

II. Structure Design

A. General Structure

In some countries, notably in Europe, there are agencies devoted to the study of population change and its relevance to public policies. The Institut National d'Études Démographiques (INED) has been important to population research and the development of policy in France. The Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) has come to play similar roles in Holland. Canada does not have such an organization. For a period in 1986-92, the federal government through Health and Welfare Canada undertook a Review of Demography and its Implications for Economic and Social Policy with participation from many members of the proposed cluster. However, this agency was set aside for budgetary reasons at the same time as the Economic Council of Canada. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Industry Canada and SSHRC are currently sponsoring studies of "Implications for the labour market and skills development of an aging population". And, some agencies have maintained interests in particular aspects of population, for instance, education, health, labour, immigration, and social development, however, there is no agency that takes into account the population change and its implications as a whole. While academic research on population change has continued through regular funding, this has not been systematically linked to the policy sector.

The proposed cluster is envisioned to accomplish objectives of a population research institute for Canada without the kind of institutional structure and in-house research that are part of the INED and NIDI models. In our vision of the planned "virtual institute", the proposed structure will be able to develop, support and disseminate the research that is needed to ensure that researchers, persons in policy/planning departments, and the general public are kept abreast of population change, associated implications, and relevant policy considerations. As an essential feature of the cluster, research areas will be identified in partnership with government agencies and the private sector. Researchers, based in different universities and government agencies and belonging to different disciplines, will work together on identified areas of research priority. The research will include analyses at both the micro and macro levels, and it will adopt the most appropriate data and techniques, including the life course as a framework. Findings from the research will be disseminated widely through various media including the internet, face-to-face meetings, and print publications that are accessible to non-technically oriented readers. The cluster will aim for a long-term viability of the network through innovative ways of education, training, and involvement in research of young Canadian scholars.

B. Canada's Strengths in the Area

Canada has developed a strong basis for research not only on purely demographic issues but on topics that lie at the intersection of demographic change and social policy. There is a strong tradition of demographic research not only in our universities but in the public sector as well, most notably at Statistics Canada. We briefly highlight some of the most important contributions that have been made and some of the work that is on-going.

1. Canada has two world-class university centres of population research at the University of Western Ontario and at the Centre Interuniversitaire d'Études Démographiques in Montreal.

Both groups have a strong core of full-time demographic researchers with extensive records of research on contemporary issues in demography including family change, population aging, mortality, immigration, and demographic techniques. These two groups have worked together well in the past, most recently on a large project funded through the SSHRC strategic area of Social Cohesion in a Globalizing Era. These two groups will form the prime nuclei of the research cluster. Beyond these two groups, there is relevant strength in academic institutions across the country. Economists at McMaster University have made important contributions to the study of population aging and the demands on social programmes. Demographers at University of Alberta are studying the causes of mortality differentials, and the demography of immigrant and ethnic minorities. Scholars at the University of Toronto have particular expertise in the area of immigration. A new group formed at the University of Victoria is doing important work in the areas of family change and aging. A group of persons interested in demographic questions and social statistics is emerging at McGill.

2. Canada can boast one of the leading statistical agencies in the world. Statistics Canada's work to develop longitudinal surveys such as the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, the National Population Health Survey, and the Youth in Transition Survey, as well as its commitment to research using census data have transformed social science research in the country and makes Canada as well equipped as any nation to address questions of demographic and social change. The expansion and maturation of the Research Data Centres programme has opened the door to much broader use by Canadian scholars of these precious data sources. Moreover, Statistics Canada itself has a large group of accomplished researchers with good links to the academic community and a track record of active involvement in Canada's professional societies.

3. Canadian demographers have long been active in collaborative efforts to study population change and its implications for social policy. Many members of the proposed cluster participated in Review of Demography and its Implications for Economic and Social Policy, which operated from 1986-1992. Others participated in a major review of immigration by the Economic Council of Canada in the late 1980s and continue to do work in this area supported by the various centres associated with the Metropolis project.

