



Philanthropic  
foundations  
Canada

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# PROFILES IN PHILANTHROPY

## WORKING TOGETHER: FOUNDATIONS AND PUBLIC POLICY MAKERS

### THE POLICY STAGES

#### ISSUE:

Policy research and issue identification

#### ENGAGEMENT:

Policy development; thought leadership; convening

#### DECISION:

Advocacy; policy choice; political action

#### IMPLEMENTATION:

Policy implementation, and monitoring

#### IMPACT:

Policy evaluation, impact and renewal

Canadian foundations typically don't think of themselves as public policy players. Perhaps this is because policy work is viewed as falling in the realm of "political" activity. But in fact, whether they state it explicitly or not, foundations today are playing a wide range of important roles in the public policy process. Public policy making has many stages, and funders can engage at any point in the process, from funding research all the way to evaluating policy. Because foundations are independent, they are uniquely positioned to engage without partisanship.

Foundations also bring much more than financial capital to this space. Their assets are both wide-ranging and relevant to policy work:

- social networks;
- convening capacity;
- knowledge of the landscape and;
- reputational credibility.

The following profiles illustrate some of the many ways in which Canadian foundations engage in public policy work today, using all of the assets at their disposal. Sometimes they do their work in partnership with public funders. Sometimes this work is carried out in the open space for public conversation and dialogue in which all share. Sometimes it is work for the long term. Sometimes it is to find a solution to a pressing policy need. In all these ways and more, foundations are legitimate and important policy players, looking for solutions to complex issues in partnership with governments at all levels.



# YOUTH HOMELESSNESS: POLICY NEEDS A PLAN

## Catherine Donnelly Foundation

### VITAL STATISTICS:

- Established in 2003
- Legacy of The Sisters of Service

### MISSION:

Committed to Gospel values, the Foundation strives to transform the lives of those most in need by proactively supporting creative initiatives in the areas of housing, adult education and the environment.

### VISION:

The Catherine Donnelly Foundation's vision is to collaborate with others to create a world that respects and reverences creation; a world where all have a voice and can live with dignity to realize their full potential, a world that is open to transformation and one that seeks justice, peace and respect for all.

When the Catherine Donnelly Foundation began granting in 2005 it funded housing, adult education and environmental initiative intended to support those most in need. Over time, it began to see that it wasn't living up to its mandate of promoting social justice and decided that it needed to change the way it was working. Valerie Lemieux, General Director of the Foundation, explains that the Foundation came to understand that it needed to become proactive and to engage directly in long-term strategic partnerships with others if it was to contribute to real systemic change.

"The philanthropic sector has a huge amount of power," she says. "If we act together, we can have real impact. We can change policy. We can ensure that the voices of society's victims are heard and acted on."

The Foundation set out to better define and focus its activities in the housing area by organizing a "Movers and Shakers" seminar on youth homelessness. The event, which brought together homeless youth serving agencies, supportive academics and researchers, and foundations involved with homeless youth, focused on the desire to promote significant social change and the conviction that working collectively would be more effective and powerful than working in isolation. Lamenting the absence of any cohesive planning, Lemieux describes how various levels of government had, and continue to have, their own approach with very few working in tandem. The initial consultations and brainstorming sessions concluded that the ultimate goal of the exercise needed to be policy change.

"So the Foundation struck a steering committee of partner youth serving organizations, initially without any government involvement. By way of strategy, we were convinced that our response would entail advocating policy change from the outside. However, our common experience quickly led us to realize that there was a government appetite for just this kind of thing. Governments were looking in our direction".

The resulting program selected six communities across the country that lacked any kind of cohesive plan but that had identified youth homelessness as a priority. The program initiated a process of community animation and mentoring, which helped link the target communities with experienced activists across the country. It developed toolkits, webinars, etc. were created to facilitate comprehensive planning at the community level. With shared learning and information exchange a key component in the strategy, all participating communities had to agree to collaborate with the other communities involved full-time. At the same time, the community groups applying for support had to engage all of the community actors with a vested interest in reducing youth homelessness. This requirement led communities to reach out to and engage the local social services, criminal justice, and education systems in ways that had not been done before.



