



Message From The Chairperson

As the 20th century draws to a close, I reflect on the fact that for over eighty years of this century a national system for the compilation and exchange of vital event information has been in place. The success and endurance of this system has been due in large part to the dedicated work of the women and men within the vital statistics organizations across Canada in the collection of vital event data. The other factor contributing to its success has been the existence of the Vital Statistics Council for Canada, which traces its history back to conferences held in 1918 and 1919, and which was formally established by federal/provincial agreements in 1945. This partnership between the provincial/territorial vital statistics organizations and Statistics Canada has, by its very nature and mandate, developed and maintained a first rate vital statistics system over this past century. And the fact that the Council has formally existed for over fifty years attests to its viability. Those who have been and are members of the Council can take pride in their contribution to one of the world's most envied vital statistics systems.

As we look to the future, the Council can anticipate many challenges as it takes the national system of vital statistics into the next century. With challenges come choices. And like any organization, the Council has in recent years chosen to conduct its activities on a more structured and clearly delineated basis in order to continue to develop the national system and grow as an organization. To this end, in recent months the Council has been working on the development of a strategic business plan identifying strategic initiatives with accompanying key activities that the Council needs to undertake over the next 5 years. It is expected that Council members will adopt the strategic business plan at the June 1999 annual meeting.

Before examining some of the strategic initiatives that the Council must undertake, I think that it is important first to understand some of the challenges facing not only the Council but also the national vital statistics system itself. The regionalization and restructuring processes of provincial/territorial and federal governments have left vital statistics organizations faced with the challenge of trying to make decisions about new corporate directions while trying to maintain a national vital statistics system. This has been made

more difficult with the considerable differences among vital statistics organizations with respect to reporting relationships, mandate, available resources, organizational complexity, service availability and delivery methods, and the degree of automation or the ability to automate their systems. The organizational infrastructure of Council, which has historically been informal by nature, is somewhat ill equipped to support either the national vital statistics system or its members in this constantly changing environment.

Another challenge has been the transformation of the health care system across the country as the shift has been to knowledge/evidence-based results and decision making, to the prevention of disease, and to the promotion of one's health. This has placed increased pressure on vital statistics organizations to provide comprehensive quality data that is linked for the purpose of data analysis so that health organizations can develop and deliver their programs. This has become difficult to achieve as more vital statistics organizations are being moved from their respective provincial/territorial health departments. Also, as there has been a growing demand for vital statistics data, there has been an equal increasing demand by the public to protect the privacy of the information that is collected. The Council faces the challenge of finding a balance between the need to protect private information and to provide data to clients for developing programs that are in the public interest.

While at times it seems a formidable task to face the challenges that are before Council, it is the recognition of our many accomplishments over the years that now leads us to develop strategic initiatives that will advance the organization and the national vital statistics system.

The Council is committed to strengthening the integration of the components of the national vital statistics system through the development and promotion of its programs, services and data collection systems. To do this the Council will work

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toward building a strong organizational infrastructure. This includes strengthening the relationship between its members, developing member skills, developing and providing the appropriate resources needed to deliver a national system, as well as developing itself as a governing body with respect to the national system of vital statistics.

A key component of the national vital statistics system is of course the data itself. In order to maintain the high quality assurance of the data while at the same time providing a vehicle for its national comparability, the Council recognizes the need to become the focal point for establishing and implementing national standards and definitions of vital statistics data.

An integral part of any organization is the partnerships that are formed in developing and delivering its program and services. To date the longevity and success of the national vital statistics system and the Council is in large part due to the strong partnership between the provincial/territorial vital statistics organizations and Statistics Canada. However, as other organizations begin to realize the value of accessing the services and products of a national vital statistics system, there are opportunities to not only strengthen relationships with existing partners but to also develop new partnerships with other organizations.

Probably one of the more important strategic initiatives that the Council is undertaking involves the revitalization of the concept that the national vital statistics system is a key component of an integrated health information system. This is crucial if governments of health care systems, other health agencies and ultimately the public are to benefit from the data that is collected by vital statistics organizations. As vital statistics organizations are moved out of health departments and change their mandate, this becomes a considerable challenge.

As the 21st century fast approaches, I recognize that the strategic directions the Vital Statistics Council for Canada has identified for itself over the next few years will be challenging. Nonetheless they exemplify the leadership, commitment and support that the members of Council give to building not only a stronger organization but also a stronger national vital statistics system that will serve us all well in the next century and beyond. ♦

*Shelley Ann Gibson, Chairperson,
Vital Statistics Council for Canada*

A Farewell and a Welcome

It is with regret that members of the Vital Statistics Council for Canada bid Diana Denroche, Registrar General, farewell as she leaves the Northwest Territories Vital Statistics office at the end of March. In addition to her duties as Registrar General, Diana has played an integral part in organizing the relocation of the Northwest Territories vital statistics office to Inuvik and in establishing a new vital statistics office for the new territory of Nunavut. Diana has also been an active member of the Council since 1993 and we would like to thank Diana for her contributions. The Council would also like to take this opportunity to send Diana best wishes for success and happiness as she moves on to the next stage of her career.