4. Canadian demographers, at both universities and in the public service, have strong ties to leading researchers in other Western countries and have been very active in international organizations, especially the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. The topics to be addressed by researchers in this cluster are especially suitable for international comparison and we look forward to strengthening our ties to colleagues in other countries. European social scientists are especially interested in Canada's experiences in the area of immigration and the success of our policies relating to the integration of newcomers. Various countries have a common interest in understanding low fertility and its implications.

5. The leaders of the network are experienced in managing groups and networks. Besides being Director of the Population Studies Centre at the University of Western Ontario, *Roderic Beaujot's* writing has helped to bring together the research on the population of Canada. During the time of the Review of Demography and its Implications for Economic and Social Policy, he played an active role in supporting research and dissemination, as President of the Federation of

Canadian Demographers. *Robert Bourbeau* has directed the Research Group on Demography of Quebec and is now Deputy Director of the Centre Interuniversitaire d'Études Démographiques. *Céline Le Bourdais* was the founding Director of both the Centre Interuniversitaire d'Études Démographiques and the Centre Interuniversitaire Québécois de Statistiques Sociales. *Frank Trovato* is Past-President of the Canadian Population Society, and a former editor of Canadian Studies in Population. *Zheng Wu* is affiliated with the Population Research Group and Centre on Aging at the University of Victoria, and with the Centre for Studies in Demography and Ecology at the University of Washington. *Byron Spencer* is Director of the Research Institute for Quantitative Studies in Economics and Population (QSEP) at McMaster University, and principal investigator of the SSHRC-funded Social and Economic Dimensions of an Aging Population (SEDAP) Research Program. *Zenaida R. Ravanera* has done several studies on the life courses of Canadians and helped coordinate Family Transformation and Social Cohesion, a SSHRC-funded strategic grant. *Monica Boyd*, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, has a Canada Research Chair in Sociology at the University of Toronto, and is a visiting scholar at Statistics Canada. *Kevin McQuillan* is past chair of the Department of Sociology and Member of the Board of Governors at the University of Western Ontario. Besides belonging to various work-groups and research teams, all members of the leadership team have played active roles in Canadian and Quebec professional associations of demographers.

C. Organization of the Cluster

The establishment of the cluster greatly depends on a major assumption that SSHRC's conceptual and financial support for the cluster will be for the long haul (10 years and beyond) with periodic appraisals. The cluster is not meant to be a strategic research program with definite start and end, but is designed to be an institute, albeit a "virtual" one, that will go through a process of development and maturity. The planned cluster's structure will consist of: (1) a network of researchers and stakeholders; (2) a formal organization; and (3) a research cycle.

1. Network of Researchers and Stakeholders.

a. *The Researchers:* The core of the network will be researchers willing and able to do studies on population change. Seventy-five researchers have been identified as having worked in the research areas of interest to the cluster and, currently, 44 have indicated their intention to become part of the network. They come from Canadian universities and belong to various disciplines including demography, sociology, economics, and geography. In a number of universities located in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, there are groups of five or more researchers who will be involved in the network, notably from the Population Studies Centre of the University of Western Ontario, University of Toronto, Université de Montreal, Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique, McGill University, and University of Victoria. Other researchers are affiliated with 16 additional universities including four universities in the Prairies and three in the Atlantic Provinces. Researchers in government agencies (for example, in Statistics Canada) will be invited to join in the network.

b. *The Partners:* A second group of the network will be stakeholders mainly interested in making use of the results of the studies, including government agencies (federal,

provincial, or city and municipal), non-governmental organizations, business groups, and the media. We have started by involving agencies of the federal government including Policy Research Initiative, Health Canada, Citizenship and Immigration, Social Development, Human Resources and Skills Development, Finance, Statistics Canada and Canada Pension Plan. Representatives of these agencies participated in a workshop in February 2005 at London, Ontario where both research and structural questions were discussed. Other agencies will be associated as time progresses, especially from provincial and municipal government, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

