducted prior to the grant's approval.

***There are some grounds for concern regarding the amount of time and resources CPRN devotes to conducting research, compared to administration (governance, financial administration and human resources).*** Several key informants indicated that, in their judgement, the ratio of administrative to research staff at CPRN was high. Administrative data indicate that research staff account for only 41.1 percent of CPRN's total full-time staff. Moreover, CPRN staff spend 58 percent of their time on research activities, but only 32 percent of their time is billable to research projects. CPRN states that some of the organization's administrative costs resulted from implementing the Brown Report's recommendations.

More generally, the level of staff dedicated to research at CPRN appears to be located as part of a cluster at the low end of comparator institutes. For instance, research staff comprise 63.6 percent at the Caledon Institute, 62.8 percent at the Fraser Institute, and 56.7 percent at the Canadian Council on Social Development. On the other hand, the C.D. Howe Institute (38.6 percent) and the Institute for Research on Public Policy (35.3 percent) are more closely aligned with CPRN. Overall, the evaluation evidence does not lead to an unqualified endorsement of the status quo. In light of the evaluation evidence, it would be beneficial for CPRN to examine alternative strategies with a view to assessing the potential to improve the balance between research and administration.

***Subsequent to the receipt of the grant, CPRN substantially increased its research activities and outputs.*** Between 1999/2000 to 2002/03 total research expenditures increased 159% from approximately \$801 thousand to \$2.1 million. The number of research reports and related documents also increased. In total, 140 research reports, 111 presentations, and 92 summaries were produced. Of these 343 documents, only 20 were produced prior to the grant's approval (1998/99), while on average 58 documents per year were produced over the following five years.

***CPRN attracts and maintains a high quality research staff.*** The quality of both staff and research at CPRN is assessed as ranging from "solid to exceptional". According to key informants consulted as part of the evaluation, some of the differences in the quality of CPRN research products could be attributed to the capabilities of individual network directors. One challenge faced by CPRN in maintaining the quality of its research is a high level of turnover among research staff. However, this observation is not unique to CPRN and it must be noted that CPRN has also played a role in grooming promising talent and advancing established researchers for new positions in policy and research elsewhere.

*CPRN provides a high level of quality assurance for its research; however, further measures could be taken to strengthen the independence of its review processes.* CPRN conducts a thorough quality assurance process, employing a range of methods to strengthen the quality of its research products. These processes appear to be relatively effective as two thirds of online survey respondents agreed that CPRN research publications meet or exceed the standards of most peer reviewed journals<sup>24</sup>.

However, one issue identified with respect to quality assurance centered on the peer review process. While CPRN has established criteria for peer reviews, the reviews are not blind, and the reviewers are often CPRN associates. The lack of an independent peer review process could raise concerns about the appearance of a potential conflict of interest. CPRN's quality control processes might well benefit further from independent external peer review wherever possible.

---

<sup>24</sup> Note: Only 6.4% of on-line survey respondents disagreed that "CPRN's research publications meet or exceeded the standard for most peer reviewed journals. A further 27.4% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

## 6. Access and Outreach

This chapter addresses the following questions:

- How does CPRN reach its intended target audiences?
- How effective have CPRN's outreach activities been?

To this end CPRN's activities to promote access to and use of its research are examined, as are related effectiveness measures including website downloads. A profile of users is also presented as a measure of the effectiveness of CPRN's dissemination activities.

### 6.1 CPRN's Outreach Activities

In order to achieve greater awareness and use of their research, CPRN created a Public Affairs unit. For each publication, the Public Affairs Director initiates the following media activities:

- News release distributed to the full Parliamentary Press Gallery.
- News release sent to CPRN's media distribution list across the country.
- Calls to specialist reporters to arrange interviews and to provide advance embargoed copies of the publications.
- CBC magazine shows are approached.

Ongoing non-media activities include:

- Weekly electronic news service (e-network), an e-network release is sent out at least once a week or even two or three times a week.
- University libraries and government departments and agencies are contacted.
- *Policy Direct*, a paid subscription service that targets provincial governments. Subscribers receive pre-release drafts / advance copies of papers.
- *Network News*, a quarterly electronic service, sent to paid subscribers including Ministers, federal and provincial Assistant Deputy Ministers, and some members of the non-profit and private sectors.

CPRN relies heavily on its website to make its research accessible. Virtually all of CPRN's research products are available online at no cost. Website statistics are tracked monthly to assess CPRN's outreach and identify the products or publications that receive the most attention.

## Website Access

The effectiveness of CPRN's outreach activities is supported by evidence pertaining to incidence of website visits and document downloads. There was a substantial increase in visits and downloads between 2001 and 2003 (Exhibit 6.1.1). In 2001 the average monthly number of visits was approximately 20,000 increasing to nearly 34,000 in 2002 and over 45,000 in 2003, an increase of 122 percent in the total website visits since 2001. Monthly downloads showed a similar pattern, increasing from approximately 28,000 in 2001 to just fewer than 50,000 in 2003. The download statistics compare favourably to those for C.D. Howe Institute (35,000) and the Institute for Research on Public Policy (60,000) as reported in the comparative survey, but considerably less than the Fraser Institute who reported their site records showed nearly 4 million downloads per year.

<b>Exhibit 6.1.1</b>				
<b>Website Visits and Downloads*</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Visits</b>	<b>Monthly Average</b>	<b>Total Downloads</b>	<b>Monthly Average</b>
2001	244,118	20,343	334,218	27,852
2002	405,390	33,783	484,770	40,398
2003	542,759	45,230	599,062	49,922

\* Note that the statistics for the work network excludes activity on CPRN's JobQuality.ca project.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 33.

The online survey of CPRN's users also produced evidence that CPRN has been relatively effective in reaching their clientele, especially through their website:

- 82% of respondents rated the ease of accessing CPRN's research reports and information as high or very high (mean rating 4.2<sup>25</sup>);
- 87% agreed they could easily find the research and information that interested them on CPRN's website (mean rating 4.2<sup>26</sup>).

## CPRN Citations on the Web

Several approaches were used to summarize the incidence of references to CPRN on the Internet. One approach was to query Google for the number of links to specific sites. Links to the home pages for CPRN and the comparative institutes were retrieved (Exhibit 6.1.2). The results show the Fraser Institute was linked to by the most sites, 631, nearly double the number of the second ranked institute. CPRN had the third highest number of links, 205, tied with C.D. Howe but lower than the Canadian Council on Social Development.

<sup>25</sup> Based on attribute rating of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

<sup>26</sup> Based on a rating of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

<b>Exhibit 6.1.2 Links to Selected Think Tanks</b>	
<b>Rubric</b>	<b>Count</b>
<a href="http://www.fraserinstitute.ca">www.fraserinstitute.ca</a>	631
<a href="http://www.ccsd.ca">www.ccsd.ca</a>	333
<a href="http://www.cprn.org">www.cprn.org</a>	205
<a href="http://www.cdhowe.org">www.cdhowe.org</a>	205
<a href="http://www.caledoninst.org">www.caledoninst.org</a>	151
<a href="http://www.irpp.org">www.irpp.org</a>	137

Retrieved using a Link query on Google on May 14, 2004.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 31.

As an alternative method to assess the relative influences of the think tanks, the web sites of six selected larger Canadian universities were searched. The results show that CPRN is well referenced, including in some course material, across the spectrum of tested sites (Exhibit 6.1.3).

A similar search was undertaken for each of the comparative institutes on the University of Toronto web site. All of the institutes are referenced to some degree (Exhibit 6.1.4). The Fraser Institute again had the most references of the institutes tested, 160, while IRPP, CPRN and Caledon were in a near tie for second place in this ranking with 72 to 76 references. While the results of these searches may be indicative of the use of CPRN and other institutes at Canadian universities, the results are highly sensitive to the key words used for the searches and the universities selected.

<b>Exhibit 6.1.3 CPRN References on University Web Sites</b>					
<b>University</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Conference</b>	<b>In PDF</b>	<b>Investigators</b>
University of Toronto	74	x	x	X	x
University of Saskatchewan	55			X	
Queen's University	51	x	x	X	x
University of Western Ontario	26		x	X	x
University of Calgary	21	x		X	
McMaster University	18	x		X	x

Retrieved on May 14, 2004.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 31.

<b>Exhibit 6.1.2 Links to Selected Think Tanks</b>	
<b>Rubric</b>	<b>Count</b>
<a href="http://www.fraserinstitute.ca">www.fraserinstitute.ca</a>	631
<a href="http://www.ccsd.ca">www.ccsd.ca</a>	333
<a href="http://www.cprn.org">www.cprn.org</a>	205
<a href="http://www.cdhowe.org">www.cdhowe.org</a>	205
<a href="http://www.caledoninst.org">www.caledoninst.org</a>	151
<a href="http://www.irpp.org">www.irpp.org</a>	137

Retrieved using a Link query on Google on May 14, 2004.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 31.

As an alternative method to assess the relative influences of the think tanks, the web sites of six selected larger Canadian universities were searched. The results show that CPRN is well referenced, including in some course material, across the spectrum of tested sites (Exhibit 6.1.3).

