

Rethinking Development: Local Pathways to Global Wellbeing
June 20-24, 2005,
St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada

A landmark international conference will be held from June 20-24, 2005. The conference will examine successful initiatives world-wide that attempt to integrate sustainable and equitable economic development with environmental conservation, social and cultural cohesion, and good governance.

Addressing the degrading social and environmental consequences of prevailing development trends, the conference will confront the challenge of redirecting global development towards socially and environmentally responsible policy and practices. The goal is to ensure long-term prosperity and equity for all.

Innovative, working models of alternative development practices will be presented to provoke stimulating and proactive dialogue that supports deep learning. Our intention is to engage in a hands-on problem solving approach to provide practical guidance to governments, businesses, and non-government organizations that want to take concrete steps towards creating good and sustainable human societies.

Examples of initiatives from Bhutan, Brazil, Canada, India, Kenya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the USA, Scandinavia, and others will be profiled. The focus will be on how these programs are implemented, why they can work on a global level, how major challenges were overcome, and what challenges remain. Speakers will address questions of both policy and practice.

Curitiba, Brazil, is creating a "sustainable city" based on mass transit rather than automobile use. The Dutch government gave its citizens far more free time and sharply reduced unemployment by encouraging shorter work hours. Denmark is phasing out agricultural pesticides and encouraging organic agriculture. Honey Care Africa has pioneered sustainable community-based development practices in Kenya.

The conference will gather government, non-government, business, labour, academic, and youth leaders; and representatives from more than 20 countries, along with delegates from Canada and the Atlantic Provinces.

The conference is **designed to offer practical tools**, inspiration, critical understanding, and connection to an international support network. Participants will be prepared to implement successfully practical actions in their own countries and communities. The design of the conference is intended to create an atmosphere of open participation that demonstrates modes of communication practiced in a society devoted to enhancing wellbeing.

A Sampling of Conference Presenters

Ray Anderson is the founder and CEO of Interface Inc, one of the world's largest commercial interior furnishings companies, with sales in 110 countries and manufacturing facilities on four continents. Recently featured in the film "The Corporation," Ray Anderson has vowed to eliminate waste at Interface and make his company completely sustainable. Fortune magazine named Interface one of America's "100 Best Companies to Work For."

Ela Bhatt is founder and first General-Secretary of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India. Based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, SEWA is the largest single trade union in the country with a membership of 687,000 women. Among SEWA's achievements is the SEWA Bank whose capital is made up entirely of members' own contributions.

Cindy Blackstock is a member of the Gitksan First Nation and Executive Director, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (FNCFC), Ms. Blackstock is one of Canada's leading and most eloquent spokespersons for the promotion and strengthening of First Nations cultures and knowledge. She has devoted her life to using reconciliation to address structural risks for First Nations children that are often exacerbated by conventional "development" strategies.

Rev. Bliss Browne is founder and President of Imagine Chicago, a remarkable and innovative civic project founded in 1992 that has inspired a global movement on six continents (www.imaginechicago.org). An ordained Episcopal priest (the first female priest ever to preach at Westminster Abbey), Rev. Browne was formerly a corporate banking Vice President and Division Head at the First National Bank of Chicago (1975-1991); and author of "Ten Years of Imagination in Action" and "Women Alive: A Legacy of Social Justice."

Raffi Cavoukian, C.M., D.Mus, serves as Chair of the Troubadour Foundation and is CEO of Troubadour Music. Raffi is one of North America's most popular and beloved children's singer/songwriters and family entertainers. He has become a global troubadour, and is now founder of Child Honoring and author of the Child Honoring Covenant and Principles.

The Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimpu, Bhutan, will be represented by Karma Ura, Director, and the following researchers: Karma Galay, Dorji Penjore, Lham Dorji, Tashi Choden, Chhimi Dem, and Kesang Tshering.

Dr. Serigne Mbaye Diène worked with the Senegal Ministry of Health in Dakar for nearly 20 years, serving as Deputy Director for the National Service of Food and Applied Nutrition, managing nutrition and oral rehydration therapy (ORT) programs. He is the Nutrition Team Leader at BASICS, providing leadership for community-based nutrition interventions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and is founder of the Senegal Ecovillages Network and EcoYoff Living & Learning Center, which is turning his home village of Yoff, Senegal, into an eco-village with close ties to the Ithaca eco-village in New York.