The Policy Research Initiative has invited the present cluster, along with select other strategic clusters, into a partnership entitled *The Population, Work and Family Policy Research Collaboration*. This project is to explore issues and potential policy interventions related to the aging of the population, the evolution of the Canadian labour market, and the role and responsibilities of families. The PRI mandate, as part of the Privy Council Office, is to identify high-priority issues for the middle term policy agenda through consultation with representatives of federal agencies, to synthesize the relevant research on these issues, commission or conduct work to respond to unanswered questions, and to prepare policy options where appropriate. The PRI also plays a strategic role as chair of the Policy Research Data Group of the federal government. The *Collaboration* will provide a process and venue for the cluster to have a regular, ongoing, and effective interface with the transversal policy research coordination process that PRI manages within the federal government; a privileged venue of open exchange with senior policy people across a range of departments and agencies; a structured series of roundtables and an annual symposium to showcase the collaboration and policy-relevant research of the cluster. The leadership of the cluster will co-manage the *Population, Work and Family Policy Research Collaboration*, meeting with the representatives of the PRI twice a year, most likely in conjunction with one of the planned events, to clarify issues and plan joint activities.

c. International Link. The network will link with international organizations including population institutes of other countries, the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, offices of the United Nations involved with population issues (such as UNFPA, UNECE), Population Council, World Bank, and OECD. These links will build on the strong ties that Canadian scholars have to leading researchers in other Western countries. The Population Research Group at University of Victoria is linked to the Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology at the University of Washington. Similar links with other population groups are envisaged.

2. Formal Organization

a. Board of Directors – The Board will set the cluster’s general direction and will consist of nine members: five from the academics, three from the stakeholders (government agencies, non-governmental organization, private sector), and one student. The procedure for selection of the board, the tenure of office, regular meetings, and other procedural

matters governing the functions of the Board and the network will be drawn and agreed upon by the network members.

b. *Executive Committee* – A sub-set of the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee will report to the Board and it will be responsible for the day to day operation of the cluster. It will consist of three academics, headed by a chair who will also be the director of the cluster.

c. *Research Committees* – These will be committees that will be formed as needed for the cluster's projects. Their functions will revolve around a research cycle (see below).

d. *Administrative Office* – The office will provide administrative and various types of support to the network, the Board, and the Committees. Among its task will be preparation and maintenance of websites and the facilitation of research cycle activities and dissemination. The personnel of the administrative office will include a Manager and the services of a professional communications person with a background in population and public policy to translate research results into materials for stakeholders.

3. *Cycle of research* – The core function of the cluster is to do a series of activities that form a research cycle. It will consist of identification of research theme based on policy issues; doing the research; and disseminating results through several channels.

a. *Identification of research topic.* Workshops and surveys of partners and researchers will be conducted periodically to determine areas that should be given priority. On the basis of knowledge and information gathered, the Board will decide on research priorities and form committees that will take responsibility for particular research projects.

b. *The research proper.* Having been mandated by the Board of Directors, a research committee will proceed to undertake activities leading towards the achievement of the assigned task. The number of researchers and the data to be used will vary with the complexity of research issues. The committee members could, for example, do the research themselves. A more likely scenario, however, is that projects would require collaboration of other network members, graduate students in training, and experts from within Canada and from other countries.

Research data will be mostly from the Canadian censuses, vital registration, administrative records, and from cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys. Some comparative research would need data from other countries such as data from the Generations and Gender Surveys currently being undertaken by a number of European countries, and the Current Population Survey in the United States.

Throughout the research proper, the committees will be interacting with others in the network, making use of various means of communication such as the internet facilities. They will be mindful of the *policy cycle*, ensuring that communications with those involved in policy making are maintained in all the phases of the research cycle.

c. *Dissemination of Results.* Results will be disseminated in two general ways: through academic communities, and public dissemination. The first will include presentation of research results in academic conferences and publications in academic print and e-journals of various disciplines and on public policy. The second will be public dissemination of results through conferences and various means of communication involving different media and modes of dissemination. Among the possibilities are: meetings centered around certain themes, publications (in print and through the internet) of research briefs, policy issues series, series on facts and fallacies about population change, news releases, and newsletters targeted to stakeholders. In order to reach as broad an audience as possible, resources of communications offices in the universities and means of dissemination by government agencies (such as Statistics Canada's *The Daily*, Policy Research Initiative's *Horizons*) will also be used.