A similar search was undertaken for each of the comparative institutes on the University of Toronto web site. All of the institutes are referenced to some degree (Exhibit 6.1.4). The Fraser Institute again had the most references of the institutes tested, 160, while IRPP, CPRN and Caledon were in a near tie for second place in this ranking with 72 to 76 references. While the results of these searches may be indicative of the use of CPRN and other institutes at Canadian universities, the results are highly sensitive to the key words used for the searches and the universities selected.

<b>Exhibit 6.1.3 CPRN References on University Web Sites</b>					
<b>University</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Conference</b>	<b>In PDF</b>	<b>Investigators</b>
University of Toronto	74	x	x	X	x
University of Saskatchewan	55			X	
Queen's University	51	x	x	X	x
University of Western Ontario	26		x	X	x
University of Calgary	21	x		X	
McMaster University	18	x		X	x

Retrieved on May 14, 2004.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 31.

<b>Exhibit 6.1.4 Institute References at University of Toronto</b>					
<b>Rubric</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Conference</b>	<b>In PDF</b>	<b>Investigators</b>
Fraser	160	x		X	
IRPP	76	x		X	x
CPRN	74	x	X	X	x
Caledon	72	x		X	x
CCSD	23			X	x
CD Howe	20	x		X	x

Retrieved: May 14, 2004.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 31.

### **Media Use of CPRN and Other Think Tanks**

The assessment of the impact of think tanks on public opinion is necessarily subjective. In the Internet age, neither the print nor broadcast media are as essential as previously thought for the dissemination of ideas. However, newspapers remain the medium of record for many people. The Canadian Business and Current Affairs (CBCA), a major Canadian bibliographic service, was chosen for this analysis since it provides information from selected newspapers and other print media chosen to be representative of the media generating news. This index avoids counting each small paper that largely reprints national stories from other sources (e.g. smaller newspapers owned by a single media company). Simple hit counts obtained from clipping services are not an appropriate metric because of the dominance of chain newspapers and magazines as well as wire services in the Canadian market.

Exhibit 6.1.5 presents the results of searching CBCA for references to CPRN and other institutes. As an additional check, a specific search was done for the principal spokesperson for CPRN (Judith Maxwell), and the key spokesperson for the C.D. Howe Institute (W.B.P. Robson). The same analysis was also performed selecting only the National/Financial Post and the Globe and Mail. The total references have been processed to include in-house publications that are surveyed by CBCA. A total includes only references since 1995 when CPRN was active.

The results indicate, not surprisingly, that the institutes are more likely to focus on information relevant to businesses receive the most mentions. In fact, an analysis of the story headlines indicates that tax-related measures were the most popular topics. For CPRN, the work-related research seems to be the most popular topic. In total, CPRN received 75 mentions, lower than Fraser (408), C.D. Howe (236) and CCSD (95), but higher than IRPP (41) and Caledon (23). The results for the individual newspapers selected were similar to the overall findings.

**Exhibit 6.1.5  
Media Analysis**

**Based on CBCA**

	<b>Globe and Mail</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Total Since 1995</b>
Fraser	36	95	408
C.D. Howe	57	123	236
CCSD	16	10	95
CPRN	13	5	75
IRPP	11	14	41
Caledon	7	4	23
Judith Maxwell	8	4	21
W. Robson	5	39	47

Note: Total excludes in-house publications.

Retrieved Dec 2003.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 30.

Media penetration is only one indicator of an institute’s outreach effectiveness. Raising the profile of think tanks is a critical role of leaders, and securing exposure in newspapers, magazines, and television is an ongoing task and responsibility (Abelson, 2002). However, such exposure can be achieved in trivial and less trivial ways. Media organizations are voracious for “experts” to comment on issues and events, even if the commentators have only general knowledge on the matter at hand. Some think tanks find innovative ways to increase “hits” without contributing any new research or analysis. High penetration in the media, therefore, does not necessarily translate into credibility in the eyes of key decision-makers and influential advisors. Conversely, some think tanks focus on producing publications that penetrate university course reading lists, such as the Fraser Institute, and such studies do not aim to influence policy-makers in the short term (Lindquist, 1989). More recently, think tanks have taken full advantage of the Internet and web technology to make their studies and events more readily known, and to proactively reach out to members, the media, and interested publics. This facilitates the “scanning” of researchers, analysts, and advisors in other organizations.

## **6.2 Access to CPRN Research**

The information in this section is derived from the online survey of CPRN users. The profiles and related information apply to CPRN’s core clients. As indicated in Chapter 2, there is no reason to assume that the online survey population is representative of all researchers and policymakers.. The results do not represent the broader policy research and information users who do not use CPRN’s research and information. The survey may also exclude users who use CPRN’s products directly but do not subscribe to CPRN’s e-network and users who may access CPRN’s information indirectly through information provided by other researchers or policy analysts.



## Use of CPRN and Other Think Tanks

***First Time Used CPRN Information.*** All online survey respondents were asked when they first used or read information produced by CPRN. CPRN's users were a mix of older and more recent first time users.

- just under half of the survey respondents, 49%, had first used CPRN information 3 years ago or more;
- over a quarter 2 years prior, 27%; and
- nearly one quarter, 23%, had only recently accessed CPRN information or research.

Having 23 percent of respondents accessing information for the first time within a year or less is equivalent to nearly an annual growth rate of 30 percent of CPRN's clientele. However, this growth rate may be overstated somewhat since some prior users may have ceased to use CPRN and would not be represented in the sampling frame. The size of the more recent users does suggest substantial growth in CPRN's outreach.

***Methods of Obtaining CPRN Information and Related Activities.*** Online survey respondents were also asked how frequently they used various methods of obtaining CPRN information or research in the previous 12 months. The two dominant methods of obtaining information were to receive it directly from CPRN or to obtain it from CPRN's website. The former is a very proactive method of distribution while the latter is a more passive approach. Both these approaches appear to have been effective and perhaps complementary (e.g. active distribution of newsletters and documents promoting website visits).

- Nearly two-thirds, 62%, reported CPRN information was sent to them regularly. Approximately 20% rarely or never received CPRN information this way.
- 47% obtained information from the website regularly, 42% obtained information from the website occasionally. Less than 12% of respondents rarely or never obtained information from CPRN's website.

All other forms of access were considerably less frequently used. The next most frequent source of CPRN information was the media, 15% obtained information from this source regularly, 32% occasionally.

Respondents were also asked the frequency of selected activities associated with CPRN information or activities. Based on these statistics, CPRN's "interested user"<sup>27</sup> clientele are very active consumers of CPRN's research and information.

- 79% regularly read CPRN's e-network.
- 55% regularly read CPRN research or policy papers, 37% occasionally.

---

<sup>27</sup> As noted in the methodology chapter, since the online survey results are likely biased towards users with a high level of interest in CPRN's research, the term "interested user" is used to describe the population the results can be generalized to.

- 51% regularly view articles on CPRN's website (37% occasionally) and 41% regularly save or print articles for future reference (43% occasionally). For respondents who regularly viewed articles on the web, 68% also regularly saved or printed the articles for future reference.

## **Use of Other Think Tanks**

CPRN is not the only source of policy research and information used by the survey respondents. Approximately 81 percent of the respondents used information from one or more of the eight other think tanks listed in the past 12 months. The most commonly used products were research or policy papers and websites. In fact the similarity between the incidence rates for reading policy or research papers and accessing an institute's website suggests that, similar to CPRN, websites are a main source of accessing the papers read.

## **6.3 Characteristics of Users**

### **Type of Users**

Respondents were allocated to different categories depending on their responses to a series of questions at the beginning of the survey questionnaire used to direct the respondents to the most appropriate sections of the questionnaire. The resultant distribution for each respondent type is provided in Exhibit 6.3.1.

Based on the screening questions, there were 354 government employees involved in policy activities who responded to the survey, 39 percent of all respondents. The representation of federal and provincial government policy respondents was virtually identical at 17 percent each, municipal government policy respondents accounting for 5 percent of the sample.

Nine percent of the respondents were classified as academics. Nearly 12 percent of survey respondents worked for NGOs and 4 percent were employed by think tanks. The remaining 36 percent of respondents included: employees of non-media related private sector firms; employees of unions; students; and not employed or retired.

Again, there is no reason to assume that these respondents are representative of all researchers and policymakers. The survey is part of an evaluation of how effectively CPRN serves the purposes for which it was set up, that of improving public policymaking in CPRN's four thematic areas as represented by the individual research networks.

**Exhibit 6.3.1**  
**Respondent Profile: Type of Respondent**

Type of Respondent	Respondents	Percent
Federal government policy	152	16.8
Provincial government policy	154	17.0
Municipal government policy	48	5.3
Academics	84	9.3
Research institute/think tank	37	4.1
Voluntary organization/NGO	104	11.5
Other	328	36.2
Total	907	100.0

Source: *Online Survey Technical Report*, page 5.

## Region

One half the respondents were located in Ontario; only 10 percent were from Quebec and just under 9 percent from the Atlantic provinces (Exhibit 6.3.2). Approximately 27 percent of the respondents were from the Prairies or B.C. The remaining 4 percent of respondents were from other locations including the United States, Europe, Australia, etc. As would be expected, the highest percentage of respondents involved in federal policy was for Ontario (69 percent), Quebec having the second largest representation (11 percent).