Dr. Wilhelmina Donkoh is a lecturer in African history in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Kwame Nkrumah University, Kumasi, Ghana, specialising in Ashanti history, and co-author of The Just King: The Story of Osei Tutu Kwame Asibe Bonsu. Dr. Donkoh has chronicled the importance of traditional governance structures in dealing with modern challenges like HIV-AIDS in Africa.

Lam Dorji is Director of the Department of Planning in the Ministry of Finance of the Royal Government of Bhutan, and previously served as Director of the Department of Budget and Accounts in the Finance Ministry.

James Drescher is Director of The Maritime Ecoforestry School and the caretaker and forester for Windhorse Farm, a highly successful 160-year experiment in low-impact, sustainable forestry in Nova Scotia. His practice of 'enrichment forestry' is based on the principles of "nothing missing" and concern for the welfare of all living beings. He has lectured widely in North America.

Holly Dressel is a journalist and co-author with David Suzuki of 'From Naked Ape to Superspecies' and 'Good News for a Change: Hope for a Troubled Planet.' The latter book profiles exemplary models of sustainable development and environmental protection throughout the world.

Dasho Zangley Dukpa is Vice Chancellor of the Royal University of Bhutan, and was previously a District Governor, Principal of Sherubtse College, and Deputy Director in Department of Education in the Royal Government of Bhutan. He has been involved in curriculum development, national education assessment, establishment of educational standards, and drafting of legislation, and has published a number of articles on the education system in Bhutan.

Heather Eaton, Ph.D. is professor of theology at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, specializing in the areas of religion/spirituality, ecology and women's issues. She is founder of the Canadian Forum on Religion and Ecology, author of *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies* (2005) and co-editor of *Ecofeminism and Globalization: Exploring Religion, Culture and Context* (2003). Her goal is to mobilize religions on key social and ecological issues.

John Taylor Gatto was recognised as New York State and New York City Teacher of the Year and is author of *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling* (1992); *The Exhausted School* (1993); *A Different Kind of Teacher* (2000); and *The Underground History of American Education* (2001).

Paul Gipe is one of the world's leading experts on wind energy and focuses on the economic, environmental, community, and governance aspects of wind power. Mr. Gipe is the author of *Wind Energy Comes of Age* and *Wind Energy Basics* and is lead author of *Wind Power in View*. Recently, the American Wind Energy Association named him "Person of the Year."

Yagya Ghale is Senior Program Officer at the Centre for Micro-Finance in Nepal, managing and developing savings and credit co-operatives, micro-finance institutions, and HIV/AIDS partnership projects. She was previously the general manager of a women's co-operative for 9 years. Financial co-operatives are currently providing an important stabilizing function in Nepal's highly unstable political situation.

Anders Hayden is a former researcher and policy coordinator for 32 HOURS: Action for Full Employment, a citizen's group committed to a reduction and redistribution of work time. He is one of the leading proponents of new work schedules in Canada, and is author of *Sharing the Work, Sparing the Planet: Work Time, Consumption, & Ecology*.

John Helliwell, Ph.D, is Professor of Economics at the University of British Columbia (formerly of Harvard and Oxford Universities) and author of *Globalization and Well-Being* (2002), *The Contribution of Human and Social Capital to Sustained Economic Growth and Well-Being* (2001) and other books. Professor Helliwell serves as Special Adviser to the Bank of Canada and is a pioneer in wellbeing measurement.

Farouk Jiwa is Co-Founder and Director of Honey Care Africa, a small, private sector organization that has been working to promote sustainable community-based bee keeping initiatives across Kenya. Farouk has received the prestigious Equator Prize that recognizes outstanding achievement in sustainable development and sustainable community livelihoods.

K. K. Krishna Kumar, was Director of Kerala's Total Literacy Program, which mobilized 350,000 volunteers to teach everyone in Kerala to read, write, and do math, and has worked with the people's movement for science popularization and awareness in Kerala for more than 30 years. He is a founding member of the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi (BGVS), one of the largest voluntary agencies in India, providing field and academic support for literacy and continuing education throughout India, and is on the executive committee of India's National Literacy Mission.

Stuart Myiow has been Wolf clan representative of the Mohawk Traditional Council, Kahnawake Mohawk Territory, since 1987, and is among the last of the Mohawk Traditionalists to be born and raised by the chiefs and clan mothers within the Longhouse. He will pass on to conference participants the knowledge of good governance passed down to him through generations, on the Constitution of the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy - "the Great Law of Peace."