## YOUTH HOMELESSNESS: POLICY NEEDS A PLAN CONTINUED

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Partners in the program were committed to the proposition that effective policy needs to be informed and developed in direct engagement with those working on ground. At the same time, they had no particular intention of engaging directly with government in the short term. Instead, the approach was to create a platform where all of the key actors come together around a shared strategy supported by an emerging network. In the process, “We created a space where the actual experience was able to advise government.”

The plan is working. Equipped with the practice and research generated in the different experiences, the partners on the steering committee have been invited to present to different levels of government across the country. Provincial government interest is bubbling up in Ontario and Newfoundland. Alberta, with its own ten-year plan to end youth homelessness, has become an active partner and participant in the steering committee. According to Lemieux, “we are beginning to witness real policy change. We have helped develop an effective network that can effectively leverage resources and credibility to make policy change happen.”

Lemieux explains that while the group initially believed that it had to work in opposition to government, it has learned that government is not only looking for solutions but knows that others can help provide the solutions it is seeking. “Working together gives us access to the research, experience and knowledge of frontline practitioners.” The program also built on the excellent work that had been achieved over the last ten years. “We’ve come to a place where we are ready for the next step. We are finally in a position to really influence government.”

What started out as a Foundation-driven initiative has now grown into an independent entity fully owned and driven by a national coalition of groups dedicated to eliminating youth homelessness. The A Way Home coalition that engages practically all of Canada’s major national homeless youth-serving initiatives, will be formally launched (October 2015). The Foundation’s initial investment of \$1.25 million over five years has leveraged support from additional funders including the Home Depot and Laidlaw Foundations. “With our collective response to youth homelessness now attracting serious government attention, talks are underway with yet other foundations.” Lemieux added that, “Where we thought it would be a tough sell for governments, we found real interest at the municipal and provincial levels. The program has exceeded our expectations and we’re excited to have been able to seed this exciting initiative. We hope others will pick it up.”



Fondation  
Graham Boeckh  
Foundation

## Fondation Graham Boeckh Foundation

### VITAL STATISTICS:

- Established in 1990
- Named after Graham Boeckh, a young schizophrenia sufferer, who died due to complications with his medication.
- The Boeckh family is determined to improve how patients and families are treated in Canada.

### MISSION:

Based in Canada and open to the world, Graham Boeckh Foundation aims to be a catalyst in bringing about transformational changes that significantly improve the lives of people with or at risk of mental illness.

# YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH: WE HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER FOR CHANGE

The first major project of the Foundation was establishing a chair in schizophrenia studies at the Douglas Institute of McGill University in 1996. Ian Boeckh, President of the Foundation, explains how they landed on a role in public policy. About seven years ago they decided that they wanted to do something significant to solve some of the issues with mental health. They hired a full-time staff person to go about it in a more deliberate and systematic way.

The Foundation began by consulting with many wise people. Boeckh recounts the Foundation's question: "How can we have the maximum impact on a broad population basis?". They realized that the only way they could do this was to work with a wide range of people and organizations including government officials. "If we went charging off on our own people would say, great, but they wouldn't necessarily be along for the journey," he explains. So they got people together in a room and asked for advice. What emerged was a mandate to focus specifically on youth mental health.

According to Boeckh, mental health services have been treated as an afterthought in the healthcare system. "We have a hospital so we'll throw psychiatry in." His hope is that we can create a system that works and makes sense for people with mental health problems rather than just carry on a dysfunctional system." Moreover, Boeckh says that the services currently offered to youth are often inadequate or non-existent and are poorly organized. By focusing on youth mental health we can intervene early and prevent lifelong disability.

Recognizing that policy makers have the best intentions, but also have many demands placed on them and little time, the Foundation's approach has been "let's figure out what needs to be done together and help make it easy for you." He describes the approach as offering turnkey solutions for government.

The Foundation holds an annual workshop for senior policy officials interested in mental health. This workshop allows policy-makers to get to know one another and be exposed to innovative programs and ideas. Occasionally, some of the content comes from work that the Foundation is catalyzing on the ground.

Boeckh is working with the Canadian Institute of Health Research on a joint \$25 million initiative to create, test and evaluate a transformed system of care for youth with mental health issues. The focus is on integrated services, all under one roof, that are patient friendly and with properly trained staff. They have brought a network of experts together to develop the model and test it out. Currently, there are 12 sites across Canada – from inner city locations to Inuit sites in the Arctic, opening on a staggered basis over the next



Fondation  
Graham Boeckh  
Foundation

## YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH: WE HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER FOR CHANGE CONTINUED

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two years. And the foundation is working with several provinces to create additional sites to replicate the model across the country.