For provincial policy respondents, there were more respondents from the Prairies than Ontario, 31 percent versus 27 percent. A sizeable proportion was from the Atlantic region, 18 percent, in fact more than from Quebec, 13 percent.

Approximately 42 percent of the academics who responded to the survey resided in Ontario. The remaining academics were almost evenly distributed across the other regions, ranging from 8 to 14 percent. It was interesting to note that approximately 11 percent of the academics who responded to the survey resided outside of Canada.

The high incidence of CPRN's user clientele in Ontario and the lower representation of Quebec residents may be due to a number of factors, including the heavy influence of the federal government policy workers on the overall regional distribution. Another factor may be related to the CPRN's translation policy. According to key informants, the organization translates reports and other related documents only if the client provides funding for translation as part of the project financing. If there is no budget provided for translation, the documents are not translated into French. Several survey respondents who completed the questionnaire in French expressed displeasure that not all of CPRN's documents on their website were translated and that there were few references to French language documents.

<b>Exhibit 6.3.2</b>								
<b>Respondent Profile: Region by Type of Respondent</b>								
<b>Region***</b>	<b>Federal Policy</b>	<b>Provincial Policy</b>	<b>Municipal Policy</b>	<b>Academics</b>	<b>Think Tanks</b>	<b>NGOs</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
Atlantic	4.6%	17.9%	2.1%	13.1%	3.1%	4.9%	7.6%	8.6%
Quebec	11.2%	13.2%	4.2%	11.9%	9.4%	4.9%	10.7%	10.3%
Ontario	69.1%	26.5%	52.1%	41.7%	56.3%	57.3%	51.7%	50.3%
Prairies	6.6%	30.5%	20.8%	14.3%	3.1%	20.4%	15.8%	16.9%
B.C.	6.6%	7.9%	10.4%	8.3%	18.8%	10.7%	11.7%	9.9%
Other	2.0%	4.0%	10.4%	10.7%	9.4%	1.9%	2.5%	4.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total Respondents	152	151	48	84	32	103	317	887

Source: *Online Survey Technical Report*, page 6.

## **Involvement in Policy**

Government employees who participated in the online survey were asked a series of questions to identify their level of involvement in policy within the public service.

- Nearly one in five respondents regularly make policy decisions and about the same number regularly make decisions on program terms and conditions.
- Nearly 50 percent regularly advise others on policy, 41 percent regularly write policy papers or position papers.
- Seven percent regularly make decisions on HR policies, 19 percent occasionally.
- Virtually all of the respondents had some degree of policy involvement. Only 6 percent indicated they did none of the policy related activities listed in survey.
- Of the respondents involved in policy related activities, just over 70 percent were involved in at least one of these activities on a regular basis.

The above survey results indicate that CPRN is reaching government representatives with a high degree of involvement in policy making.

## **Academic Area**

Respondents who were academics (employed by a university, college or educational institution and were a professor or instructor) were asked to indicate in which areas they teach or conduct research. The most common areas were:

- sociology, psychology and other social sciences (42%);
- political science, international studies/development and public administration (30%);
- health sciences (21%) ; and
- economics, labour relations and human resources management (19%).

## 6.4 Summary

*CPRN has expanded awareness and access to its research and information in the public policy community.* CPRN's website, developed with the assistance of the grant, has become a key distribution channel for their research. Administrative data indicates that, between 2001 and 2003 monthly download activity increased by 79%, from 27,852 to 49,922 downloads per month. The citation analysis confirms CPRN has been effective in disseminating its research results. Nearly two thirds of survey respondents reported CPRN information was sent to them regularly.

*CPRN translates all its documents and research products into both official languages only if the client provides funds for translation. This limits access for potential client groups.* While translation was not specified as a requirement under the grant, the current practice at CPRN is not fully consistent with the federal government's policy of ensuring access to public documents in both official languages. Given that all Canadians contributed to the tax revenue which funded the grant arrangements, this is a source of concern in the context of the administration of public funds at the federal level.

## *7. Financial Sustainability*

This chapter examines CPRN's progress towards financial sustainability, as well as the impact and appropriateness of the federal grant funding mechanism. Specifically, the evaluation questions included:

- Has the current grant funding approach been successful in enabling the CPRN to:
  - a. Improve long-term planning
  - b. Conduct research and other activities that would not have been possible with annual operating grants and project funding
  - c. Make more efficient and effective use of available resources?
- Has the CPRN succeeded in diversifying its sources and types of funding, such that it is moving toward sustainable financing of its core operations without federal government operating grants?
- What terms and conditions were associated with the grant (i.e., a floor amount of \$4.5M) and were they appropriate for the granting objective of sustainability?

Prior to addressing this issue it is important to highlight that no matter how successful think tanks appear to be in the media and no matter how diverse their funding base, all are concerned about revenue streams. Think tanks rely to very different degrees on individual members, corporate members, endowment income, project-related funding, contract work for research and consultations, collaborative arrangements with other organizations, or even a stream of “club” services to members (Lindquist, 1993). Think tank leaders devote incredible amounts of time raising funds for their organizations, and they tend to feel that the funding streams for their organizations are precarious. (Lindquist, 1989; 2004).

### **7.1 Financing**

CPRN's deficit has averaged \$975,000 in the four years following the receipt of the unrestricted grant of \$9 million during CPRN's 1998/99 fiscal year<sup>28</sup> (Exhibit 7.1.1). Revenue increased from \$1.760 million in year the grant was received in 1998/99 to \$2.8 million in 2002/03, a 58 percent increase since 1998/99. During the same time period expenditures rose from \$2.6 million in 1998/99 to \$3.8 million in 2002/03, a 44 percent increase. The result was an annual deficit that ranged from \$663,000 to \$1.1 million. Based on the observed deficits since the grant, there was no basis to suggest the absolute amounts were decreasing or increasing over time, although as a percentage of expenditures the deficit has decreased.

---

<sup>28</sup> The figures in various tables concerning deficit amounts do not include items such as amortization, securities, write-down and loss on disposal of capital assets. To that end, these “deficit” numbers do not exactly match the annual report numbers.

**Exhibit 7.1.1**  
**CPRN Revenue and Expenditures (000's)**

	1996-1997*	1997-1998*	1998-1999*	1999-2000*	2000-2001*	2001-2002*	2002-2003*	2003-2004**
Revenue	\$1,611	\$2,044	\$1,760	\$2,128	\$2,235	\$2,894	\$2,773	\$3,591
Expenses	\$2,462	\$2,869	\$2,637	\$3,270	\$3,309	\$3,557	\$3,792	\$4,196
Profit/Loss	-\$851	-\$826	-\$877	-\$1,142	-\$1,074	-\$663	-\$1,020	-\$605

\* From Annual Reports \*\* Budgeted

Revenues excludes core funding from the \$9 million dollar grant.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 20.

Detailed information on CPRN's revenue sources, excluding core funding and the grant under review, indicate that project funding in the previous two fiscal years, 2001/02 and 2002/03, accounted for approximately 80 percent of CPRN's revenue (Exhibits 7.1.2 and 7.1.3). While project funding has typically been the largest source of revenue, in some years prior to this projects grants only accounted for two-thirds of CPRN's revenue. There have been changes in the pattern of two sources of revenue that account for these variations; donations and investment income.

Donations decreased from over \$500,000 in years prior to the grant to under \$30,000 by 2002/03<sup>29</sup>. In fact, by 2002/03 donations were less than 1 percent of CPRN's revenues. One reason for the sudden decrease in donations in 2001/02 and 2002/03 was the President's Innovation Fund (PIF). Donations to PIF are not for specific projects and, due to deferral accounting methods, the funds are not recorded until they are expended. Including PIF, the total donations would have been \$74,000 in 2001/02 and \$152,000 in 2002/03, still well below the pre-grant levels.

The second major change in the pattern of revenue was for investment income. Prior to the grant, investment income was very limited. In year following the grant, 1999/2000, investment income was \$490,000, nearly one quarter of CPRN's revenues. This amount decreased over time as the grant was used to cover deficits. By 2002/03 investment income decreased to \$294,000, accounting for just under 11 percent of revenues.

<sup>29</sup> Before the grant, all donations were taken in as general revenue. Following the grant, and with changes in CPRN's accounting system – along with changes in how corporate donors in particular wanted to contribute - donations funds were channelled either directly to projects, or to the President's Innovation Fund. Therefore while the donations line on the Audited Statements does show a decrease in funding, the actual amount of donations has been increasing, reflecting the organization's investment in a Development Department.

<b>Exhibit 7.1.2</b>								
<b>CPRN Revenue Sources (000's)</b>								
	<b>1996-1997*</b>	<b>1997-1998*</b>	<b>1998-1999*</b>	<b>1999-2000*</b>	<b>2000-2001*</b>	<b>2001-2002*</b>	<b>2002-2003*</b>	<b>2003-2004**</b>
Project grants	\$1,071	\$1,431	\$1,380	\$1,303	\$1,424	\$2,295	\$2,319	\$3,003
Donations (exclud. PIF)	\$502	\$566	\$239	\$310	\$135	\$31	\$26	\$291
Investment income	\$16	\$16	\$123	\$490	\$383	\$336	\$294	\$204
Fees	\$14	\$21	\$8	\$12	\$78	\$35	\$20	\$67
In-kind salaries/other	\$8	\$9	\$10	\$12	\$215	\$197	\$114	\$25
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,611</b>	<b>\$2,044</b>	<b>\$1,760</b>	<b>\$2,128</b>	<b>\$2,235</b>	<b>\$2,894</b>	<b>\$2,773</b>	<b>\$3,591</b>

\* From Annual Reports \*\* Budgeted

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 21.