Thakur S. Powdyel is Director of the Centre for Education Research and Development in the Ministry of Education of the Royal Government of Bhutan. He previously served for 15 years as Vice Principal of Sherubtse College in Bhutan and has worked in community service, curriculum development, national education assessment, establishment of educational standards, and production of bilingual dictionaries. Powdyel's major interests are in educational integrity, institutional self-respect, inter-cultural relations, development, and furtherance of gross national happiness.

Dick and Pat Richardson collaborated with faculty and university administrators in creating the Environmental Science Institute at the University of Texas, and have worked with a variety of government, non-government and private land managers over many years to restore soil health and biodiversity in prairie lands. Their innovative educational methods use holistic research methods to teach students about their relationship with nature.

Richard Reoch is President of Shambhala International and Chair of the International Working Group on Sri Lanka, a network of diplomats and experts supporting the peace process in that war-torn island. Mr. Reoch was former Global Media Chief of Amnesty International where he spent 23 years and he is author of Combating Torture, the official field manual of the 55-nation Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and of To Die Well: A Holistic Approach for the Dying and Their Caregivers.

Vicki Robin is co-author with Joe Dominguez of the national best-seller, Your Money Or Your Life: Transforming Your Relationship With Money & Achieving Financial Independence, available now in nine languages. She is President of the New Road Map Foundation and Chair of the Simplicity Forum. She lectures widely, has appeared on hundreds of radio and television shows including "Oprah" and "Good Morning America" and has been featured in People Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, and the New York Times.

Sanjit (Bunker) Roy is founder and Director of the Barefoot College, India, whose mission is to alleviate the suffering of the rural poor and imbue them with self-respect and dignity. Founded in 1972, the Barefoot College is the only College in India built by and for the poor, and addresses issues of health & sanitation, rural employment, sustainable energy, social awareness, and the conservation of ecological systems in rural communities. The college recently received the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement and Mr Roy was awarded the St. Andrew's Prize for the Environment.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche is Head of the Shambhala Buddhist lineage, which emphasizes the basic goodness of all beings and works towards the creation of an enlightened society based on wisdom and compassion. He is author of the best selling book, Turning the Mind into an Ally, and his teachings emphasize the profound relationship between working with one's own mind, caring for others, and creating decent and peaceful human societies on earth.

Joel Salatin is one of America's most dynamic and innovative farmers, combining science, art and ideas from nature to create a farm that is highly profitable, produces zero waste, and has been featured in the Smithsonian Magazine, National Geographic and countless other radio, television and print media. He is author of many leading books on organic farming, including *You Can Farm*, *Salad Bar Beef*, and *Pastured Poultry Profits*.

His Excellency John Ralston Saul, author of *The Unconscious Civilization*, *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West*, *The Doubter's Companion: A Dictionary of Aggressive Common Sense*, *On Equilibrium*, *Reflections of a Siamese Twin*, and five novels. He won the 1996 Governor General's Literary Award for Non-Fiction and has twice won the Gordon Montador Award for the Best Canadian Non-Fiction Book on social issues.

Allan Savory is a pioneer in holistic management and founder of the Allan Savory Centre for Holistic Management, Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is author of the seminal books, *Holistic Management: A New Framework for Decision Making*, and *Holistic Resource Management: A Model for a Healthy Planet*, and was recently awarded the International Banksia Award for "the betterment of our environment on a global level."

Lyonpo Jigmi Thinley is Home Minister and former Prime Minister of Bhutan, whose King has proclaimed that "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product." He is also President of the Council of The Centre for Bhutan Studies. Bhutan recently received the United Nations Environment Program's Champion of the Earth award for placing the environment at the centre of all its development policies, for its "excellent environmental track record," and for preserving more than 72% of its land under forest cover, with 26% designated as protected areas.

Karma Ura is Director of the Centre for Bhutan Studies, and author of *The Hero With a Thousand Eyes* (1995), *The Ballad of Pemi Tshewang Tashi: A Wind Borne Feather* (1996), *Deities, Archers and Planners in the Era of Decentralization* (2004), *The Bhutanese Development Story*, and numerous other books and articles on Bhutanese history, culture, and literature.