The Council also has the pleasure of welcoming Diane L. Baxter and Eric Ukpatiku as they begin their jobs as Registrar General of Vital Statistics for the Northwest Territories and the Territory of Nunavut. Council looks forward to meeting and working with Diane and Eric, and wish them all the best as they get settled into their new positions.

Effective April 1, 1999, the Vital Statistics Office will be located in **INUVIK** for the Northwest Territories, and **RANKIN INLET** for the new Territory of Nunavut.

For vital events occurring in the Northwest Territories, contact:

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Government of the NWT
Bag #9
INUVIK, Northwest Territories X0E 0T0
Phone: (867) 777-7420
Fax: (867) 777-3197

For events occurring in Nunavut, beginning April 1, 1999, contact:

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The “First” Right to an Official Identity

*Thelma Johnston, Registrar, Vital Statistics,
Prince Edward Island*

When a person is born in Canada, the birth is registered in the province or territory where the birth occurred, and with few exceptions a person becomes a Canadian citizen. Provincial and territorial Vital Statistics offices have the responsibility of collecting information concerning births. Although there are some differences between the provinces and territories regarding what information is collected and how it is collected, there are standard information requirements which are utilized by all the provinces and territories. For example, in most, if not all provinces a Registration of Live Birth form is used to collect birth information. The standard information collected includes the child's name, date of birth, place of birth, sex, and the names of the child's parent(s) including their dates and places of birth. Other pieces of information may include the birth weight of the child, duration of pregnancy, congenital malformations, etc. Regardless of any differences that may exist between provinces and territories in the information that is collected on a birth, the end result is the filing of a Registration of Birth, which constitutes a permanent legal record of the facts of the birth.

Many countries regard the registration of a person's birth as the first official acknowledgement of a person's existence, and afford a person the right to a legal identity and, with a few exceptions, citizenship to the country. The Birth Certificate, which is produced from the Registration of Birth is recognized worldwide as a primary identification document and provides a person with a legal identity. Many governments and private organizations require it as proof of citizenship when establishing a person's eligibility for services and benefits offered by a province or country.

Consider the consequences of not being able to obtain a birth certificate. For example, without proof of birth, people are often denied essential services such as health care, a driver's license, social benefits, banking, and access to travel, etc. In Canada, birth registration systems have been in existence for many years. However, there are still countries where no formal birth registration system exists, or if one does exist, a very high percentage of the births are not registered. The effect that this has on people's rights as well as the development of these countries is significant. In a recent article that appeared in the Toronto Star, Unity Dow, the first

female High Court Judge in Botswana, discusses the importance of birth registration systems and the implications for individuals and the country where no formal system exists, or where the system is incomplete. In these countries people are often denied the basic right, that is, “the right to a name and nationality”, and thus lack the legal status required to access the privileges and protections of a country. Some examples that she provides of the hardships for individuals who do not have legal status include children being denied vaccination, children being ineligible for legal adoption, children being ineligible for school, and children being conscripted into the military because they can't prove their age. Other examples of violation of rights include people being denied health care, people being ineligible to vote, countries not being able to determine their demography, and increases in crime against the homeless and disenfranchised.

The significance of the birth registration system to an individual's status is obvious. However, there are other significant contributions made by birth registration systems. The data collected on vital events, in particular birth registration data, is essential for the compilation and analysis of public health information. Health planners and researchers have utilized this information not only for determining the health of a population and the necessary health services required on a provincial, territorial and national basis, but also for the management and evaluation of those services. Furthermore, governments use this information to calculate population estimates, which are used to determine, for example, transfer payments to the provinces and territories, or for planning the number of schools or hospitals to be built in a particular area.

In summary, birth registration systems play a significant role not only in the lives of individuals but also in the governing of a country. In countries where birth registration systems have been in place for many years, there may be a tendency to overlook the importance of such a process. However, in countries where no formal system exists to register the birth of a child, the lack of a registration system may lead to the population enduring hardships. In the words of Unity Dow, “In the scheme of things, the need for a birth certificate may not seem profound, especially when compared with the hurdles children routinely have to scale in developing countries. But in reality, that piece of paper is crucial. It is the proof that what might be called the “first” right, the right to an official identity, has been fulfilled.” ♦

Indira Singh Wins Ontario Public Service Excellence Award

Office of the Registrar General, Ontario

Ontario's Office of the Registrar General is proud to announce that Deputy Registrar General Indira Singh has won the 1998 Amethyst Award for excellence in the Ontario Public Service.