<b>Exhibit 7.1.3</b>								
<b>CPRN Revenue Sources as a Percent of Total Income</b>								
	<b>1996-1997*</b>	<b>1997-1998*</b>	<b>1998-1999*</b>	<b>1999-2000*</b>	<b>2000-2001*</b>	<b>2001-2002*</b>	<b>2002-2003*</b>	<b>2003-2004**</b>
Project funding	66.5%	70.0%	78.4%	61.2%	63.7%	79.3%	83.6%	83.6%
Donations (exclud. PIF)	31.2%	27.7%	13.6%	14.6%	6.0%	1.1%	0.9%	8.1%
Investment income	1.0%	0.8%	7.0%	23.0%	17.1%	11.6%	10.6%	5.7%
Fees	0.8%	1.1%	0.5%	0.6%	3.5%	1.2%	0.7%	1.9%
In-kind salaries/other	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	9.6%	6.8%	4.1%	0.7%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* From Annual Reports \*\* Budgeted

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 21.

The two main components of CPRN's expenditures are salaries and research and related costs (Exhibits 7.1.4 and 7.1.5). Salaries have increased substantially over the years as CPRN has grown, from \$658,000 in 1996/97 to \$1.98 million in 2002/03. Prior to the grant, salaries accounted for slightly less than one third of CPRN's expenditures and recently salaries and benefits represented over half of CPRN's costs.

Research and networking costs varied considerably by year since they essentially represent the variable flow through costs of CPRN's research. Prior to the grant year, expenditures on research and networking were approximately \$900,000 to \$1 million, over one third of total expenditures. In the years following the grant, this amount ranged from as low as \$672,000 (under \$600,000 in the grant year) and as high as 1.1 million, accounting for 20 to 28 percent of expenditures.



Rent and office services have remained relatively stable, approximately 10 percent of total expenditures. Contract and professional services have declined in the previous two fiscal years (2001/02 and 2002/03). Costs associated with publications rose for a period of time but also decreased in the previous two fiscal years, largely due to a greater emphasis on distributing reports electronically through CPRN's website.

CPRN's senior management has examined the overhead costs for other similar institutes and concluded CPRN's overhead was greatly consistent with these organizations. CPRN's Board is not concerned about the level of CPRN's administration if management can maintain high revenue volumes. The problematic years are when there is a mismatch between overhead and the volume of work. The Finance and Audit Committee has encouraged CPRN to structure its costs to keep fixed costs low relative to variable costs.

<b>Exhibit 7.1.4 CPRN Expenditures (000's)</b>								
	<b>1996-1997*</b>	<b>1997-1998*</b>	<b>1998-1999*</b>	<b>1999-2000*</b>	<b>2000-2001*</b>	<b>2001-2002*</b>	<b>2002-2003*</b>	<b>2003-2004**</b>
Rent and office services	\$244	\$282	\$315	\$376	\$297	\$353	\$362	\$375
Salaries and benefits	\$658	\$884	\$950	\$1,314	\$1,474	\$1,759	\$1,978	\$2,185
Research and networking	\$896	\$1,058	\$598	\$849	\$672	\$897	\$1,057	\$1,251
Contract and professional services	\$371	\$376	\$372	\$394	\$594	\$210	\$106	\$39
Travel/Representation	\$153	\$61	\$85	\$86	\$33	\$44	\$45	\$125
Publications	\$132	\$192	\$304	\$238	\$227	\$106	\$132	\$183
In-kind salaries/other	\$9	\$16	\$14	\$13	\$12	\$187	\$112	\$38
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,462</b>	<b>\$2,869</b>	<b>\$2,637</b>	<b>\$3,270</b>	<b>\$3,309</b>	<b>\$3,557</b>	<b>\$3,792</b>	<b>\$4,196</b>

\* From Annual Reports \*\* Budgeted

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 22.

<b>Exhibit 7.1.5</b>								
<b>CPRN Expenditures as a Percent of Total Income</b>								
	<b>1996-1997*</b>	<b>1997-1998*</b>	<b>1998-1999*</b>	<b>1999-2000*</b>	<b>2000-2001*</b>	<b>2001-2002*</b>	<b>2002-2003*</b>	<b>2003-2004**</b>
Rent and office services	9.9%	9.8%	11.9%	11.5%	9.0%	9.9%	9.6%	8.9%
Salaries and benefits	26.7%	30.8%	36.0%	40.2%	44.6%	49.5%	52.2%	52.1%
Research and networking	36.4%	36.9%	22.7%	26.0%	20.3%	25.2%	27.9%	29.8%
Contract and professional services	15.1%	13.1%	14.1%	12.0%	18.0%	5.9%	2.8%	0.9%
Travel/Representation	6.2%	2.1%	3.2%	2.6%	1.0%	1.2%	1.2%	3.0%
Publications	5.3%	6.7%	11.5%	7.3%	6.8%	3.0%	3.5%	4.4%
In-kind salaries/other	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	5.3%	2.9%	0.9%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* From Annual Reports \*\* Budgeted

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 22.

## 7.2 Funding Sources

Since the grant, CPRN has increased the number and diversity of its client base. A review of CPRN's clients by number and by sector shows that until recently government clients substantially outnumbered non-government clients (Exhibit 7.2.1). However, in the past two years this has reversed. In terms of dollar contributions, government, especially the federal government, dominates the sources of funding. A detailed analysis of the CPRN records indicates that a relatively small number of clients are providing continuous support to CPRN. The others are most likely issue focused and provide support to a particular initiative. A review of the provincial funders also indicates support has generally been provided to CPRN on specific issue basis.

<b>Exhibit 7.2.1</b>			
<b>Project Funders by Year</b>			
<b>Budget Year</b>	<b>Number of Active Clients</b>		
	<b>2000-01</b>	<b>2001-02</b>	<b>2002-03</b>
Federal	24	15	15
Provincial	15	14	14
Municipal	1	5	2
Total government	40	34	31
Foundations	8	9	9
NGO	6	5	8
Corporate (*)	11	8	12
Total Non Gov't	25	22	29

Note: Corporate includes some project funding and donations.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 27.

The federal government remains the dominant funder for CPRN. In the years since the grant, federal government funding has accounted for the majority of CPRN's project funding, increasing from approximately \$900,000 in 1999/2000 to approximately \$1.5 million in 2002/03 (Exhibits 7.2.2 and 7.2.3). The federal share of project funding fluctuated from 62 percent to 72 percent with no clear pattern of increasing or decreasing. Provincial funding increased during some years to reach 10 to 12 percent of project funding, but fell again in 2002/03 to 6 percent. Municipal funding of projects is rare.

Non-government project funding has steadily increased each year, rising from \$282,000 to \$668,000 in 2002/03. As a proportion of total funding, the pattern has been less consistent, fluctuating between 19 to 29 percent, the highest level being in 2002/03. CPRN has made consistent progress in obtaining non-government sources in the past four years. However, CPRN has also been successful in increasing funding from government sources, which has resulted in a lower share of financing for non-government sources in some years.

<b>Exhibit 7.2.2</b>				
<b>Project Funding Sources by Year (000's)*</b>				
<b>Budget Year</b>	<b>Fiscal Year</b>			
	<b>1999-2000</b>	<b>2000-2001</b>	<b>2001-2002</b>	<b>2002-2003</b>
Federal	\$896	\$859	\$1,522	\$1,489
Provincial	\$71	\$164	\$230	\$131
Municipal	\$0	\$0	\$62	\$32
<b>Total government</b>	<b>\$966</b>	<b>\$1,023</b>	<b>\$1,814</b>	<b>\$1,652</b>
Foundations/NGOs	\$130	\$365	\$266	\$417
Corporate	\$152	\$4	\$146	\$250
<b>Total non-government</b>	<b>\$282</b>	<b>\$369</b>	<b>\$412</b>	<b>\$668</b>
<b>Total Project Funding</b>	<b>\$1,248</b>	<b>\$1,393</b>	<b>\$2,226</b>	<b>\$2,319</b>

\* Includes only project specific funding.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 28.

<b>Exhibit 7.2.3</b>				
<b>Project Funding Sources Percent by Year*</b>				
<b>Budget Year</b>	<b>Fiscal Year</b>			
	<b>1999-2000</b>	<b>2000-2001</b>	<b>2001-2002</b>	<b>2002-2003</b>
Federal	71.8%	61.7%	68.4%	64.2%
Provincial	5.7%	11.8%	10.3%	5.6%
Municipal	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	1.4%
<b>Total government</b>	<b>77.5%</b>	<b>73.4%</b>	<b>81.5%</b>	<b>71.2%</b>
Foundations/NGOs	10.4%	26.2%	11.9%	18.0%
Corporate	12.2%	0.3%	6.6%	10.8%
<b>Total non-government</b>	<b>22.6%</b>	<b>26.5%</b>	<b>18.5%</b>	<b>28.8%</b>
<b>Total Project Funding</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* Includes only project specific funding.