Father Francisco VanderHoff, Ph.D. (theology and political economy), is an ordained Roman Catholic priest living in Mexico, and founder of the global fair trade movement that now works in 17 countries. He founded the Union of Indigenous Communities of the Isthmus Region (UCIRI) in Mexico in 1983, and in 1989 co-founded Max Havelaar in the Netherlands - the world's first fair trade seal - as a way to build a more just and sustainable commercial bridge between poor peasant farmers and wealthy nations.

Mathis Wackernagel developed, with William Rees, the 'Ecological Footprint' - a widely-used measure of sustainability. He is founder and Executive Director of the Global Footprint Network and co-author of *Our Ecological Footprint, Sharing Nature's Interest*, and the WWF Living Planet Report. He has advised the United Nations and governments and organizations on six continents on reducing human impact on the earth.

Marilyn Waring, Ph.D, is a Professor of Public Policy, Massey University, New Zealand, and a former Member of Parliament serving for 9 years. Dr. Waring is author of *Counting for Nothing*, the basis of the National Film Board film *Who's Counting*, and *Three Masquerades: Essays on Equality, Work and Human Rights*. She has led major development projects for UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and has just completed a Ministerial Review of NZAID for the New Zealand Government.

| Presenters | Organization | Country |
|----------------------------------|---|----------------|
| Anderson, Ray | Interface Inc. | USA |
| Anthony, Ric | Grass Roots Recycling, California Research Chair | USA |
| Baldacchino, Dr. Godfrey | Canada Research Chair, UPEI and Sociology Professor at University of Malta | Canada |
| Beale, Elizabeth | Atlantic Provinces Economic Council | Canada |
| Blackstock, Cindy | First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada | Canada |
| Browne, Rev. Bliss | Founder and President of Imagine Chicago | USA |
| Bruce, David | Rural and small town program, Mt Allison University, NB | Canada |
| Abdi, Nur | | Canada |
| Ayer-Guigan, Suhasini | Auroville Building Centre in South India | India |
| Bhatt, Ela | Self Employed Women's Association in India | India |
| Bracho, Frank | Former Venezuelan Ambassador to India | Canada |
| Diene, Serigne | BASICS and Senegal Ecovillages Network an EcoYoff Living and Learning Center | Senegal |
| Fernandez, Rosa Flores | Proterra; Earth and vernacular architecture | Brazil |
| Ghale, Yagya | Centre for Micro-Finance, Nepal | Nepal |
| Jiwa, Farouk | Honey Care Africa | Kenya |
| Khan, Ali Nawab | Aga Khan Planning and Building Service, Pakistan | Pakistan |
| Kone, Dr. Yacouba | Director, Sante Sud and Doctors for Development in Mali, Africa | Mali |
| Kumar, K. K. Krishna | Total Literacy Program; Bharat Gyan Vigyan; India's National Literacy Mission | India |
| Roy, Sanjit (Bunker) | Barefoot College, India | India |
| VanderHoff, Dr. Father Francisco | Ph. D Theology and Political Economy; Global Fair trade movement; Union of Indigeous Communities of the Isthmus Region in Mexico; Max Havelaar in the Netherlands | Mexico |
| Willenswaard, Van Wallapa | Suan Nguen Mee Ma Co., Ltd | Thailand |
| Zangmo, Tashi | Doctoral Candidate in Education and Development at the University of Massachusetts | Bhutan |
| Zhu (Zhu Qing Yan), Linda | Staw-bale Ecological Housing Program for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA China) | China |
| Cavoukian, Raffi | Troubadour Music | USA |
| Comeau, Jean Guy | Acadian woodlot owner from New Brunswick | Canada |
| Coyle, Mary | Director, Coady Institute, ST FX University, Antigonish | Canada |
| D'Aragon, Jean | School of Architecture, McGill University | Canada |
| de Graaf, John | Television Writer and Producer; Shorter Work Time National Coordinator | USA |

