

Biographies

Keynote Speakers

Tom Corbett has emeritus status at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and remains an active affiliate with the Institute for Research on Poverty where, until his retirement, he served as Associate Director. He has long studied trends in social programs that affect the well-being of vulnerable families, along with methods for assessing their effectiveness. Recently, he co-edited a book with Mary Clare Lennon titled *Policy Into Action*, an exploration of implementation-evaluation methods. He consults with several organizations attempting to help state and local sites successfully introduce integrated service models. He is co-author of *Toward a Framework for Integrating Welfare, Workforce, and Human Service Systems—Securing the ‘Holy Grail of Public Policy at Long Last?’*, addressing the emergence of new organizational models of integrated workforce development, focussing on cutting edge best practice sites.

Dr. Kurtis Kitagawa is Principal Research Associate at The Conference Board of Canada. In this capacity, he led the national research and development work on the Skills Credentialing Tool (SCT) in versions specially adapted for individuals and organizations. The SCT helps employers work with their direct reports to assess, certify and manage their employability skills, attitudes and behaviours for high performance and increased productivity in the workplace. Dr. Kitagawa's current projects involve creating a National Skills and Productivity Action Plan with the Conference Board's Skills and Productivity Forum and helping to put together the Board's new Business Leaders' Roundtable on Immigration. In his nearly ten years with the Conference Board, Dr. Kitagawa has also managed several projects, including the influential Employability Skills Forum and its successor, the Skills Solutions Forum; the National Employability Skills Program (an employability skills curriculum, complete with evaluation framework, performance criteria and a fully integrated assessment battery); and *Make the Skills Connection* (a joint Conference Board-Human Resources Development Canada publication series comprised of original skills and labour market research and applied products for teachers, trainers, policy makers and program officers).

Panellists

Since 1988, **Kay Blair** has held the position of Executive Director with Community MicroSkills Development Centre (MicroSkills). MicroSkills is a community-based organization with a staff of 70, serving over 15,000 clients per year. The agency provides settlement, training, employment and self-employment services to immigrants and members of racialized communities, with emphasis on the needs of low-income women and, more recently, at-risk young women. Through Kay's leadership, MicroSkills has grown dramatically and is viewed as a leading, successful agency by funders, government, the business community, clients and other service providers. Kay has been proactive, entrepreneurial and innovative in her thinking, with many programs and projects launched by MicroSkills under her leadership: notably, the establishment of the first Women's Enterprise & Resource Centre and Women's Technology Institute in Ontario, both of which focus on immigrant and racialized women. Kay served two terms as President of Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), as well as various positions on the executive (1989-99). During this period, Kay was instrumental in expanding the OCASI membership and influencing a variety of public policies, in particular, the Employment Insurance Act and Settlement Renewal and Labour Market Development initiatives. As Past President of the National Visible Minority Council on Labour Force Development, and a current member of the Executive Committee, Kay continues to share her experience and expertise in community development, equity, access, and anti-racism issues.

Stephen Diamond is a lawyer with 30 years of experience focussing on municipal law including, in particular, development approvals. He is regularly identified as a leading practitioner in this area in such publications as the “500 Leading Lawyers in Canada”. Mr. Diamond has represented many well-known development and property management interests on some of the largest and most contentious development approvals in the Greater Toronto Area, including, for example the Central Site of Humber Bay Shores (Etobicoke Motel Strip), the Trump Tower, Minto’s Yonge-Eglinton development, the new Four Seasons, and the recently approved Woodbine Racetrack redevelopment (over 3 million square feet of development). He has also negotiated highly-scrutinized, multi-party agreements, such as the sitting Provincial Government’s renegotiation of the Oak Ridges Moraine land swap, on behalf of the entire group of affected landowners. Mr Diamond was previously a partner of McCarthy Tétrault and head of that firm’s Municipal and Environmental Department. He also sat on the firm board of directors. He is currently Vice-Chair of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and sits on the board of the Mount Sinai Hospital Foundation. He recently acted as chair of the Mayor’s (of Toronto) Task Force on Youth Employment at the request of the Mayor and (then) Chief Justice of Ontario Roy McMurtry.

For the past 15 years **Deena Ladd** has been working to improve wages and workings of low-income workers, immigrants, racialized communities and women. Currently she is the co-ordinator of the Workers' Action Centre - a workers' centre focused on supporting and organizing workers in precarious low paid work.

Andrew Mitchell is the co-ordinator and a researcher for the Social Assistance in the New Economy project at the Faculty of Social Work of the University of Toronto. The SANE project has received four major grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to conduct research into the changing nature of social assistance programs. From 1990 to 2002 he was a Program Director at the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (now the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto) where he conducted research on poverty, government fiscal policy, the declining economic status of younger families and income security programs such as social assistance. He served on the Low-income Relief Working Group of the Ontario Fair Tax Commission and has published commentaries on Ontario’s changing tax system. Andrew also serves on the Public Affairs Committee of the Daily Bread Food Bank.