Source: *Administrative Analysis Technical Report*, page 28.

## 7.3 Sustainability

CPRN has made some progress towards financial sustainability but senior management would describe the progress as modest. In terms of fundraising, CPRN would describe their *Fresh Ideas Campaign* as very successful in terms of raising the profile of the organization. Eleven events with 230 individuals were held to support the fundraising effort. In addition to these events, 164 one-on-one meetings were held with potential supporters. The campaign has raised more than \$1.3 million, including multi-year commitments but according to CPRN, this came with a considerable expenditure on new staff and with high demands on the President's time.

One of the challenges for the fundraising campaign has been the cost of generating revenue through fundraising. According to an internal report prepared for CPRN, campaign costs as a percentage of campaign contributions were very high, 61 percent. The report noted, however, that it takes three to five years to appropriately assess the costs of a new fund-development program and that CPRN was just completing its third year of the campaign.

Consequently, the remainder of the \$9 million grant (approximately \$4.3 million remained at the time of this analysis - Spring 2004) and project funding will likely be the primary source of CPRN's revenue to finance projects and its operations, at least in the near future. In terms of project funding, CPRN has broadened the base of project funders over the years, but the federal government remains the main source of project funding. Senior management indicated it is difficult to obtain support for CPRN's research beyond this primary market.

Progress towards financial sustainability has occurred in two phases. The first phase established the infrastructure to provide the management and information necessary to implement financial controls and monitoring. CPRN's systems have improved and better information is available to make decisions.

The next phase toward CPRN's financial sustainability is to find a financial model that will allow CPRN to attain this goal. According to senior management, no conclusion has been reached on the most appropriate model to attain financial sustainability. Based on the input from key informants, the possible solutions included:

- using per diems that would enable CPRN to recover overhead and development costs;
- ensuring all time spent on project work, including administrative time, was recorded and recoverable under the funding mechanism;
- negotiating funding mechanisms that allowed overhead and development costs as expenses or included in the per diems, including obtaining mark-ups on external researchers; and
- achieving an appropriate balance between fixed costs and variable costs; and renewed equity funding or core funding.

Senior management indicated that CPRN would seek additional funding in the near future, although the nature of the request had not yet been formulated at the time of writing this report. Other key informants interviewed were uncertain what the best approach was for funding an organization such as CPRN. A large endowment fund, sufficient to fund a relatively ambitious research agenda, would be ideal operationally. Such a mechanism would allow CPRN to undertake more risky projects or projects that meet longer-term policy interests but are difficult to find funding for at the current time. Concern was expressed that this approach has no built-in requirement to be responsive to the needs of policy makers compared to a funding level that still requires CPRN to seek project funding. CPRN senior management agreed that the funding mechanism should provide a balance between providing CPRN longer-term security and ensuring incentives which encourage the organization to remain responsive to the needs of policy makers.

Some key informants questioned what other organizations would be eligible for this type of large grant funding. They indicated that other organizations would merit funding not just CPRN and the process for access to this type of funding should be open and transparent.

## **7.4 Impact and Appropriateness of the Grant**

The federal grant in the amount of \$9 million was given to CPRN to support its policy research efforts so as to better inform public policy. The mechanism used was a single grant for the total amount but was considered to be the equivalent of a grant of \$1.3 million annually over 9 years. The purpose of the single grant was to provide the organization a working capital fund up to the period ending March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005. According to internal federal documents, this fund was designed to establish a financial base for the organization that would permit it to meet contingencies, launch new projects and build intellectual capital.

Due to the grant's objectives and the unconditional nature of grants,<sup>30</sup> it was difficult for the evaluation to link the impact of the \$9 million grant to a specific project or projects. The overall findings of the evaluation suggest that, in this particular case, the grant funding mechanism had a significant benefit for the federal government. The unconditional nature of CPRN's grant provided the government greater leeway to assist CPRN to strengthen its organizational and research capacities without impinging, or appearing to impinge, on the organization's objectivity and independence.

One issue did arise, however, during the evaluation which was linked to the government's expectations concerning this grant. The letter received by CPRN from the federal government when the grant was approved described the amount of the grant approved, the requirement for an independent review and the provision of audited statements, but did not include further expectations. Although internal federal documents state there was an expectation that CPRN's drawdown from the Capital Fund would not exceed \$4.5 million by the end of the 2004/05 fiscal year, this expectation was never

---

<sup>30</sup> Traditionally, federal grants, by their nature, do not involve terms and conditions nor do they impose ongoing reporting demands on recipients.

communicated to CPRN. CPRN's withdrawal from the Capital Fund will in fact exceed \$4.5 million by the end of the 2004/05 fiscal year.

Lastly, the evaluation findings also suggest that the federal government may wish to consider that future grants contain conditions related to and consistent with broader government policies and regulations. This suggestion would help to ensure that grant activities are conducted in line with government policy, for example, official language use.

From the perspective of the CPRN, the grant mechanism helped to provide longer term stability while to some extent reducing the financial reporting burden of the organization. The grant provided the equivalent of nine years worth of core funding. As there were no reporting requirements, CPRN's administrative burdens and costs were lessened with respect to this particular support component.

When CPRN moved from annual funding agreements to the grant, management decided to leverage the funding with project financing in order to increase the scope of its activities. As part of their strategy, CPRN expanded its management team, improved its information technologies, and expanded the scope of its research. By 2001 CPRN had built the infrastructure to become more effective in obtaining additional funding. Overall, then, the grant has permitted CPRN to:

- support website development and other technological improvements to its financial and communication systems;
- provide the seed for fundraising;
- start new Networks and themes within Networks; and
- allow CPRN to run their dissemination model of free and open access to all products as a contribution to the public good.

Several key informants stated that without the federal grant CPRN would not exist or would not be able to continue with the same scope of projects it has undertaken in the past few years. Two of the case studies indicated the grant had a role in the planning of large-scale projects that are often challenging to fund. The planning and budgeting process examined in the case study of the *Work Network* illustrated how the grant funds are used to support project costs in general. The case study on CPRN's \$990,000 *Dialogue on Canada's Future* project showed how this support allows CPRN to take calculated risks in pursuing new endeavours. The *Dialogue* project was initiated when only \$250,000 in funding had been secured even after several previous commitments had disappeared. The decision to take this "huge risk" was undoubtedly made easier by the availability of the grant to cover costs if the entire funding required had not been found.

## 7.5 Summary

***With respect to financial sustainability there has been progress but further efforts are required.*** The evaluation has found that high administrative costs and low billable time pose a barrier to CPRN's ability to achieve financial sustainability. CPRN's deficit

averaged \$975,000 in the four years following the receipt of the grant, compared to an average of \$839,000 in the two years prior to the grant's approval.

CPRN plans for financial sustainability comprise two phases. The first phase established infrastructure to provide the management and information systems necessary to implement financial controls and monitoring. CPRN's systems are now improved; better information is available for decision-making purposes. The next phase, as yet to be completed, will be to find a financial model that will allow CPRN to attain greater financial sustainability. Senior management has not reached a conclusion on the most appropriate model to attain this goal.

According to key informants, some of the possible solutions to be considered include:

- ensuring all time spent on project work, including administrative time, is recorded and recoverable under particular funding arrangements;
- negotiating project funding that allow for overhead and development costs; and
- achieving a more appropriate balance between fixed costs and variable costs.

***While there has been some progress toward diversification, the federal government remains the dominant funding source for CPRN's operating budget.*** Subsequent to the grant, CPRN has succeeded in diversifying its funding sources. In particular it has attracted greater investments from foundations and NGOs. Funding from foundations and NGOs accounted for 12% to 26% of CPRN project funding during the 2000/01 to 2002/03 fiscal years. The federal government, however, remains the dominant source of revenue for the CPRN, accounting for 62% to 68% of project funding over the same period.

***From the perspective of the CPRN the grant appears to be an appropriate mechanism to achieve the intended results.*** The grant provided long-term stable funding to the CPRN. The grant afforded the CPRN sufficient flexibility to strengthen its administrative processes, expand its research programs, and respond to emerging issues as required. In short, the investments helped to increase CPRN's capacity to inform public policy.

***For the federal government, the grant mechanism is appropriate for supporting this type of relationship as it ensures CPRN's independence; however, there are lessons to be drawn.*** The unconditional nature of CPRN's grant provided the government greater leeway to support CPRN's efforts to strengthen its organizational and research capacities without impinging, or appearing to impinge, on the organization's objectivity and independence.

This experience, however, raises issues for consideration for any future government financial assistance that may be considered. These include: the need for greater clarity and improved communications regarding expectations associated with accountability. Internal government documents indicated that CPRN expenditures were not expected to exceed \$4.5 million by the end of the 2004/05 fiscal year. This expectation was not communicated to the grant recipient by the responsible department. As a result, expectations concerning capital fund expenditures were not met and this figure was exceeded by approximately \$300,000. In addition, the government may wish to consider conditions related to broader government policies and regulations such as official languages.