| Presenters | Organization | Country |
|--------------------------|---|----------------|
| Drescher, James | The Maritime Ecoforestry School and the caretaker and forester for Windhorse Farm | Canada |
| Dressel, Holly | Journalist; Co-author | Canada |
| Eaton, Dr. Heather | Professor of Theology, Saint Paul University, Ottawa | Canada |
| Endicott, Shane A. | Rebuilding Center of Our United Villages | USA |
| Freeman, Dr. Constance | Regional Director of the East and Southern Africa office of Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) | Canada |
| Freeman, Myra & Lawrence | Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia and her husband, His Honor | Canada |
| Gipe, Paul | Leading expert on wind energy | USA |
| Graham, Danny | Nova Scotia Legislature and expert on restorative justice | Canada |
| Greenwood, Rob | Director, Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development at Memorial University, NL | Canada |
| Gunn, Bill | Atlantic Regional Director of CIDA | Canada |
| Hayden, Anders | 32 Hours: Action for Full Employment | Canada |
| Helliwell, John | Professor of Economics at the University of British Columbia | Canada |
| Hollett, Alton | Director of Statistics in the government of Newfoundland and Labrador; Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts | Canada |
| Jonsson, Dr. Sigfus | Managing Director of NYSIR | Iceland |
| Kistler, Rainer Ph.D. | Consultant, Environment, Health and Safety | Switzerland |
| Kullerud, Lars | Director of the University of the Arctic, Arendal Norway | Norway |
| Labatut, Morin Gisele | IDRC | Canada |
| Lamond, Mary Jane | Gaelic Singer | Canada |
| Landry, Pierre | The Paint Recycling Company, NS | Canada |
| Larkman, Janet | Former ED of the Western Valley Development Authority, NS | Canada |
| Lief, Judy | Senior teacher in the Buddhist and Shambhala traditions; Executive Editor of Vajradhatu Publications | USA |
| Maclsaac, Angus | Minister of Health, Province of Nova Scotia | Canada |
| Maclsaac, Wendy | Fiddler, piano player and stepdancer from Creignish, Cape Breton; Beolach (five-piece instrumental group) | Canada |
| MacLeod, David | Windshare, a Toronto cooperative wind power project | Canada |
| May, Dr. Doug | Department of Economic at Memorial University; Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts | Canada |
| May, Elizabeth | Sierra Club of Canada | Canada |
| Michel, Ben | President, Innu Nation of Labrador | Canada |
| Moore, Jeff | Just Us Coffee, NS | Canada |
| Morash, Kerry | Minister Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour | Canada |

| Presenters | Organization | Country |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------|
| Myiow, Stuart | Mohawk Traditional Council, Kahnawake Mohawk Territory, | Canada |
| Ralston Saul, H.E John | Author; 1996 Governor General's Literacy Award for Non-Fiction and Gordon Montador Award | Canada |
| Reoch, Richard | President of Shambhala International and Chair of the International working group on Sri Lanka | United Kingdom |
| Richardson, Dick and Pat | Environmental Science Institute at the University of Texas | USA |
| Riley, Dr. Sean | President, St-FX | Canada |
| Rinpoche, Sakyong Mipham | Head of the Shambhala Buddhist Lineage; Author | Canada |
| Robin, Vicki | President of the New Road Map Foundation and Chair of the Simplicity Forum; Author | USA |
| Sable, Trudy | Director, Labrador Project/Innu; Environmental Guardians Program, Gorsebrook, Saint Mary's University | Canada |
| Salatin, Joel | Polyface Farm; Author | USA |
| Salvaris, Mike | Institute for Community Engagement & Policy Alternatives; Victoria University | Australia |
| Savory, Allan | Allan Savory Centre for Holistic Management, New Mexico; Author | USA |
| Seidel, Christina | Recycling Council of Canada | Canada |
| Shore, Paul | Documentary Director; Media Consultant and Social Entrepreneur | Canada |
| Shotwell, Hudson | Trident Café, NS | Canada |
| Stoodley, Keith | NRTEE | Canada |
| Strikland, Nancy | Coordinator, Canadian Cooperation Office, Bhutan | Canada/Bhutan |
| Taylor Gatto, John | Teacher; Author | USA |
| Thering, Khampa | Senior official, Bhutan | Bhutan |
| Thinley, Lyonpo Jigmi | Home Minister and Former President of Bhutan; President of the Council of the Centre for Bhutan Studies | Bhutan |
| Thompson, Kim | Pioneer in developing straw bale and earth construction methods for northern climates; Teaches Natural Building at Dalhousie University, Halifax | Canada |
| Tideman, Sander | Spirit in Business; Managing partner of Insight Partners; Director of the Bridge Fund | Netherlands |
| Timsit, Jean | Founder/President French American Charitable Trust Supports | France |
| Ura, Karma | Director of the Centre for Bhutan Studies; Author | Bhutan |
| Wackernagel, Mathis | Directs the Centre for Sustainability Studies at the Anahuac University of Xalapa in Mexico; Global Footprint Network | USA |
| Walker, Peter | Former Canadian Ambassador to India | Canada |
| Waring, Dr. Marilyn | Professor of Public Policy, Massey University; Author; International development adviser to the Food and Agriculture Organization and United Nations Development Fund for Women | New Zealand |
| Watson, Gael | La Have Bakery, La Have, NS | Canada |
| Wishart, Francis | Environmentalist, painter and winemaker | Canada |

