



# **Emerging Health and Safety Issues from Changing Workplaces**

**September 2007**

*Presented by*



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# Forum07 Summary Report

*Vancouver, BC*

*September 17-18, 2007*

## President's Message

On behalf of the CCOHS Council of Governors and the Forum07 Advisory Committee, I wish to thank you for downloading this initial report from Forum07. I can personally attest to the energy and passion evident during the course of our two-day pan-Canadian conference in Vancouver. Many recommendations were yielded in regards to emerging health and safety issues in changing workplaces, and I would like to commend all our delegates for their candidacy and for their insights. The journey has just begun, and we will look for ways in which we can all work together to make significant progress in enhancing the safety and health of Canadians. I encourage each and every one of you to continue the conversation – complete our survey, share your story, encourage others to lend their perspectives – so that we can have a broad range of information, opinions, and ideas to spark improvements and understanding. In the face of changing workplaces, and if we are to eliminate the occurrence of workplace injuries and illnesses in the future, we must keep the momentum going. Thank you.

S. Len Hong  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

## Background

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) hosted a tripartite, national event to explore changing workplaces and their impact on Canadian workers' health and safety. Forum07 took place September 17 & 18, 2007, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

With "Emerging Health and Safety Issues in Changing Workplaces: A Canadian Discussion" as the theme, this two-day event brought together subject experts, workers, employers and governments to share their knowledge and experience around this pan-Canadian issue, and to discuss problems and solutions.

CCOHS, the Forum07 Advisory Committee, with guidance from the CCOHS Council of Governors conducted research and consulted with key stakeholders in an effort to identify a topic in the workplace health and safety arena that required comprehensive discussion and generation of ideas. The issues surrounding evolving workplaces resonated throughout this process.

Research shows that Canadians are very concerned with how the health and safety of workers are impacted by the changes they are facing today. The workforce is aging and is increasingly more diverse. And the "nature" of the workplace is also changing with the growth of contract, seasonal and part-time employment and outsourcing. All of these present new issues such as gaps in worker protection, accountability and responsibility for occupational health and safety in the changing workplace.

Forum07 provided a unique opportunity for participants to explore and better understand how these particular challenges impact the health and safety needs of workers.

Delegates took part in an interactive, informative workshop in addition to attending plenary sessions by leading Canadian and international experts.

Forum07 marked CCOHS' second national forum effort. The first event, held in 2005, brought together nearly 350 Canadians who shared concerns, debated issues and made recommendations on the issue of occupational disease. Forum07 generated a similar interest and enthusiasm in an effort to stimulate creative solutions among Canadians to help ensure people can be safe and healthy at work.

## Program

Forum07 was organized into four themes, with an expert presenter in each area focusing on a particular component of changing workplaces. Corresponding, concurrent workshops were held on Day 2, so that delegates could discuss known and emerging issues arising from each component, and to identify possible solutions and strategies to improve workplace concerns. Delegates chose the workshop topic that they were most interested in.

### 1. The Evolving Workplace

The workplace is changing with a growing number of workers in Canada being part-time, temporary, working on contract, holding multiple jobs or self-employed. And the workforce is also changing due to aging, increases in women working, and ethnic diversity. What are the effects of increasingly more precarious employment? How do these changes impact the health and safety of workers?

**Presenter: Dr. Michael Quinlan, Fellow of Safety Institute of Australia and Professor in the School of Organisation and Management , University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia**

Access the presentation at: <http://www.ccohs.ca/events/forum07/quinlan.pdf>

### Evolving Workplaces - Workshop Highlights

Ethnic diversity and retention strategies surfaced as the top issues of discussion. Underlying were the core beliefs that these were multi-faceted issues requiring multi-faceted solutions of which education and social marketing were paramount. Some recommendations that were highlighted included:

- Coaches to help immigrant/foreign workers overcome language barriers
- Allow work benefits to be flexible to the needs of the worker
- Organizational ranking system or Better Business Bureau-type system which takes into account the treatment of employees
- Supply chain regulation for industries that are higher users of precarious workers
- Codes of practice (regulation, inspection, benchmarks) for temporary work agencies
- Educate new arrivals about workers' rights and labour standards
- Focus on retention strategies such as flexibility of benefits, balance, and wellness
- Improvements in retention strategies require the leadership from employers, government and health care providers

## **2. Emerging Technologies and Processes**

What is "in" the workplace is changing. Rapidly changing technologies and increasing complexity and inter-relatedness of systems are having impacts on workplaces and the risks of injuries. What are the new and emerging risks? What strategies in equipment design and workplace systems and processes can be deployed to control the hazards and increase the safety of workers?