## ***8. Summary and Conclusions***

This document has presented the key findings and results of the evaluation of the federal grant provided to the Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc. The \$9 million grant was extended to the CPRN for the period 1999/2000 to 2004/05. The funding was intended to assist CPRN to create a working capital fund to help finance the operating costs of its activities.

The evaluation was directed to assessing the: value-added contribution of CPRN's activities in informing policy making; the degree to which the CPRN has been successful in diversifying its funding sources towards financial independence; and the appropriateness of the grant funding mechanism. Based on analysis of the findings from the evaluation's multiple lines of evidence, a summary of the main findings follows.

### **8.1 Key Findings**

*The grant has supported CPRN's capacity to inform social and economic policy by allowing it to strengthen its overall operations and substantially expand its research activities.* While the exact contribution of the grant to this increased activity cannot be determined in detail, the evaluation evidence points to the conclusion that without the grant or a core funding equivalent, CPRN could not have maintained its infrastructure and implemented its research program. Key informants confirmed that without the grant CPRN would not exist with the same nature and project scope.

*The grant has strengthened the CPRN while supporting its neutrality and independence.* The unconditional nature of the granting mechanism supported the independence of CPRN and its research activities.

*The general nature of the grant funding mechanism does not allow linking the \$9 million grant to specific individual project or policy impacts.* Thus, it is the general impact of the grant which is assessed. The grant was intended to help finance the general policy research efforts of the CPRN and not specific initiatives. In this context the grant is assessed in terms of its broader impact on CPRN's operations and research program.

### **8.2 Value-Added of CPRN Research and Policy Activities**

#### **8.2.1 Success**

*The evidence points to the conclusion that CPRN has been successful in meeting its objective of informing the development of social and economic policy.* The evidence from the evaluation's online survey suggests that the greatest influence of the CPRN was on the government, academic and non-governmental sectors. More than one third of



federal policy respondents (n=122) accessing CPRN materials indicated that they occasionally or regularly referenced CPRN materials and that CPRN's research has had an impact on their work. Among provincial government policy respondents the figure was 44% (n=126). Sixty-seven percent of NGO respondents (n=88), and 58% of academics (n=79) rated the impact of CPRN on their work as high or very high.

Further evidence of the CPRN's contribution to informing policy comes from in-depth evaluation case-studies. For example, key informants from the Health Human Resources Project case study concluded that CPRN's research was instrumental in framing issues and shaping thinking at the Romanow Commission. The Project's findings are cited extensively in Commission's report (Chapter 4) and several recommendations for the Health Council of Canada reflect the CPRN suggested roles for a national health human resource agency.

***Subsequent to the receipt of the grant, CPRN substantially increased its research activities and outputs.*** Between 1999/2000 to 2002/03 total research expenditures increased 159% from approximately \$801 thousand to \$2.1 million. The number of research reports and related documents also increased. In total, 140 research reports, 111 presentations, and 92 summaries were produced. Of these 343 documents, only 20 were produced prior to the grant's approval (1998/99), while on average 58 documents per year were produced over the following five years.

***CPRN's research is viewed as high quality and objective by those accessing the material.*** Approximately 92% of online survey users responding (n=907) rated the overall quality of CPRN's research and information as high or very high, and 83% rated CPRN's academic standards or rigour as high or very high. This assessment of CPRN's research was further confirmed in the key informant interviews and case studies. Nearly two thirds of respondents also assessed the CPRN as being independent of government influence and 80% rated objectivity as high or very high.

***CPRN has expanded awareness and access to its research and information in the public policy community.*** CPRN's website, developed with the assistance of the grant, has become a key distribution channel for their research. Administrative data indicates that, between 2001 and 2003 monthly download activity increased by 79%, from 27,852 to 49,922 downloads per month. The citation analysis confirms CPRN has been effective in disseminating its research results. Nearly two thirds of survey respondents reported CPRN information was sent to them regularly.

## **8.2.2 Relevance**

***The evaluation concludes that there is significant support for the policy research provided by the CPRN.*** CPRN is viewed as occupying an independent and neutral policy niche in the spectrum of policy research institutes that makes it a unique and valued source of information. Among respondents to the on-line survey of CPRN users (n=907), 82% agreed that the CPRN provided a unique perspective on social policy. In addition, 88% agreed with the statement that "CPRN provides new ideas for future social policy". Only 15% of respondents indicated they could find the same research elsewhere if the

CPRN did not exist. In addition, the case study analysis indicated that CPRN research has helped to frame policy discussions related to health policy, children and the not for profit sector.

*Duplication and overlap do not appear to be significant issues.* As a general rule, CPRN undertakes distinctive research projects in a flexible manner for diverse clients and funders. CPRN has an open approach to projects and is willing to consult with multiple stakeholders at the outset of a project to define issues and assess the best approach to answer questions. Several key informants complimented this approach because CPRN is aware of others' initiatives and avoids duplication. While its work may broadly overlap in domains where other think tanks and academic research centres have undertaken (or are undertaking) research, it does not appear to duplicate the research of those organizations. Moreover, CPRN has been a leader in encouraging informal coordination with other research institutes, in particular with the Canada West Foundation, the Canadian Council on Social Development, and the Public Policy Forum.

### **8.2.3 Delivery**

#### **CPRN's Structure and Organization**

*CPRN has improved the independence and functioning of its governance and management structure.* Since the grant's approval, CPRN has established an independent Board Chair, broadened Board membership, and created both a Finance and Audit Committee, and a Governance and Membership Committee. These initiatives are in accordance with the recommendations of the Brown Report (Brown et al., 1998) an external review conducted prior to the grant's approval.

*There are some grounds for concern regarding the amount of time and resources CPRN devotes to conducting research, compared to administration (governance, financial administration and human resources).* Several key informants indicated that, in their judgement, the ratio of administrative to research staff at CPRN was high. Administrative data indicate that research staff account for only 41.1 percent of CPRN's total full-time staff. Moreover, CPRN staff spend 58 percent of their time on research activities, but only 32 percent of their time is billable to research projects. CPRN states that some of the organization's administrative costs resulted from implementing the Brown Report's recommendations.

More generally, the level of staff dedicated to research at CPRN appears to be located as part of a cluster at the low end of comparator institutes. For instance, research staff comprise 63.6 percent at the Caledon Institute, 62.8 percent at the Fraser Institute, and 56.7 percent at the Canadian Council on Social Development. On the other hand, the C.D. Howe Institute (38.6 percent) and the Institute for Research on Public Policy (35.3 percent) are more closely aligned with CPRN. Overall, the evaluation evidence does not lead to an unqualified endorsement of the status quo. In light of the evaluation evidence, it would be beneficial for CPRN to examine alternative strategies with a view to assessing the potential to improve the balance between research and administration.

***CPRN attracts and maintains a high quality research staff.*** The quality of both staff and research at CPRN is assessed as ranging from “solid to exceptional”. According to key informants consulted as part of the evaluation, some of the differences in the quality of CPRN research products could be attributed to the capabilities of individual network directors. One challenge faced by CPRN in maintaining the quality of its research is a high level of turnover among research staff. However, this observation is not unique to CPRN and it must be noted that CPRN has also played a role in grooming promising talent and advancing established researchers for new positions in policy and research elsewhere.

### **CPRN’s Quality Assurance Processes**

***CPRN provides a high level of quality assurance for its research; however, further measures could be taken to strengthen the independence of its review processes.*** CPRN conducts a thorough quality assurance process, employing a range of methods to strengthen the quality of its research products.<sup>31</sup> These processes appear to be relatively effective as two thirds of respondents from the on-line survey of CPRN users agreed that CPRN research publications meet or exceed the standards of most peer reviewed journals<sup>32</sup>. However, one issue identified with respect to quality assurance centered on the peer review process. While CPRN has established criteria for peer reviews, the reviews are not blind, and the reviewers are often CPRN associates. The lack of an independent peer review process could raise concerns about the appearance of a potential conflict of interest. CPRN’s quality control processes might well benefit further benefit from being strengthened by means of independent external peer review wherever possible.

### **Access to Research Products**

***CPRN translates all its documents and research products into both official languages only if the client provides funds for translation. This limits access for potential client groups.*** While translation was not specified as a requirement under the grant, the current practice at CPRN is not fully consistent with the federal government’s policy of ensuring access to public documents in both official languages. Given that all Canadians contributed to the tax revenue which funded the grant arrangements, this is a source of concern in the context of the administration of public funds at the federal level.

## **8.3 Sustainability**

***With respect to financial sustainability there has been progress but further efforts are required.*** The evaluation has found that high administrative costs and low billable time pose a barrier to CPRN’s ability to achieve financial sustainability. CPRN’s deficit

---

<sup>31</sup> These methods include peer reviews, the use of experts and stakeholders during both the design and execution of research projects, steering committees and roundtables to validate conclusions and formulate recommendations. The CPRN President also provides a final quality review of completed research reports.

<sup>32</sup> Note: Only 6.4% of on-line survey respondents disagreed that “CPRN’s research publications meet or exceeded the standard for most peer reviewed journals. A further 27.4% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

averaged \$975,000 in the four years following the receipt of the grant, compared to an average of \$839,000 in the two years prior to the grant's approval.