The Ontario Public Service presents the Amethyst Award annually to recognize individuals and organizations for their exceptional contributions to client service, innovative management, valuing people and professional achievement.

Ms. Singh has demonstrated outstanding leadership in motivating staff to achieve new standards of customer service. In two years as Deputy Registrar General, she has worked with staff to change the organization's work culture to provide clients with accessible, timely, accurate and quality services.

The Vital Statistics Council for Canada congratulates Ms Singh and her staff for building a better and more customer-focused organization. ♦

A Story of Fraud

*Wayne R. Young, Investigation and Control Officer
Human Resources Development Canada
and Shelley Ann Gibson, Director
Saskatchewan Vital Statistics*

FRAUD - The Webster's Dictionary defines fraud as "deceit, trickery with specific intentional perversion of truth in order to induce another to part with something of value or to surrender a legal right".

Unfortunately fraud is a fact of life, and directly or indirectly, it affects each and every one of us. Fraud does not discriminate in that it can happen to an individual, to small or large businesses, and even to provincial and federal government agencies. The old saying "if there is a will, there is a way" often seems to come to mind when you talk about fraud. While no person or agency likes to have fraud occur to them, when it does happen, it is important that the success stories of people and agencies coming together to fight fraud and crime be told so that others may learn from these unfortunate circumstances.

The following is one such true story, which chronicles the collaboration of staff from Human Resources Development Canada, the R.C.M.P., the Regina Police Service, the Saskatoon Police Service, Revenue Canada, Saskatchewan Social Services, Saskatchewan Justice, and Saskatchewan Vital

Statistics. It is one of the few times where such a diverse group of people from so many different agencies have successfully come together to fight fraud against government. Here is their story.

In May 1997 the Saskatchewan Region of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) received a referral from their Central Index office in Bathurst, New Brunswick to conduct an investigation on a 35 year old Canadian male who was being issued a Social Insurance Number (SIN) for the first time in his life. The investigation quickly identified that there was absolutely no evidence to indicate that this person existed. Only an address was connected to him, which was a postal box at a contracted postal outlet. There was no record of him at Revenue Canada, Saskatchewan Social Services, Saskatchewan Health, or at any of the utility agencies. The birth certificate that had accompanied his SIN application gave his place of birth as Selkirk, Manitoba. Based on the birth certificate, the investigator at HRDC proceeded to contact the persons believed to be the parents of this individual in Selkirk, Manitoba only to find that one John Hardwick who was born in 1960 had passed away in 1968.

The Regina Police Service were contacted and it was learned that they were investigating a matter identified by Saskatchewan Vital Statistics concerning the application for a Saskatchewan birth certificate of a person who had been deceased for 22 years. The person who had requested this birth certificate was using the same postal box address that the alleged John Hardwick had used. A postal code search was conducted and it was found that 4 persons were connected to that same postal box, and that SIN's had been issued to three of them. The renter of the postal box who had provided a SIN for identification was found to be a different person from the other four. Upon investigation, the HRDC Central Index office verified to whom this SIN belonged and where the SIN card had been sent. It was determined that the SIN card had been mailed to another post office box. Another search of the new postal code resulted in seven more individuals being identified who had been issued SIN cards for the first time within the past year and a half, and in each case the individuals were over 30 years of age.

Further investigation identified that no employment insurance claims had been made by these individuals holding the SIN cards; however, the SIN cards had been used to receive provincial welfare benefits and GST refunds. In some instances, joint GST refunds (husband and wife or common-law) were being

applied for. The refund claims being filed followed the same pattern in that there had been no previous income tax returns filed by the individuals and then suddenly there was a block of years (either 1990-95 or 1991-96) where GST refund claims were being filed. In all of the cases, the information that was provided on the refund claim application indicated there was no source of income.

The key persons identified in this web were all verified by the appropriate Vital Statistics agencies to be deceased, and were linked by association to fraudulent claims for GST and welfare benefits. A co-ordination of efforts by members of HRDC, Revenue Canada Investigations, Saskatchewan Social Services, the Regina Police Service, the Saskatoon Police Service and Saskatchewan Vital Statistics was begun. The only financial institution that had been utilized for direct deposit of the GST and welfare benefits was the Credit Unions. With their co-operation, holds were placed on numerous accounts.

