

The Metropolis Project is an international forum for comparative research and the development of public policy about migration, cultural diversity and the challenges of integrating immigrants in cities in Canada and around the world.

The **Canadian branch** of the Metropolis Project is funded jointly by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Citizenship and Immigration Canada and several other federal partners. Its annual national conference is the only conference in Canada that brings together academics, not-for-profit organizations, and policy makers to discuss research on issues surrounding immigration and the creation of more inclusive cities.

As Canada's population becomes ever more diverse, immigrants, policy makers, and society as a whole face new challenges of integration. What does it mean to be Canadian? What is the future for Canadian cities? Beyond, challenges, what opportunities does immigration bring to Canada?

Chad Gaffield, President of SSHRC, delivered the opening **keynote speech** to the third plenary session of the ninth national Metropolis Canada Conference, held in Toronto, March 1 to 4, 2007. The overall theme of the conference, explored in more than 50 presentations, panels, discussions and workshops, was "Exploring Canada's Diversity, Today and Tomorrow."

In his address, Dr. Gaffield emphasizes the points at which **the goals of the Metropolis Project and those of SSHRC coincide** as well as the role the project plays in building the understanding and developing the talent that Canada needs to meet the challenges of the 21st century.



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

**Address by
Dr. Chad Gaffield, President, SSHRC
to the
Ninth National Metropolis Project Conference
Toronto
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Thank you for that generous introduction.

As president of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), I would like to underline how important the work of the Metropolis Project is to Canadian society and how well it exemplifies the benefits of social sciences and humanities research.

En tant que président du Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines (CRSH), j'aimerais souligner à quel point le projet Metropolis est important pour la société canadienne et à quel point il illustre de façon remarquable les bienfaits de la recherche en sciences humaines.

SSHRC, which will be marking its 30th anniversary this year, is a federal agency dedicated to building understanding of people—individuals, communities and societies in the past and present—and nurturing their talents. The goal is to help build a better future by maximizing the impact of new and existing knowledge to improve Canadians' quality of life.

Le CRSH, qui célèbre cette année son 30^e anniversaire, est un organisme fédéral qui vise à mieux comprendre les gens—individus, communautés et sociétés d'hier et d'aujourd'hui—ainsi qu'à favoriser l'expression de leurs talents. Son objectif est d'aider à bâtir un avenir meilleur en maximisant l'impact des connaissances déjà existantes ou nouvellement acquises de manière à améliorer la qualité de vie des Canadiens.

SSHRC focuses on putting people in the picture of our current challenges and possibilities. In order for research to enhance our quality of life and prosperity in a competitive global environment, the social sciences and humanities must play a central role, since all questions—including those usually defined as scientific and technological—are human questions involving ideas and behaviour. This is why SSHRC increasingly collaborates with its sister agencies, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), to support innovative research activities that integrate all fields of knowledge. In fact, the three council presidents have increased their regular contact by creating the Tri-Council Coordinating Committee, known as TC3, to express the exponentially greater value of close collaboration.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council is now taking action based on the three key objectives of its strategic plan. The first objective is to support as effectively and intensively as possible the top-quality research that is the wellspring of creativity in every field. Toward this end, we are enhancing the quality of all aspects of program administration, including the independent expert-review process. For example, we are exploring how we can increase the international participation of experts on our peer-review committees in keeping

with the greater international reach of Canadian research, as illustrated by the Metropolis Project.

The second objective of our strategic plan seeks to enable connections, among researchers, across disciplines, and between the university and the larger society. This objective reflects the changing world of research in which specialization is being combined with contextualization as strategies for advancing knowledge and building understanding. I like to use the expression “discipline-based inter-disciplinarity” to describe the new efforts to advance research through both specialization and contextualization. These efforts build horizontal linkages connecting the vertical structures of disciplines, institutions and jurisdictions. In this spirit, SSHRC has been developing new ways to support researchers, such as through grants for Community-University Research Alliances, for International Opportunities and for Strategic Research Clusters.

These programs complement joint initiatives, such as illustrated by the partnership that supports Metropolis. Overall, we are seeking to maximize the potential of our funding to enable innovative research that reflects the new ways that scholars are attempting to build understanding about individuals, groups and societies. Similarly, we are revising our governance structure to enhance our connections to Canadian society. By moving toward a balanced Council membership composed of both academic leaders and those from the larger society, we are deepening the engagement of Canadians in the research activities of the social sciences and humanities.