To encourage academic researchers to put more effort into dissemination to a wider public, the cluster will help explore ways for university merit system to appropriately reward non-academic publications.

The internet will be both a means of dissemination of results and a way of coordinating activities of the network. The website will be an essential tool; other internet tools such as e-group and inter-active presentations will also be explored and will be utilized when deemed workable and effective.

D. Education and Training Component

To ensure the long-term viability of the network, graduate students will be systematically involved through supporting exchanges, work-placements, research assistantships, and post-docs. Further, the cluster would serve as the hub for inter-university co-operation on education and training for the study of population change. Currently in Canada, only two universities (the University of Western Ontario for English Canada and the Centre Interuniversitaire d'Études Démographiques for French Canada) offer doctoral programs in demography. There are, however, courses of relevance to the study of population change and public policy that are offered in other disciplines in other universities. For instance, the University of Victoria offers courses on Population Economics, Population Dynamics, and Population Problems and Policies. Other graduate technical and substantive courses are offered at the University of Alberta, the University of Toronto and McMaster University.

Techniques of analysis to study population change and its implications are constantly being developed in particular centers, universities and government agencies. The network will provide the facilities and resources to ensure that the various courses and expertise on techniques are made accessible to students and researchers in various locations within the country. These could be done in a number of ways such as:

- a. Making available interactive lectures for certain topics and courses using the internet or electronic technologies.
- b. Developing a system of training in the use of certain techniques of analysis for macro-level research, for example, Statistics Canada's LifePaths software,

MacMaster's MEDS, software on environment simulation and population projections developed by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). The training would make use of a combination of media such as face-to-face lecture and workshops for introducing the software, followed up with the use of electronic media for hands-on application of the software. Whenever possible, the cluster will collaborate with the Policy Research Initiative for the development of data and research tools, and with the various data training schools that are offering relevant programs.

- c. A more complex inter-university co-operation will be explored such as developing a degree-granting program on population and public policy where students from universities in various locations attend lectures delivered through electronic media.

E. Time Frame

The cluster requires a long-term plan for its development into an effective "virtual" institute. For the purposes of planning the organization and funding for the cluster, we envision a 15 year time frame with the first 3 years as a start-up period, the next 6 years as a period of expansion, and the final 6 years as period of maturity and stability.

The primary aim for the first three years would be the organization of the network and will involve:

1. Organizing the network's structure to include obtaining formal commitments from network members, forming the Board of Directors, hiring administrative staff, and developing internet based facilities such as an inter-active website as a tool for network co-ordination and research dissemination.
2. Establishing research committees that would undertake the research cycle activities described above. These research committees could be on any of the research areas identified in the first part of this concept paper. Given the current work and interests of many of the researchers and partner agencies, and in line with the *Population, Work and Family Policy Research Collaboration* with the Policy Research Initiative (PRI), two committees could be readily initiated.
 - a. Committee on Aging and Life Course Flexibility. The committee would build on the research on aging undertaken by Jacques Légaré and his group on Current and Future Social Security Public Spending for Quebec, the work at McMaster by Byron Spencer and his group on Social and Economic Dimensions of an Aging Population, Health Canada's Implications of Aging for the Health System, and the Policy Research Initiative project on Population Aging and Life-Course Flexibility. One of its activities could be a synthesis of the work already done focusing on policy options, and possibly in comparison to policies in other developed countries. We would also hold a workshop, on its own or in collaboration with PRI, to disseminate the findings of these various studies, and to identify research gaps that could then become the research agenda for the committee; and, we would develop materials for dissemination to a wider

audience through electronic and print media .

- b. Committee on Low Fertility and Its Implications. Building on the micro-level research on fertility and family that has been done by many of the network members, the committee could further examine the macro-level consequences of low fertility and changes in the family. Among its activities could be a workshop to assess the current work on fertility (in Canada and other countries) and to plan new research focusing on the macro-level. Inputs will be sought from partners (if possible, in collaboration with Policy Research Initiative) on issues of interest to them. In short, the committee would go through the cycle of research that starts with identification of research priorities and culminates with various ways of disseminating results.
3. Developing a training system revolving around a particular research tool, possibly, Statistics Canada's LIFEPAATH software or McMaster University's MEDS projection program.