Photographs of two people, a male and a female, were captured on a security camera at an automated banking machine while conducting a transaction of one of the accounts that had been set up under the fraudulent identity. As of October 1997, forty-three identities were connected to this fraud operation. In an attempt to bring closure to the investigation, the October GST refund cheques for three of the false identities were released with a freeze being put on accounts. The Saskatoon Police Service placed the Main Branch of the Credit Union in Saskatoon under 24-hour surveillance in order to effect an arrest. The accounts were never accessed.

Also in October 1997, it was learned from the HRDC Investigation and Control office in Edmonton that an investigation conducted in the previous year, 1996, involved similar fraudulent identities. This case had involved a woman who had used eight identities to obtain credit cards and then used them for fraudulent purposes. The woman failed to return to court after an adjournment and a warrant was issued for her arrest. The names and addresses provided by the Edmonton HRDC Investigation and Control office were tied to the addresses already associated to the person(s) responsible for the fraud scheme identified in Saskatchewan. At this point in the investigation, the identity of the individual(s) was still unknown.

In May 1998 all avenues of investigation seemed to have been exhausted until it was found that two of the most recently issued SIN's connected to this

fraud scheme were in Nanaimo, British Columbia, and that the identity involved had been receiving welfare benefits to the end of 1997. A computer enhancement of this male person captured on the Credit Union security camera matched a suspected associate of the wanted woman from Edmonton. Photographs of the wanted woman and the suspected associate were sent to the Major Fraud Unit of HRDC in Vancouver. The male associate turned out to be the same person who had two active welfare claims in Nanaimo, British Columbia. To this point in time, there were 73 identities associated with this fraud scheme.

In June 1998, members from the Regina Police Service, the R.C.M.P. Commercial Crime Unit from Regina along with the assistance of the R.C.M.P. Plain Clothes Unit in Nanaimo arrested the man and woman believed to be connected with this fraud scheme. Vince Logan and his wife, Janet, were taken into custody and brought back to Regina to face charges of fraud and personation. At the time of their arrest they were found to have created and have in their possession an inventory of identities for 103 persons.

On the 22nd October 1998, both Vince and Janet Logan pleaded guilty to the charges of fraud and personation. Combined, there were 19 charges of fraud for GST claims, 14 charges of fraud for obtaining welfare benefits in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, and 98 charges of personation. A total amount of \$125,019.86 had been defrauded from provincial and federal government departments. Vince Logan was sentenced to 3 years in jail while Janet Logan received a 1-year sentence. Upon their release they will be taken into custody under an immigration violation since they had both been living illegally in Canada. As well, Vince Logan will also be turned over to the U.S. authorities upon his release since he is also in violation of his parole.

The fight against fraud is an on-going battle, and as individuals and agencies we must continue to collaborate our efforts in this fight and do what we can to minimize, if not ideally to eliminate, the occurrence of fraud. As the above story illustrates, the "bad guys" do eventually get caught as a result of co-operation and interaction of the agencies concerned. ♦

ON A TYPICAL DAY IN SASKATCHEWAN IN 1997

The following events were recorded:

35 LIVE BIRTHS OCCURRED IN THE PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN:

- 18 males and 17 females were born
- 4 were born to teenage mothers
- 1 multiple birth per day
- 2 were low birth weight babies (<2500 grams)
- 12 were born to single mothers
- 1 stillbirth every week
- The most popular name for boys was Austin and for girls was Taylor.

15 MARRIAGES WERE SOLEMNIZED IN SASKATCHEWAN:

- 6 marriages end in divorce or annulment each day

23 DEATHS OCCURRED IN THE PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN:

- 12 males and 11 females died
- 8 deaths were due to diseases of the circulatory system including:
 - 6 deaths were from heart diseases
 - 2 deaths were from cerebrovascular diseases
- 2 deaths were due to diseases of the respiratory system

- 7 deaths were from AIDS/HIV infections for the entire year

6 deaths were due to cancer including:

- 1 lung cancer
- 1 cancer of digestive organs
- 1 cancer of genitourinary organs
- 1 breast cancer every 2nd day
- 1 prostate cancer every 2nd day

- 1 motor vehicle traffic accident every 2nd day

- 1 suicide every 3 days

- 1 homicide every 2 weeks

- 1 perinatal death every 3 days

- 1 infant death every 4 days

- 1 neonatal death every 5 days

169 CERTIFICATES WERE ISSUED EVERY DAY:

- 135 birth certificates

- 17 death certificates

- 17 marriage certificates

2 APPLICATIONS FOR LEGAL NAME CHANGES WERE REGISTERED

1 ADOPTION WAS REGISTERED

Source: Saskatchewan Vital Statistics

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