Media Clipping

May 29, 2005, The Halifax Herald

Forget GDP, let's measure Gross National Happiness

By SILVER DONALD CAMERON

"I love living in a depressed area," sighed the professor, holding up a glass of white wine in the evening sunlight. "One lives so well."

The remark lingers in my memory because of its curious truthfulness. East Coast incomes may be lower than those elsewhere, but we own our own homes, we eat well, we get good medical care, our divorce rates are low and our communities are safe and functional. We have a celebrated regional culture, a glorious landscape and a satisfactory educational system. A dollar goes a long way here. This is a good place to live.

I know, I know: there's no excuse for complacency. We could certainly do better on every one of these indices. Nevertheless, surveys consistently show Atlantic Canadians to be the most contented people in Canada. Newfoundlanders even claim the most active sex lives.

Our economy may be depressed, but our spirits are not, and only an economist would think that the latter depends on the former.

The problem is measurement. Industrial societies have come to regard the gross domestic product as the major indicator of social progress, which it is not. The GDP is a purely economic statistic. It simply tallies up the value of all goods and services that are exchanged for money. House fires, automobile production, crime, food harvests, war, lumber sales, pollution, the plumber's bill, tobacco smoking - good and bad alike, they all contribute to a rising GDP.

On the other side of the ledger, the things that truly make us happy - good health, a clean environment, a caring community and stable families, for instance - literally count for nothing in the GDP.

Can't we find a better measurement?

Since 1997, a small organization based in St. Margarets Bay has been using Nova Scotia as its laboratory in developing a genuine progress index based not just on economics, but also on sustainability, well-being and quality of life. GPI Atlantic (www.gpiatlantic.org) has issued numerous carefully researched and thought-provoking reports on aspects of Nova Scotians' well-being, including recent reports on air quality, solid waste and working time.

And now the work is going national.

GPI has not been working in a vacuum. Across the country, other organizations have also been working on measures of human well-being, including universities and government agencies such as Statistics Canada and Environment Canada. Funded by Toronto's Atkinson Foundation, about 20 such research teams have pooled their resources in a national working group, aiming to produce a national measurement called the Canadian Index of Well-being.

Group spokesman Roy Romanow believes the new Index will "engage Canadians" in a discussion about "what it means to have a world-leading quality of life and genuine sustainability." The index will help us all to understand the complex long-term effects of the choices we make, for example, instituting corporate tax cuts while under-investing in education, and it will give us a far better instrument for holding governments and corporations accountable.

The index, says Romanow, rests on a fundamental change in our understanding of the intricate relationship between social, health, economic and environmental issues. Health Canada, for instance, has identified a dozen "determinants" of health. Genetics, gender and personal habits play a role, but nine of the 12 determinants are social factors such as income and social status, the physical environment, social support networks, education and working conditions. Improve any of these, and you will improve health as well.

But you won't really know you've made improvements if you have no way to measure them. And that's what the index will provide. The working group will report this fall on three core areas of well-being: population health, living standards and time use.

Romanow believes the Canadian Index of Well-being is part of a huge shift in our thinking about health. "Health" first meant the control of infectious diseases, and then the treatment of non-communicable conditions. The "third revolution," Romanow says, is to conceive of health as a state of positive well-being, focused on the prevention of illness and distress.

GPI likes to quote the King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who declared 30 years ago that "gross national happiness is more important than gross national product." Appropriately enough, Bhutan was the site of the first International Conference on Gross National Happiness, held in 2004.

Thanks to the work of GPI, the second such conference, with a star-studded list of international participants, will be held here in Nova Scotia, at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish on June 20-24.

The Canadian Index of Well-being is our first attempt to measure gross national happiness. When we can measure it, we will be able to see what helps and what doesn't. We may even be able to show that the East Coast is a sane and balanced place, and not a depressed region at all.