"We're very excited. We feel it's going very well so far but it's an ambitious project. We're lucky too in our timing because mental health is making its way upward on the policy agenda," Boeckh explains.

Next up is getting a new project off the ground to allow patients and their families to have a much stronger voice. When added to the direct engagement with government Boeckh believes they've got the elements to create change. "These two things are both needed: engage policy makers, collaborate with them, help them solve problems and at the same time ensure that there's a strong voice from society that this should be a high priority. Doing just one thing is not enough."

Boeckh notes that there are many ways to have an impact as a Foundation and that they've tried to approach their issue from different angles. He explains how their on-the-ground work in youth mental health helps to provide the solutions, their annual workshop helps build relationships with policy makers and convey the solutions and finally, their collaborations with others in the mental health sector aim to unite the sector and promote collaboration.

Boeckh says that you need to have a collaborative mindset. "It's a different kind of philanthropy from giving a lot of money to a hospital and having your name on a wing. It's a lot more work. The agenda is not just what you want as a philanthropist; it's what does society need?" Boeckh believes they have a pretty good shot but that it's all about persistence. "It's up to society to roll up its sleeve and give the message out there that mental health should be one of our highest priority issues. We need to really turn up the volume on this."

For someone starting out in public policy Boeckh suggests that you need to think about how you want to have impact and you need to look at it as a long-term strategy to engage and work with government. "There's no instant success," he explains. "You have to build relationships and credibility and you have to learn how to do it. We tried out some things and tried to learn as much as possible along the way." It requires a collaborative philosophy but also the ability to respond to situations as they arise. "We've had to be flexible and open-minded and then be able to act quickly to take advantage of the opportunities."

# ADVOCATING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

## The Lawson Foundation

### VITAL STATISTICS:

- **Established in 1956 by the Honourable Ray Lawson, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario and Canadian Consul General in New York**
- **The Foundation works on the well-being of children and youth. It invests in three interrelated strategic areas that it believes will have a significant impact on the healthy development of children and youth: early child development; healthy, active living; children and the environment.**

**W**ith 25 years of experience in research and public insights, the Lawson Foundation has amassed a track record of leadership in the area of early child development. Over the past ten years it's been working with a group of eight other Canadian foundations focused mostly on early childhood education. Together they share information and look at ways of collaborating. But a recent move has brought the work to the fore on a more public stage.

In 2015, the group of foundations decided they wanted to have a stronger collective voice on the public policy front. Fueling their new direction was the example of a group of Quebec-based foundations, including the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation. These foundations had published an open letter to the Government of Quebec in the spring of 2015 urging the provincial government to factor into its budget deliberations the impact of fiscal cutbacks on social inequality.

Inspired by their colleagues, the group decided to send a letter to the five federal party leaders, with a two-pronged message: 1) Canada needs to invest more in early childhood education; 2) The Federal government needs to be a partner. As Marcel Lauzière, President and CEO of the Lawson Foundation, explains, the biggest challenge was incorporating all the different perspectives and experiences of the group and then coming to an agreement on approach and content. Once consensus was reached, the letter went out to the federal party leaders. The open letter was picked up by media in Edmonton, Fredericton and St. John's. The Toronto Star printed an opinion piece signed by Lauzière and by Colette Murphy of the Atkinson Foundation, another group member.

With wind in their sails and an upcoming meeting of the Council of the Federation in St. John's, the group reached out to the participating Premiers, requesting meetings. The St. John's Telegram published the letter to the party leaders the day the Premiers arrived in town. Face-to-face meetings are now scheduled with five provinces (Ministers and high level officials). "For some, this might seem very tame for a collective of private foundations but it is not. This has not often happened in the past," says Lauzière. We've seen foundations in the United States influencing public policy for a long time but that has been less the case here in Canada." He emphasizes that all involved are quite pleased with the results so far. "At every step we've made sure everyone's on board."

The group had no expectation that their actions would change the direction of the federal election. Rather, the goal was to position themselves as a source of knowledge and expertise. "We wanted to be seen as credible so that whatever party is in charge will

## The Lawson Foundation

### MISSION:

The Lawson Foundation invests in and engages with ideas, people and organizations that contribute to healthy outcomes of Canadians throughout their life course.