The third objective of our strategic plan concerns the impact of our research, and it is this objective that presents special challenges about which many of you know a great deal. What is the value of our research? What difference does research make in the lives of Canadians? And how can we assess the value and impact of our research? I do not think that we have fully conceptualized how we might address such questions and we certainly are only now beginning to develop effective strategies to mobilize knowledge in ways that do justice to the potential impact of our research. To increase and accelerate our pursuit of this objective, we have created a new position of Vice-President, Partnerships, at SHRCC, and I invite you to contact Dr. Gisèle Yasmeen, who has just taken up this position and who is looking forward to collaborating with you to enhance the impact of our research on the lives of individuals, groups and communities across Canada and internationally.

As part of our efforts to support the changing world of research, SSHRC has adopted an international policy designed to facilitate and enhance Canadian participation in international research efforts. For example, we are increasing our collaboration with research councils elsewhere in order to support more effectively projects involving researchers in several countries, as well as global research networks that span numerous jurisdictions.

Since 1995, the year the Metropolis Project was launched—and particularly since 2005, when its strategic plan was finalized—SSHRC has developed a diverse suite of programs in keeping with the spirit of the Metropolis Project.

One program connects researchers with local communities to tackle urgent problems affecting everyday life. Another enables major research teams to address complex questions that cut across disciplines. A third funds Canadian researchers to join global research projects which address key issues common to many societies. A fourth supports the creation of research networks that focus new and existing knowledge in diverse disciplines on specific research problems. In each case, these deployments hold the potential to create a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

In its discipline-based inter-disciplinarity, in its focus on expanding links between researchers and decision makers, in its concern for the societal impact of research, and in its far-sighted, pan-Canadian and trans-national scope, the Metropolis Project displays key features of the changing world of research. Not surprisingly, this effort has attracted wide-spread participation. In Canada alone, the project engages some 350 researchers, has generated more than 700 publications, and has trained close to 400 students—men and women who will take their new skills and understanding with them to leadership positions across the private and public sectors.

The role of Metropolis in developing the talent needed to meet the challenges of the 21st century deserves special emphasis: 70 per cent of our money goes to support students, i.e., develops talent!

For all these reasons, I am proud to be able to say that SSHRC has supported the Metropolis Project from the beginning, and is pleased to support this third phase. In theory and in practice, Metropolis illustrates new research approaches that are becoming more familiar around the world.

The speed with which the character of research is changing in the social sciences and humanities has been accelerated in recent years by substantial faculty renewal: 40 per cent since 2000; 68 per cent at SSHRC!

Not surprisingly, therefore, we are actively working with the universities to seek better ways to support the growing numbers of new faculty who have been entering the universities in recent years.

By supporting research and policy development on migration, cultural diversity and the challenges of immigrant integration in cities, both in Canada and around the world, the Metropolis Project focuses on one of the most important questions of our times. This effort clearly illustrates the benefits of public investment in advancing knowledge and developing talent.

Moreover, Metropolis has succeeded not only in advancing our knowledge in a broad area that is vital to the interests of every Canadian, but has also made this knowledge readily available through content-rich websites, both pan-Canadian and specific to each of the regional centres.

The scope and relevance of Metropolis is evident in the more than 50 topics featured at this ninth national conference, “Exploring Canada’s Diversity, Today and Tomorrow.” In order to address the diverse issues relevant to immigration, the researchers, policy-makers and community leaders gathered here today are presenting research results on almost every aspect of everyday life: from multiculturalism policy and public attitudes, to public school curricula and the nature of democracy itself.

In many ways, Canada’s development as a country has been defined by the history of immigration, the growth of cities, and the interactions between the two processes. In our era, the questions of immigration and the questions of urbanization have become inseparable.

How can we better integrate over 200,000 new Canadians every year? How can we eliminate racism? How can we erase the income disparities that persist into the second generation? Our ability to successfully address such questions depends upon the analysis of evidence; that is to say, research. By collaborating with colleagues at Statistics Canada, Canadian Heritage, and Citizenship and Immigration, Metropolis researchers are creating and examining the evidence we need to develop better policies and programs.