The activities for the first three years would be a process of establishing collaboration among researchers, involving students, and relating to partners and other users of research output. By the fourth year, our network should be well functioning with research committees and research cycles in place and would have established systems and routines that would be put to further use in the next six years of the project.

A number of research areas would be the focus from the 4th year onwards, possibly, immigration, internal migration, and distribution of Canadian population; mortality, morbidity, and health; and labour force, together with the other cross-cutting themes, in particular, the life course as a policy perspective and issues relating to equity and cohesion.

During this phase, the cluster would identify new emerging topics and issues of relevance to population change and public policy, and it would establish appropriate research committees. For example, while the cluster's focus in its initial years of operation would be on issues of immediate concern to Canada such as those of aging, low fertility, and immigration, we foresee that the cluster would need to tackle wider world issues such as population and environment, and population and development, both of which are linked to a globalizing world.

F. Funding Requirement and Financial Plans

The cluster will need funds to cover the general administration of the cluster, release time for the director, and depending on the research project, funds for remuneration of (or release time for) researchers, and funds for consultants and experts within and outside Canada, graduate students to work as trainees and research assistants, and for post-doctoral fellows. Dissemination of results will require funds as well, in particular, for holding workshops and conferences and for various publications, in print and electronic media.

To achieve its objectives, the cluster will need a total annual budget of \$500,000 when fully operational, although, in its first year, a smaller amount of about \$300,000 will be needed as the

systems for research, training, and dissemination are being established. Three-quarters of the annual budget will cover research, training, and dissemination. As with other SSHRC-funded projects (e.g., Community-University Research Alliance, Initiatives for the New Economy) involving inter-disciplinary cooperation of a large number of researchers, students and partners, the cluster will incur administrative costs for coordination and management of its activities, projected to be a quarter of its annual budget.

To fully function as an institute, albeit in a virtual sense, the cluster has to have a secure funding for its operation. In its early years, that is, in the first three years, and possibly for the following six years, the cluster could be treated as a strategic program with funding from SSHRC as it establishes and develops its structures and systems. In subsequent years, however, it should have found sources of funding that would allow it to reduce its dependence on SSHRC.

The network will explore the possibility of endowment and other sources to fund the cluster's annual budget, which for planning convenience could be thought of in terms of four components: administrative, research, dissemination, and training. At the very least, the cluster needs to secure funding for its administrative cost as the networking functions might still be possible with this minimal amount of funding. This would assume that (a) *research* would be funded from other sources (for example, SSHRC's standard research grant), the output from which would then be disseminated through the cluster; (b) for *dissemination*, some funds could be obtained for workshops and conferences (such as from SSHRC's Aid to Research Workshops and Conferences in Canada); and (c) for *training*, some universities' regular funds for graduate students would be specifically allocated for students affiliated with the cluster.

This model with reduced funding may be viable but it does have a number of drawbacks. The first is that research priorities identified by the cluster may not be adequately addressed. For example, if funding depends on standard SSHRC grants, there may not be an interest for the researchers to address the mandate of the cluster, namely, research on issues relevant for policy purposes. Similarly, a dependence on funding through contracts with specific partner agencies may focus research too narrowly to be useful to other agencies and other users of the research output. As much as possible, therefore, the cluster should explore a source of funds that would cover the four components of research, training, dissemination and administration.

G. Transparency, Accountability, and Evaluation

The cluster will aim at transparency in its operation through a number of ways. The website, used for dissemination of research output and coordination of network activities, will also be made interactive (through, for example, the use of feedback forms) so that opinions from network members, users of research outputs and other viewers can be readily received.

An annual report will be prepared by the Executive Board to highlight the cluster's activities, use of funds, and accomplishments. The Board of Directors will also make an internal assessment of the network's strengths and weaknesses prior to setting the direction for the following year. Finally, an evaluation by external reviewers will be conducted at the end of the cluster's third year of operation, and every three years thereafter.