CPRN plans for financial sustainability comprise two phases. The first phase established infrastructure to provide the management and information systems necessary to implement financial controls and monitoring. CPRN's systems are now improved; better information is available for decision-making purposes. The next phase, as yet to be completed, will be to find a financial model that will allow CPRN to attain greater financial sustainability. Senior management has not reached a conclusion on the most appropriate model to attain this goal.

Based on the key informant interviews, some of the possible solutions to be considered include:

- ensuring all time spent on project work, including administrative time, is recorded and recoverable under particular funding arrangements;
- negotiating project funding that allow for overhead and development costs;
- achieving a more appropriate balance between fixed costs and variable costs.

*While there has been some progress toward diversification, the federal government remains the dominant funding source for CPRN's operating budget.* Subsequent to the grant, CPRN has succeeded in diversifying its funding sources. In particular it has attracted greater investments from foundations and NGOs. Funding from foundations and NGOs accounted for 12% to 26% of CPRN project funding during the 2000/01 to 2002/03 fiscal years. The federal government, however, remains the dominant source of revenue for the CPRN, accounting for 62% to 68% of project funding over the same period.

## 8.4 Appropriateness of the Granting Mechanism

The appropriateness of the grant mechanism is examined from both the perspective of the recipient organization (CPRN) and that of the granting organization (the federal government).

*From the perspective of the CPRN the grant appears to be an appropriate mechanism to achieve the intended results.* Traditionally, federal grants, by their nature, do not involve terms and conditions nor do they impose ongoing reporting demands on recipients. The unconditional nature of CPRN's grant provided the government greater leeway to support CPRN's efforts to strengthen its organizational and research capacities without impinging, or appearing to impinge, on the organization's objectivity and independence.

*For the federal government, the grant mechanism is appropriate for supporting this type of relationship as it ensures CPRN's independence; however, there are lessons to be drawn.* The unconditional nature of the grant has permitted the government to assist CPRN to strengthen its organizational and research capacities without impinging, or appearing to impinge, on the organization's objectivity and independence.

This experience, however, raises issues for consideration for any future government financial assistance that may be considered. These include: the need for greater clarity and improved communications regarding expectations associated with accountability. Internal government documents indicated that CPRN expenditures were not expected to exceed \$4.5 million by the end of the 2004/05 fiscal year. This expectation was not communicated to the grant recipient by the responsible department. As a result, expectations concerning capital fund expenditures were not met and this figure was exceeded by approximately \$300,000. In addition, the government may wish to consider conditions related to broader government policies and regulations such as official languages.

## *Appendix A – Matrix of Key Questions, Criteria and Data Sources*

Key Questions	Criteria	Data Sources
<b>Delivery</b>		
Is the CPRN appropriately structured to achieve its objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization and governance structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CPRN staffing levels and expenditures, comparison with other organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> <li>• Survey of comparators</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratio of projects conducted internally versus externally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Survey of comparators</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to recruit and retain high quality staff/researchers, succession planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Literature review</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
Does the CPRN employ an appropriate balance of balance of research and other activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of CPRN's total expenditures allocated to research versus other activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of billable to non-billable time for research staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of billable time on per diems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outputs produced /Incidence of research projects/papers, presentations by Network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
Does the CPRN employ <b>adequate strategies to ensure</b> that its <b>research</b> and other <b>outputs</b> maintain a sufficiently <b>high standard of quality</b> to meet the needs of policy makers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of quality control procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived quality of CPRN research and related products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online survey</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects obtained competitively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey of comparators</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credentials and perceived quality of staff/researchers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document Review</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Case studies</li> <li>• Online survey</li> </ul>

Key Questions	Criteria	Data Sources
Does the CPRN have <b>safeguards in place to avoid overlap and duplication</b> with other like organizations, and to maximize coordination of research and dissemination?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence and adequacy safeguards to reduce overlap and duplication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment of potential for overlap and duplication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Survey of comparators</li> <li>Literature review</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
How does CPRN reach its intended target audiences? How effective has CPRN's outreach activities been?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of methods of dissemination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Case studies</li> <li>Survey of comparators</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website statistics, comparison with downloads for comparator institutes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Administrative data analysis</li> <li>Survey of comparators</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Citations on the Internet, university website citations, and media citations, comparison with other institutes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Citation analysis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>User views on website, ease of access to information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frequency and methods of accessing CPRN research and information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of other think tank information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Profile of users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance</b>		
Is there a <b>continued need</b> for the CPRN, as a source of policy research, given the availability of other government and non-governmental policy-research sources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessments of internal and external policy research capacity based on literature review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature review</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Views of policy makers and other stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to obtain continued funding/project funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative data analysis</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
Are the areas that CPRN targets as a priority for its research appropriate to <b>the needs of policy makers</b> ? Has CPRN adopted a <b>forward looking agenda</b> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of how CPRN establishes research agenda and funds projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Document review</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Views of CPRN and policy makers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Case studies</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incidence of projects obtained with competitive/reactive funding versus proactive research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative data analysis</li> <li>Survey of comparators</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasons for unsuccessful projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case studies</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>

Key Questions	Criteria	Data Sources
<b>Success In Meeting Policy Objectives</b>		
Has the CPRN made <b>progress in meeting its ultimate objective</b> of influencing the development of social and economic policy? To what extent can this progress be <b>attributed to funding under the Grant?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Views of policy makers on the relative importance of various sources of policy research and information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of CPRN research in policy development/policy papers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> <li>Case studies</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of CPRN research in teaching/courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> <li>Case studies</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of other think tank research and information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceived impacts of CPRN research by policy makers and other stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> <li>Case studies</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
<b>Impact of the Grant on CPRN's Operations, Diversification of Funding Sources and Sustainability</b>		
Has the current grant funding approach been successful in enabling the CPRN to: <b>a. Improve long-term planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Views of CPRN staff, Board and stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Case studies</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjustments to the nature and time frame of projects undertaken</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Case studies</li> </ul>
<b>b. Conduct</b> research and other activities that would not have been possible with annual operating grants and project funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Views of CPRN staff, Board and stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Case studies</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities or projects undertaken in advance of funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Case studies</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of grant funding to pay for core operating costs and project costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in projects undertaken, leveraging of funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
<b>c. Make more efficient and effective use of available resources?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ratio of core operating costs to total project costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in operating deficit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percent administrative costs, comparison with other think tanks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Administrative data analysis</li> <li>Survey of comparators</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in nature and scope of CPRN's operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Administrative data analysis</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Views of CPRN staff, Board and stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>



Key Questions	Criteria	Data Sources
<p>Has the CPRN <b>succeeded in diversifying its sources and types of funding</b>, such that it is <b>moving toward sustainable financing</b> of its core operations without federal government operating grants?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual disposition of funds since 1999</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of a range of funding strategies produced and implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual ratio of project to non-specific funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total annual monetary value (and % trend over time) by source of pledges, gifts, project funding, investments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual amount/proportion of total funding from government sources (federal, provincial, municipal separately)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forecasts of achieving sustainability, views of CPRN</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
<p>What terms and conditions were associated with the grant (i.e., a floor amount of \$4.5M) and were they appropriate for the granting objective of sustainability?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of terms and conditions of the \$9 million grant to CPRN</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw from grant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forecasts of achieving sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Administrative data analysis</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views of CPRN staff, Board and stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> </ul>

## *Appendix B – Bibliography*

Abelson, Donald E. (2002) *Do Think Tanks Matter? Assessing the Impact of Public Policy Institutes*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Abelson, Donald E. (2000). Do Think Tanks Matter? Opportunities, Constraints and Incentives for Think Tanks in Canada and the United States. *Global Society*, v. 14, no. 2, pp. 213-236.

Abelson, Donald E. (1999) Public Visibility and Policy Relevance: Assessing the Impact and Influence of Canadian Policy Institutes. *Canadian Public Administration*, v. 42, no. 2, pp. 240-270.

Abelson, Donald E. and Christine M. Carberry. (1998) “Following Suit or Falling Behind? A Comparative Analysis of Think Tanks in Canada and the United States”. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, v. 31, no. 3, pp. 525-555.

Abelson, Donald E. and Evert A. Lindquist (2000) “Think Tanks in North America”. In *Think Tanks and Civil Societies: Catalysts for Ideas and Action* Ed. James McGann and R. Kent Weaver. New Brunswick, N.J. and London: Transaction, pp. 37-66.

Anderson, George (1996) “The new focus on the policy capacity of the federal government”. *Canadian Public Administration*, v. 39, no. 4, pp. 469-88.

Baier, Gerald and Herman Bakvis (2001) “Think Tanks and Political Parties: Competitors or Collaborators”. *ISUMA: Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, v. 2, no. 1, pp. 107-113.

Bakvis, Herman (2000) “Rebuilding Policy Capacity in the Era of the Fiscal Dividend: A Report from Canada”. *Governance*, v.13, no. 1, pp. 71-103.

Bourke, P. and Linda Butler (1996). “Publication Types, Citation Rates and Evaluation”. *Scientometrics*, v. 37, no. 3, pp. 473-494.

Brown, Robert, Susan McDaniel and George Thompson (1998) *Final Report of the External Review Committee on Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.* Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.