The research financed by the Metropolis Project has measurably increased our ability to address urgent societal issues, such as: managing immigration levels, developing immigration-selection policies, the effectiveness of services for immigrants, the role of immigrants in invigorating Canada’s regions, factors in building a more inclusive society, and the connections between immigration and globalization.

La recherche financée par le projet Metropolis nous a permis d’accroître de façon considérable notre capacité à se pencher sur des questions sociales pressantes telles que la gestion du niveau d’immigration, l’élaboration de politiques relatives à la sélection des immigrants, l’efficacité des services offerts aux immigrants, le rôle des immigrants dans le développement des régions du Canada, les facteurs favorisant l’établissement d’une société plus inclusive et les liens entre l’immigration et la mondialisation.

The Metropolis Project stems from one of those grand ideas which, once put into action, proves itself indispensable. That, after 11 years, hundreds of participating organizations in 20 countries still take this position underscores this fact. Nowhere is this more true than in Canada.

Le projet Metropolis est né d'une grande idée qui, une fois en marche, s'est avérée indispensable. Le fait qu'après 11 ans, des centaines d'organismes participants de 20 pays différents le pensent encore ne fait que le confirmer. Et c'est d'autant plus vrai au Canada.

All these features make Metropolis a compelling example of a large-scale, multi-disciplinary, collaborative, policy-relevant, international research project. But, as it approaches its 12th year, Metropolis is becoming more than a research project. We can now think of it as an international effort to successfully meet—in an evidence-based way—the challenges and opportunities posed by the new recognition of human complexity and diversity in unprecedented global migrations.

One way to think about these challenges and opportunities is to recognize that, since the time of Confederation in 1867, Canadians have been writing the story of one of the world's most remarkably successful societies based on substantial immigration. While we must continue to recognize and come to grips with the historical examples of significant failures and regrettable actions, we must also recognize the slow but steady maturing of a strong civil society that underpinned a relatively prosperous commercial, rural society in the 19th century, the transition to an urban, industrial society by the mid-20th century and the emergence of the so-called post-industrial knowledge society in recent decades. At each stage of these transformations, increasing public investments in advancing knowledge and developing talent as a public good has played a central role in the maturing of Canadian civil society that, while being far from ideal, has become recognized internationally for its strengths, especially by immigrants from around the world.

I like to think about these transformations in the story of Canada in terms of three chapters: Chapter 1, the 19th century, with the funding of public schools; it continued in Chapter 2, the early-to-mid-20th century, with the expansion of public universities; and in Chapter 3, the last quarter of the 20th century, with the development of a made-in-Canada research community.

We are now engaged in writing the fourth chapter of the story of Canada as a society that attempts to be successful by investing in knowledge and talent as a public good. Our challenge is to ensure that this chapter ends well. Much will depend on how committed we are to further expanding and enabling the contributions the research community makes to Canada's quality of life. I am convinced that this commitment is a quintessentially Canadian strategy that has served us well since the 19th century and is now needed more than ever as we come to grips with the myriad social, economic, environmental and cultural challenges of the 21st century.

In closing, I would like to thank the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and Malcolm Brown, Assistant Deputy Minister at

Citizenship and Immigration, for the Government of Canada's support for the third phase of the Metropolis Project.

For their leadership, I want to thank Howard Duncan and Elizabeth Ruddick of Citizenship and Immigration, and Gisèle Yasmeen, Marc Fonda, Craig McNaughton, Eric Bastien, Heather Sams and Julia Gualtieri, key members of the SSHRC team, who are here today.

For this splendid event, heartfelt thanks go to Toronto's Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement—CERIS to most of us—for organizing the ninth national Metropolis conference. In particular, the CERIS co-directors, Drs. Joanne Anneke Rummens (University of Toronto), John Shields (Ryerson) and Paul Anisef (York), and conference organizers Dr. Scott Wortley (University of Toronto) and Ms. Coleen Burke.

Clearly, we live in challenging times in which basic questions of identity and existence are posed in complex and diverse ways. How we can best share this planet in peace, if not also in prosperity, is a question that probes to the heart of both public policy and everyday life. Better understandings of individuals, groups and societies do not guarantee a better future, but what else is more promising?

Thank you.