

# Bulletin

Canadian Historical Association - Société historique du Canada

## SSHRC TRANSFORMATION

By Sarah Carter

At a May, 2003 conference in Saskatoon on community-university research, the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) president Marc Renaud said that, "It's my dream to see the social sciences and humanities reach out and help communities to change the world we live in for the better. To do this we need to come up with different approaches to research, including one that brings more intellectuals into the public square where they can have a closer connection to the issues and concerns of the day."

It is Dr. Renaud's goal to develop a new vision and new structures for SSHRC, to effect profound transformation that will move SSHRC "from a granting council to a knowledge council." SSHRC will not only deliver peer-reviewed grants, but as well knowledge to the nation.

Dr. Renaud endorses proposals made by Martha Piper, president of the University of British Columbia, in the Killam Annual Lecture in October 2002. These proposals include increased funding for the social sciences and humanities, enhanced linkages among researchers and the creation of new ways to ensure the influence and impact of researchers.

In an October 2002 paper entitled "Human Sciences: The Challenge of Innovation," Dr. Renaud proposed a number of potential areas of innovation for SSHRC, which included 1) a reassessment of the peer evaluation system to develop more "cost-effective" ways to organize the process and to "make room for the voices of the potential 'users' of the research results and to promote promising new approaches to research;" 2) the creation of more "incentives for better university-community collaborations, more multidisciplinary research centres and stronger networks;" 3) targeted investments, with the SSHRC organizing to "deliver" new knowledge on topics crucial to "informed collective decision-making;" 4) partnering with government departments and private foundations; 5) knowledge mobilization, ensuring that "people needing research results have what they need when they need it;" and 6) focus on students through the training of highly qualified personnel.

What will all of this mean to members of the Canadian Historical Association? SSHRC will maintain support for Standard Research Grants and other investigator or curiosity driven research projects. There may be new funding opportunities for those whose research is inspired by policy considerations, or whose work has potential policy relevance. Policy relevance is being regarded in the broadest possible context, not just government decision-making. We also have the opportunity to become involved and help shape the way transformation will evolve at SSHRC. The participation and scrutiny of historians in Canada is essential. There is to be a twelve month process of public consultation with the research community and research users to begin late in 2003.