### VISION:

The Foundation envisions a Canada where all people have the opportunity to thrive and develop the capabilities to fully participate in and contribute to community and society.

## ADVOCATING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CONTINUED

see us as go-to experts.” Next step, says Lauzière, is to create more data that can help buttress their position and that may include polling Canadians about early childhood education.

Overall, this foray into collective action has reinvigorated the funder group once focused mainly on information sharing. “Now we need more data on what Canadians think about this, says Lauzière. “Any time you’re talking to politicians if you have data that shows there’s big support from the public, it will only help”. He adds with a chuckle: “they need to see we’re not just a bunch of disconnected pointy heads living in our ivory towers.”



Fondation  
de Gaspé Beaubien  
Foundation

# PROTECTING OUR RIVERS: A SHARED CAUSE

## de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation

### VITAL STATISTICS:

- **Established in 1990 by Nan-B and Philippe II de Gaspé Beaubien to give generously of their time and resources to the community.**
- **Initiatives:**
  - **Business Families**
  - **Health and Governance**
  - **Water Conservation**

### PHILOSOPHY:

**To support individuals, families in business, and organizations to become responsible agents of positive and sustainable change within their communities.**

The Foundation has been led by two generations of the de Gaspé Beaubien family, working with community partners in every one of its projects to mobilize others and to work on solutions together. Three years ago, the Foundation asked itself what it could do to inspire the youngest members of the family? The third generation, between the ages of 13 and 17 years old, were asked what difference they wanted to make. Water issues emerged as the most compelling area of interest. Dominique Monchamp, Executive Director of the Foundation, says that at first the older members weren't convinced " because it is such a broad subject, so complex and we had no experience with these issues." In the end, the young people " had to pick a subject with their hearts and be passionate about it so we said let's go for it."

They began with a pilot project on the Ottawa River and partnered with Ottawa River Keeper as a field expert. They discovered that there was no management agreement at all for the Ottawa River. Neither the provinces of Quebec and Ontario nor the 200+ municipalities along the river were talking to each other. According to Monchamp this meant that there was no common vision and they were often operating at cross purposes.

The Foundation and its partner Ottawa River Keeper, spurred the creation of a strategy for an Ottawa River Summit, devised by an advisory committee of 23 stakeholders and decision makers. The group included mayors from Ontario and Quebec, many grassroots groups, the Ministry of the Environment for Ontario, Québec and Environment Canada, among others. The advisory committee drafted a statement laying out a collective vision for the future of the Ottawa River, what Monchamp describes as a "group writing project." The statement also articulated how they intended to work together on an integrated strategy for the River. All parties participated in drumming up interest and attendance and committed to act as spokespeople at the event.

One of the goals was to have the Ontario and Quebec Environment Ministers come together to the Summit. What they got was so much more. The Ministers arrived with a signed agreement in hand. Monchamp says. "It was so emotional. Working so hard for that and to have all these communities behind us and then finally have all our dreams become concrete, it was really something for us and our partners."

But it took a year of hard work, she explains. The River spans 1,271 kilometres, 200 municipalities and two provinces. By getting on the agendas of the monthly County-wide meetings, they were able to sit down face-to-face with the mayors of all 200 municipalities. They also methodically tackled a master guest list for the Summit, speaking directly with everyone they wanted to have present.



## PROTECTING OUR RIVERS: A SHARED CAUSE CONTINUED

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The Ottawa River Summit was all about engagement with youth, in particular. The Foundation wanted to find a creative way to bring in technology to help generate a slew of creative ideas. The idea that was proposed was a “hackathon”. Monchamp notes that while “hackathons were common in the States, there wasn’t much here yet. We decided this would work to mobilize all the stakeholders in a way that wasn’t political but that would bring everyone together.” So, headlining the Summit was a coding competition, or Aquahacking as they called it, that surfaced innovative technology solutions to a pre-identified set of concrete river-related issues. Coders from various universities and IT companies were tapped to devise solutions to 153 issues submitted online by citizens and professionals. IBM professionals helped devise a map to organize the issues and then mentors were assigned to each. They ended up with 18 IT teams working over three months leading up to the Summit on web applications for each of 18 issues. At the Summit ten ideas were presented to a high profile jury and three were ultimately selected and given a prize.