**Presenter: Dr. Catherine Burns, Associate Professor, Systems Design Engineering, University of Waterloo, Canada**

Access the presentation at: <http://www.ccohs.ca/events/forum07/burns.pdf>

### **Emerging Technologies and Processes - Workshop Highlights**

Delegates agreed that emerging technologies and processes significantly impact organizations. The introduction of new technology to an organization usually aggravates past shortcomings, and introduces new problems that both employers and workers are not prepared to address. But depending on the generational perspective, technology can be seen as being a stressor or a helper, with knowledge transfer often going from the younger to the older worker. However, the older worker typically has the soft business skills and experience to solve problems that technology alone can't.

Recommendations included:

- Employers must become comfortable with pushing and pulling of technology; younger workers will increasingly demand and expect new technological tools
- Revisit and reconfigure information for a broader audience; for instance, MSDSs are traditionally written for the chemist
- Bridge gaps when new processes or complex technologies are introduced
- Determine the impact and potential of new technology
- Overcome attitude as a hazard; technology can be mistaken as a cloak of invincibility

## **3. Gaps in Protection, Accountability and Responsibility for OH&S in the Changing Workplace**

How do our existing laws and traditional definitions apply to contingent work arrangements including increasing self-employment, temporary workers and multiple worksite employers? The changing workplace presents gaps in worker protection and raises the question of who is accountable and responsible for health and safety in the workplace. Do workers with part-time, seasonal or temporary employment have access to the same OH&S Standards as permanent employees? Does the OH&S Legislation fully protect them?

**Presenter: Dr. Katherine Lippel, Professor, Faculty of Law (Civil Law Section), University of Ottawa**

Access the presentation at: <http://www.ccohs.ca/events/forum07/lippel.pdf>

### **Tri-Partite Panel Discussion**

A panel discussion was also held on Day One. Leaders representing Canadian government, employer and labour organizations summarized their perspectives on the protection, accountability, and responsibility for OH&S in a changing workplace.

Panel participants were:

- Wayne De L'Orme, Provincial Coordinator for the Industrial Program of the Ontario Ministry of Labour
- Wallace Baer, President and CEO, Enform
- Denis St. Jean, National Health and Safety Officer, Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)

### **Gaps in Protection, Accountability and Responsibility for OH&S in the Changing Workplace - Workshop Highlights**

Recommendations emerged from a focus on answering three questions:

Who is responsible for protecting workers in such areas such as part-time work, self-employed status, work service contracts and temporary works, new forms of employment including virtual companies on the Internet, and situations with large numbers of contractors are working together or for each other?

- Everyone is responsible
- Begin with legislation: same rights for all workers
- Education and training
- Violations
- Business owner also has responsibilities for protection, which should start at the time a business license is issued. These responsibilities cannot be signed away to contractors or subcontractors

What are good practices in OHS training and education for precarious workers?

- Clear and easy to understand language
- Make OHS training and education part of the K-12 school curriculum
- Put auditing and compliance in place
- Consider employee recognition and/or incentive programs
- Increase educational opportunities from associations

How can OHS legislation be adjusted to the needs of precarious workers?

