

**Policy Research Initiative PWFC Symposium 2008**  
**Policy Practitioner Forum - Social Determinants of Health**  
**December 10, 2008, 10:20 to 12:20**

**“Social policy as health policy: Addressing health and social inequalities through the lens of income adequacy”**

**Sponsors:**

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, The Public Health Agency of Canada, Director Generals’ “Friends of Social Policy”

The reports of the Chief Public Health Officer for Canada and the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health demonstrate that differences in health outcomes are shaped by the broad conditions in which we live and work, and that policies acting on these social determinants of health could effectively reduce health inequalities over a relatively short period of time. The reports make a compelling case that social and economic policy is health policy and that health is a concern for all, not just those involved in the health sector.

We are all affected by health inequalities. In fact, if we all enjoyed the mortality rates of those in the highest income quintile, premature mortality would be reduced by approximately 20% - the equivalent of eliminating all premature deaths due to injuries (one of the three leading causes of death).<sup>1</sup>

The Forum will engage researchers and policy-makers across disciplines in a dialogue on integrating a health inequalities perspective into research and policies that address income adequacy. The Forum will address questions such as:

- What is the state of knowledge regarding the health impacts of low income and income inequality? How does the issue of health inequalities relate to the interests and priorities of other departments or sectors?
- What knowledge gaps must be addressed to inform and support horizontal policy initiatives? How can research and policy development be integrated to spark action to reduce health inequalities?
- What research do policy-makers need to act on income adequacy as a determinant of optimal health? What are the barriers for developing the knowledge base or conducting this research?
- Does current research address those needs? How can research undertaken in the health sector be made available and accessible to the social policy community? What is needed for social policy researchers to incorporate health impacts into their work?

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, R. (2007). *Mortality by neighbourhood income in urban Canada from 1971 to 2001*. Statistics Canada, Health Analysis and Measurement Group (HAMG). HAMG Seminar, and special compilations.

**The discussion will cover:**

- the key policy questions that need to be answered with respect to income adequacy as a determinant of health;
- current and future research needs to inform policy action;
- the benefits and synergies inherent in addressing health and social inequalities through intersectoral collaboration, given the solutions are beyond the purview of any one department or sector;
- means to facilitate an intersectoral approach to addressing these needs; and
- opportunities for future collaborative work