The Foundation is now working with the three finalists on implementation. One of the solutions is River Ranger, an app that allows any citizen to take a picture of a problem along the river, like a spill, erosion or dead fish, for example. The photo is geo-located and then sent to the appropriate local response organization. Another solution uses drone technology to collect water samples for testing from inaccessible areas.

The youngest of the de Gaspé Beaubien family, 16-year-old Louis Alexandre, addressed the 265 participants at the Summit and has had two invitations to speak about the project since. “All his cousins and brother thought he was very courageous. It gave him such a feeling of empowerment,” says Monchamp. What’s more, the experience made all the grandchildren realize what was possible. “They didn’t think they could change things. Now they’re getting more involved and their grandparents are so proud of them.”

As Monchamp puts it, the bar has now been placed very high on the next Aqua Hacking event. They’re moving on to the larger St. Lawrence River project using the same overall approach. “We will keep working from the bottom up and from the top down,” says Monchamp. “We have a recipe that is now very clear.” In Montreal they are launching the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of AquaHacking with a strategy to remind Montrealers that they live on an island. “We want to give the river back to the people.”

# PLANNING FOR A COMPLEX URBAN REGION: THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION

## Neptis Foundation

### VITAL STATISTICS:

- Established in 1996 by Martha J. Shuttleworth
- Focused on research and education about regional urban policy issues
- The Foundation conducts and disseminates nonpartisan research, analysis and mapping related to the design and function of Canadian urban regions. Neptis aims to inform and to improve policy and decision-making at the regional scale

In 1996, Martha Shuttleworth founded the Neptis Foundation in Toronto after many discussions with philanthropic organizations, which mainly funded in the area of the environment, about how best she could have an impact with her charitable dollars. Martha came to realize that one of the best ways to protect the environment and create a path towards sustainability was to turn attention towards cities and how we build them. The Neptis Foundation was established to fill what she saw as a knowledge gap in reliable research on policy issues related to the design and function of Canadian city-regions.

The 1990s in the Toronto region was an era of ad hoc planning; local municipalities in Canada's most populous and fastest-growing region were engaged in a patchwork of uncoordinated planning exercises that contributed to the widespread loss of farmland and increased traffic congestion. There was a dearth of information at the regional scale that painted the big picture of the cumulative impact of this uncoordinated growth.

In 1999, the foundation commissioned a comprehensive review of aspects related to the design and function of the Toronto urban region, resulting in the six-volume "Portrait of a Region." Subsequent research examined alternative growth and development scenarios for the region, including the consequences of developing under "business-as-usual" conditions of dispersed growth patterns over the next 30 years.

For the past 15 years, Neptis has produced nonpartisan research with a special focus on policy that intersects land use, transportation, environment, and more recently, energy. This includes data analysis and mapping to assist in making sense of the bigger picture.

Although it is always difficult to quantify, Marcy Burchfield, Executive Director of the Neptis Foundation, says its body of research has helped to stimulate a new era of provincial government initiatives in regional urban growth management and ultimately informed the creation of the Province of Ontario's Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Greenbelt Plan and the Big Move in the mid-2000s.

"Our role is to identify and fill gaps in information," says Burchfield. "Over the years, we've built a reputation as a non-partisan provider of reliable research that informs policy making."

An example of such research, Burchfield points out, was the 2013 Review of the Big Move, the region's long-term transportation plan, published at a time when discussions about transit in the Toronto region were bogged down in the politics of local transit projects.

## PLANNING FOR A COMPLEX URBAN REGION: THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION CONTINUED

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Neptis published a widely discussed paper that examined the cost and benefits of all projects in the Big Move and in doing so helped kick-start a discussion about the transformation of the commuter rail system into an electrified network running all-day, frequent service across the region. “Progress on it had stalled, but is now a provincial priority,” she explains.

Another key role of Neptis, Burchfield adds, has been to track long-range policy plans over time. “Governments and bureaucrats can come and go, but policy change can take a long time to implement and it’s important that somebody else besides government is tracking things,” says Burchfield.

More recently, in a bid to widen the audience beyond policy makers and professionals, Neptis prepared Understanding the Fundamentals of the Growth Plan, a guide to the 10-year review and public consultations on Ontario’s land use and transportation plans. Burchfield says the goal was to make the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe more understandable to a large group of stakeholders, particularly those in the ENGO and agricultural community who do not have planning expertise.