- Definitions need to be standardized, inclusive, and concise, at both federal and provincial levels
- Improve speed of legislation enactment and change
- Increase ratio of inspectors to employers
- Important to define "hours of work" and "fatigue", especially for multiple job holders
- No distinction between full and part-time employees

### **4. Standing Still is Not an Option: Why Organizations Need to Focus on Employee Well-being**

In 1991 Duxbury and Higgins surveyed 37,000 employed Canadians. A second survey of 33,000 Canadians was done in 2001. This talk uses data from these surveys to address the following questions: What is the current status with respect to workplace health and well-being in Canada? Why should organizations care about employee well-being? Why is it particularly important at this point in time? How can interested employers address these issues? What can employees themselves do? Topics covered in this talk include issues associated with workloads and office technology, the link between employee well-being and recruitment, retention and succession planning, and cultural change within organizations.

**Presenter: Dr. Linda Duxbury, Professor, Carleton University School of Business, and Director of Research, Centre for Research and Education on Women and Work**

### **Presentation Highlights**

Standing still is definitely not an option - especially not after listening to Dr. Duxbury's dynamic presentation. Survey results from her various studies emphasized that work-life balance, key work outcomes (organizational commitment, job stress, and job satisfaction) and mental health have not improved over the years (1991 to 2001). People are struggling with both demands from work and home. Additionally, the impact of and expectations of technology - work anytime, anywhere - has largely only increased our workload and stress. Combined with a labour and skill shortage, change must occur if your organization will attract and keep employees. Change for the future includes being a "change agent" yourself, recognizing that work and life are not separate issues, employee well-being and supportive work environments are highly interrelated. Organizations that encourage supportive managers, and make human resources and employee support a high priority will be the ones to thrive in the future.

### **Employee Well-being Workshop Highlights**

Widespread changes, including those that are cultural, technological and generational in nature, are sweeping through workplaces, contributing largely to organizational stress, which spills over into the home life. The group outlined several recommendations to combat the occurrence and effects of stress.

- Survey for workers' needs through open-ended, anonymous methods; follow-up and deliver on resulting action plan
- Form liaison committees that can speak freely without fear of reprisals
- Increase training for everyone
- Enroll new managers into specific management training prior to assuming their new positions
- Instill 360 degree feedback mechanisms
- Managers must play role of change agents by modeling behavior, consistency of vision, and leading by example
- Increase face-to-face contact to reduce miscommunication and misconceptions
- Analyze workloads
- Recognize stress as a workplace injury
- Encourage use of employee assistance programs
- Permit flexible work arrangements
- Unions need to speak for all workers, not just the minority
- Governments need to ensure that elder care and child care are made mandatory at organizations
- Leadership has to be on a tripartite level if we are to make significant progress

## Post-Forum Survey

### Questions

Following the Forum, CCOHS invited Canadians to weigh in on changing workplaces via an online survey.

The survey, entitled "Weigh in on Changing Workplaces," consisted of the following questions:

- 1) Is there a concern in your workplace about worker health and safety due to increasingly more temporary and short-term work arrangements (such as part-time, seasonal, temporary, contract, self-employed etc.)?
- 2) If you answered yes, please identify how these situations have affected workplace health and safety.
- 3) Is there a concern in your workplace due to difficulty in filling staff positions as well as high staff turnovers?
- 4) Do you feel that work contributes to your overall stress load?
- 5) What is the source of your work stress (choose all that apply)
  - a. Too many changes to my job or duties
  - b. Too much time pressure
  - c. Lack of job security
  - d. Lack of training around health and safety
  - e. Inability to control workloads or work priorities
  - f. My duties are not clearly defined
  - g. My goals and objectives are not clearly defined
  - h. Lack of support from management
- 6) Do you feel that your level of workplace stress has increased or decreased in the past 5 years?
- 7) Have you ever felt your health and safety was at risk because of a new technology or work process being used in your workplace?
- 8) Do you feel that your organization offers job training?
- 9) Do you feel that your organization offers enough health and safety training?
- 10) What solutions do you think are necessary to assist immigrant workers? (choose all that apply)
  - a. Improved regulatory changes to protect immigrant workers
  - b. Accountability from employers
  - c. Coaches to help with language barriers and/or training
  - d. Access to English as a Second Language (ESL) training
  - e. Improved guidelines and standards to protect workers
  - f. Other
- 11) How can occupational health and safety legislation be adjusted to meet the needs of precarious workers? (choose all that apply)
  - a. Standardized, inclusive and concise definitions at federal and provincial levels
  - b. Fast-track legislative changes
  - c. Increase ratio of inspectors to employers
  - d. Same legislative treatment for all workers
  - e. Recognition of fatigue as a workplace hazard
  - f. Additional legislation to mandate increased training
  - g. Other