Davis, Peter and Philippa Howden-Chapman (1996) “Translating Research Findings into Health Policy”. *Social Science and Medicine*, v. 43, no. 5, pp. 865-872.

Day, Alan J. (2000) “Think Tanks in Western Europe.” in James G McGann and R. Kent Weaver (eds.) *Think Tanks and Civil Societies: Catalysts for Ideas and Action*. New Brunswick, N.J. and London: Transaction Publisher, pp. 103-138.

Dobell, Peter (2003) *IRPP: The First 30 Years*. Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy.

Kumar, David (2000) “A study of education policy research at the Brookings Institution”. *Higher Education Policy*, 13 (3), 303-317.

Lindquist, Evert A. (1989) "Behind the Myth of Think Tanks: The Organization and Relevance of Canadian Policy Institutes". Doctoral dissertation, Graduate School of Public Policy, University of California at Berkeley.

Lindquist, Evert A. (1990) "The Third Community, Policy Inquiry, and Social Scientists" in Stephen Brooks and Alain-G. Gagnon (eds.), *Social Scientists, Policy, and the State*. New York: Praeger, pp. 21-51.

Lindquist, Evert A. (1993) "Think tanks or clubs? Assessing the influence and roles of Canadian policy institutes". *Canadian Public Administration*, v. 36, no. 4, pp. 547-79.

Lindquist, Evert A. (1997) "Beyond the Myth: New Challenges for Think Tanks". *NIRA Review*.

Lindquist, Evert A. (1999) "Efficiency, Reliability, or Innovation? Managing Overlap and Interdependence in Canada's Federal System of Governance" in Robert Young (ed.), *Stretching the Federation: The Art of the State in Canada*. Kingston: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen's University, pp. 35-68.

Lindquist, Evert A. (2001) "Discerning Policy Influence: Framework for a Strategic Evaluation of IDRC-Supported Research". Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

Lindquist, Evert A. (2004) "Three decades of Canadian think tanks: evolving institutions, conditions and strategies" in Diane Stone and Andrew Denham (eds.), *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 264-80.

Lindquist, Evert A., and James A. Desveaux (1998) *Recruitment and Policy Capacity in Government*. Ottawa: Public Policy Forum.

Lynn, Laurence E. (ed.) (1978) *Knowledge and Policy: The Uncertain Connection*. Washington, D.C., National Academy of Sciences.

McGann, James G. and R. Kent Weaver, eds. (2000) *Think Tanks and Civil Societies: Catalysts for Ideas and Action*. New Brunswick, N.J. and London: Transaction.

Pestieau, Caroline (2003) *Evaluating Public Policy Research*, Working Paper W 22. Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.

Plumptre, Tim and Barbara Laskin, (2001) *Think Tanks and Policy Institutes: An overview of issues, challenges and successes in Canada and other jurisdictions*. Ottawa: Institute on Governance.

Sabatier, Paul A. (1987) "Knowledge, Policy-Oriented Learning, and Policy Change: An Advocacy Coalition Framework". *Knowledge*, v. 8, no. 3, pp. 649-92.

Stone, Diane, Andrew Denham, and Mark Garnett (eds.) (1998) *Think Tanks Across Nations: A Comparative Approach*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Stone, Diane, and Andrew Denham (eds.) (2004) *Think Tanks Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Struyk, Raymond J. (2002) *Managing Think Tanks: A Practical Guide for Maturing Organizations*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.

Struyk, Raymond J. (2002) "Management of Transitional Think Tank Networks". *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, v. 15, no. 4, pp. 625-638.

van Leeuwen, Thed N., Martijn S. Visser, Henk F. Moed, Ton J. Nederhof, and Anthony F. J. van Raan (2003) "The Holy Grail of science policy: Exploring and Combining Bibliometric Tools in Search of Scientific Excellence". *Scientometrics*, v. 57, no. 2, pp. 257-280.

Weaver, R. Kent (1989) "The Changing World of Think Tanks". *PS: Political Science and Politics*, v. 22, no. 3, pp. 563-78.

Weiss, Carole H. (1977) "Research for Policy's Sake: The Enlightenment Function of Social Research". *Policy Analysis*, v. 3, no. 4, pp. 531-45.

Weiss, Carole H. (1991) *Organizations for Policy Analysis: Helping Government Think*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992.

Willinsky, J. (2003) "*Policymakers' Online use of Academic Research*". *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, v. 11, no. 2.



# *Appendix C – CPRN Comments on the Draft Evaluation Report*

## **CPRN’s contribution to “the public good”**

The fact that the evaluation has found CPRN “to be successful in meeting its objective of informing the development of social and economic policy” is, on its own, a public good. But we believe there is more, and while there are various references scattered throughout the document, there is no one place where the “public good” threads are brought together.

We think the public good component of CPRN’s contribution has two key elements:

- The way in which we conduct our research;
- The manner in which we take what we have learned and make it available to a much broader audience through our dissemination and outreach activities.

## **How CPRN does its research**

Our model is one that clearly differentiates CPRN within the policy research community. It is one that is participatory and inclusive. It provides a neutral space and encourages dialogue, bringing different views and disparate parties together. Whereas other policy shops undertake the research and then present the findings, CPRN brings stakeholders together during the research process itself, involving a range of communities. This builds on our network model, encourages fresh thinking and often results in issues being reframed and questions being asked from a different perspective. The end result is a more balanced discourse on the issues in question.

There is no doubt this is a more complex approach to research, and as such, requires a larger administrative infrastructure to manage the process. However, the added value that this approach brings to the research is validated by the evaluation findings, where a majority of respondents to the on-line survey indicated that they would not be able to find the same research elsewhere if CPRN were not in existence.

## **Dissemination and Outreach**

CPRN believes there is a strong functional connection between research and outreach. If the goal is to inform, then it is absolutely essential that we not only engage in developing smart ideas but that they are heard, seen, or read by the right people in order to make the results of CPRN’s research into a vital public interest instrument. And from the online survey, it appears that CPRN is reaching the right mix of people to inform policy advice.

CPRN's policy is that everything we do is put on our website, and that it is available free of charge to all who want it. We have invested considerable resources in our Internet presence, developing a large number of tools to make it easy to find and download our content. In fact CPRN had no website until November 2000 and we were only able to build it once the grant was available to provide the appropriate resources. It has since been completely overhauled and is now CPRN's face to the outside world.

This web profile is buttressed by an active Public Affairs department which reaches out to the media for dissemination of our work and creates a number of on-line and print publications. Moreover, the participation by network directors at conferences and workshops and the briefings provided by the President to senior leaders in the federal and provincial government increase the distribution of our research findings.

It is important to underline that all of this dissemination and outreach is a high cost item for CPRN –roughly half a million dollars in the current budget year. And these costs are not recoverable. They are not paid for in the contracts with those who fund the research, nor are they covered by the not-for-profit organizations and community-based groups who regularly ask for our participation at their events. From the point of view of these community leaders, CPRN is a catalyst for community building at the local level.

We see this substantial menu of outreach and dissemination activities as a vital element of the “public good” contribution that is made by CPRN.

## **Concerns about Sustainability and Access**

CPRN shares the concerns raised in the evaluation about long-term sustainability and access to all our documents in both official languages.

The CPRN experience during the time of the grant has clearly demonstrated that sustainability is not possible with continued reliance on short-term (project) funding.

Short term funding does not:

- allow for adequate recovery of overhead costs,
- cover the costs involved in dissemination and outreach,
- cover the costs in terms of the time (and energy) required by the network directors to find the funding, and then administer the increasingly complex contracts with funders, or
- allow CPRN to build its capacity for synthesis work and analysis which decision makers and community leaders find so useful.

While CPRN's efforts to diversify its funding base by means of a fundraising campaign, and broadening the client base have been modestly successful, neither holds the key to long-term sustainability.

A point of clarification is required about our fundraising efforts. The draft report, citing the figures in our Audited Financial Statements, notes that donations to CPRN have declined during the grant period. It is important to have it clearly understood that before the Grant, all donations were taken in as general revenue. Post the grant, with changes in our accounting methods – and with changes in how corporate donors in particular wanted to contribute – “donation revenues” were channelled either directly to projects, thereby becoming project revenue; or to the President’s Innovation Fund, where they are only taken in as revenue when there are associated expenses. Therefore, while the donations line on the Audited Statements does show a decrease, the actual amount of donations has been increasing, reflecting the organization’s investment in a Development Department and the many fundraising events staged by CPRN. These donations are just showing up on different lines of the financial statement.

The other concern raised in the draft report was the fact that not all CPRN products are translated in both official languages. This again is a matter of resources. If the project funders do not pay for the cost of translation, in most instances, the report is not translated. From time to time, the President’s Innovation Fund is used to cover report translation costs when wide distribution of the research is viewed as particularly important.

It should be noted that all CPRN-originated documents, our Annual Report, the *e-networks* electronic newsletter and *NetworkNews* are all issued in both official languages, as are our news releases and media advisories and job postings. The infrastructure of our website and that of [jobquality.ca](http://jobquality.ca) is also fully bilingual, even if all the research papers are not. CPRN allocates about \$50,000 a year to the translation of these documents.