As part of this effort, Neptis has developed a policy visualization tool called the Neptis Geoweb, which integrates mapping and statistics to inform discussions on complex issues and to convey information about patterns of regional growth and change.

“The wider the audience and the more people that we can help to understand the impacts of long-range urban planning policies, the more robust the engagement with all levels of government will be,” she explains.

# PRACTICING POLICY SKILLS: BECOMING BETTER POLICY MAKERS

## Max Bell Foundation

### VITAL STATISTICS:

- Established in 1972 by the late Mr. George Maxwell Bell
- Fields of interest have included: media and journalism, physical fitness, sports, oceans and inland waters, health and health care, the relationships of Canada and Canadians with countries of the Asia Pacific region, veterinary science, and education.

### MISSION:

Max Bell Foundation reflects the spirit and intent of its founder to improve Canadian society. It encourages the development of innovative ideas that impact public policies and practices with an emphasis on health and wellness, education, and the environment.

Ongoing shifts in the social, economic, and technological fabrics of Canadian life bring extraordinary changes to society and to the public policy arena. The Foundation supports work that helps Canadians adapt to those changes while positively impacting the quality of life in our communities. Its strategic priority is to support projects which educate Canadians about public policy and practice alternatives.

Since 1997 the Max Bell Foundation has focused on bringing the voices of civil society to bear in the development of public policy. It does so primarily by making grants in support of public policy work. "We've worked with a lot of organizations and ultimately came to the conclusion along with them that there was a need for professional development to improve how they were doing this work," says Allan Northcott, Vice-President of the Foundation.

Northcott began by auditing Maytree Foundation's Public Policy Training Institute (PPTI), then in its second year in Toronto. "We borrowed the whole program," he says. And three years later they paid it forward, shopping it to funders in British Columbia where it was eventually picked up by the United Way of Lower Mainland.

Max Bell's Alberta-based PPTI runs over six months, with day and a half monthly sessions consisting of five training modules and a final presentation. Twenty to 25 nonprofit professionals participate each year and 125 have completed the program to date. Participants are in the process of working on a real-life policy ask when they enter so the program is instrumental in bringing asks to fruition. The closing presentation is a role play where participants have the chance to test out all they've learned before the real pitch takes place. As well, each is paired up with a mentor pulled from the faculty of experts, all of whose experience spans the nonprofit and public sectors, the latter focused on the provincial level. "It's our experience that nonprofits are more often engaged in policy work in the provincial jurisdiction," says Northcott.

As an example, one participant was working on a plan to pitch the government of Alberta on a new program that would provide bursaries to post-secondary students that wanted to volunteer. The training offered through PPTI helped bring the ask to life and, ultimately, to a successful conclusion. The Serving Communities Internship Program has been running in Alberta since 2012 with 1,800 bursaries provided so far.

Canadian charities have a long history of helping to inform and shape public policy at municipal, provincial, and federal levels. For many, it's a key strategy for advancing their

## PRACTICING POLICY SKILLS: BECOMING BETTER POLICY MAKERS CONTINUED

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### **Participant testimonials:**

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**“This has been a superb learning experience for me that has already dramatically improved our organization’s performance in the policy change area.”**

**“I use the lessons I learned in this invaluable course almost daily. It’s changed how I structure campaigns and communications to be much more strategic and effective.”**

missions. When asked why this program is a good fit for Max Bell, Northcott underlines the fact that the foundation is a neutral agent. “We’re not trying to change government. Our concern is that good ideas in civil society make their way into policy.” He also explains that Foundations are ideally suited to deliver this kind of professional training. “While we can’t deliver a diploma,” he says, “we have a lot of freedom in creating an educational program in that we’re not encumbered by a lot of regulation and bureaucracy like post-secondary institutions”.

Northcott and his colleagues would love to see PPTI in every province in the country. Apart from smaller one-day training programs and a handful within the university context, there’s a definite gap to be filled. Just as important, the work, he explains, is pure pleasure.

“It’s awesome. What I love is being in the room with this really interesting variety of individuals all committed to doing good public policy. I’m just as excited as I was when we started eight years ago.”

**Philanthropic Foundations Canada  
615 René-Lévesque Blvd. West, Suite 1220  
Montréal, Québec H3B 1P5**

**[info@pfc.ca](mailto:info@pfc.ca)  
[www.pfc.ca](http://www.pfc.ca)**

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