- 12) Who should own or share responsibility for protecting the health and safety of workers in such areas as part-time, temporary, seasonal, contract, and self-employed work? (choose all that apply)
- a. Workers
  - b. Employers
  - c. Labour Organizations
  - d. Government
- 13) Has the changing landscape of workplaces personally affected your and your health & safety? Maybe you're a part-time, seasonal or contract worker. Or perhaps you know someone who has experienced increased changes within their organizations – anything from the introduction of new technology to decreased job security to longer and longer work hours. We invite you to share your story with us.



## Survey Results

### The Evolving Workplace

Is there a concern in your workplace about worker health and safety due to increasingly more temporary and short-term work arrangements (such as part-time, seasonal, temporary, contract, self-employed etc.)? 58% responded YES:



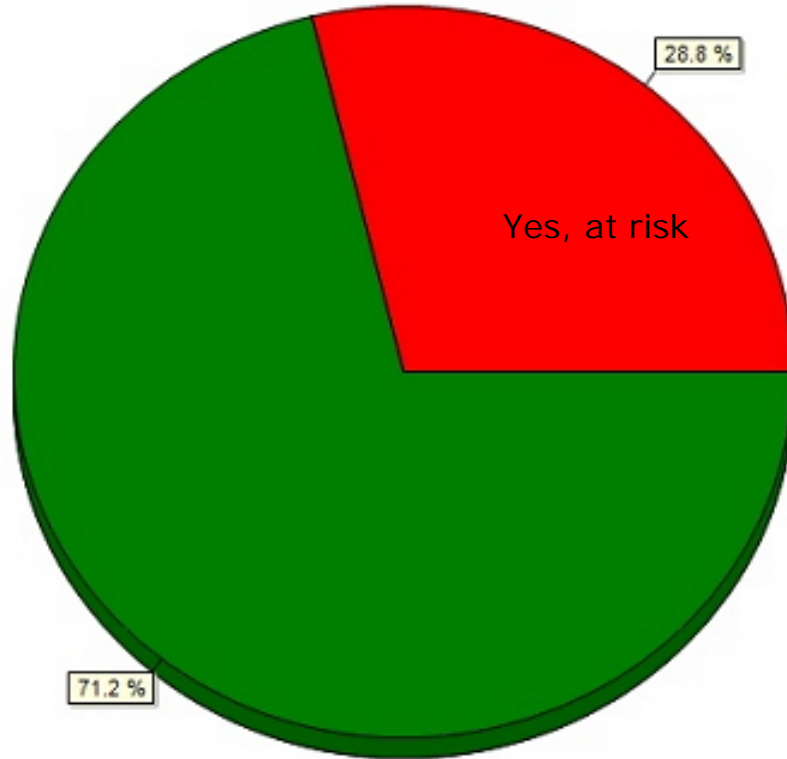
68.6% of respondents indicated there was concern in their workplace about the difficulty in high staff turnovers and the ability to fill staff positions.

The top three solutions to assist immigrant workers:

- 1) Coaches to help with language barriers (70.9%)
- 2) Access to ESL training (62.7%)
- 3) Accountability from employers (53.7%)

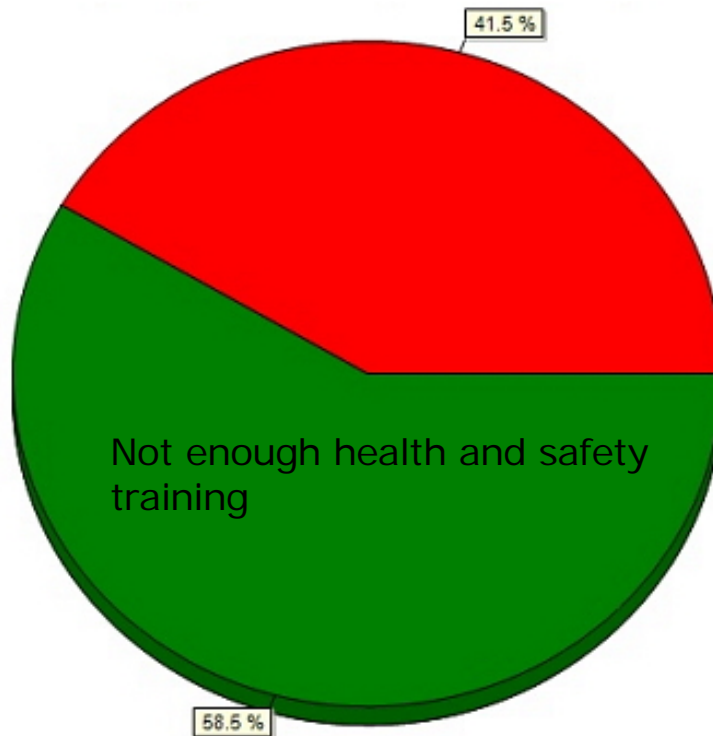
### Emerging Technologies and Processes

Have you ever felt your health and safety was at risk because of a new technology or work process being used in your workplace? 28.8% responded YES:



## Gaps in Protection, Accountability and Responsibility for Occupational Health and Safety

Do you feel that your organization offers enough health and safety training? 58.5% indicated NO:



30.8% feel that their organization does not offer enough job training

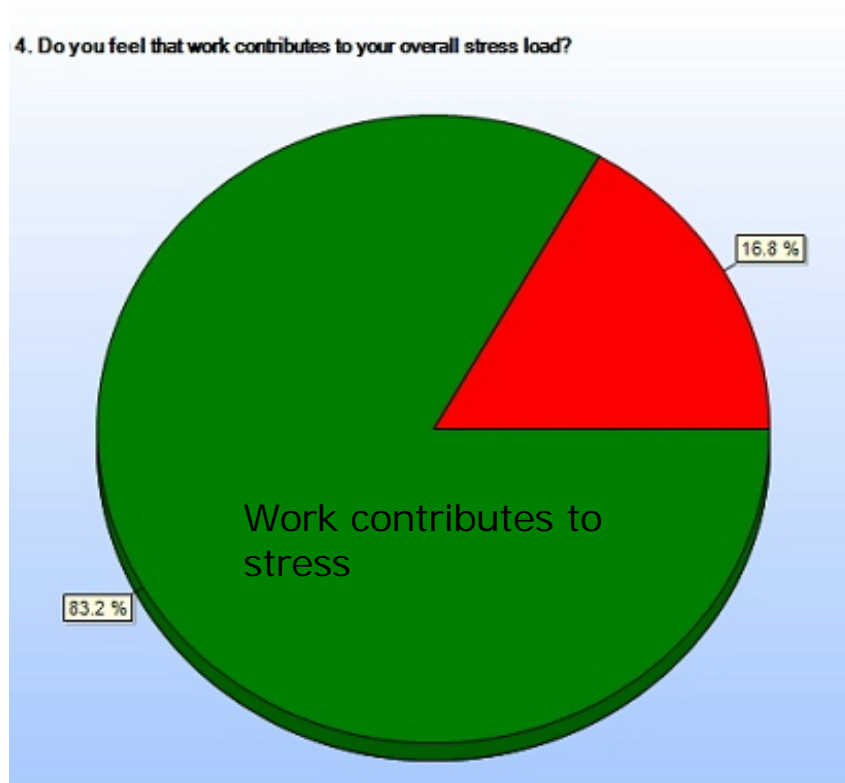
The top three recommendations for improving occupational health and safety legislation:

- 1) Same legislative treatment for all workers (61.9%)
- 2) Standardized, inclusive, and concise definitions at federal and provincial levels (60.4%)
- 3) Recognition of fatigue as a work hazard (57.5%)

Protecting the health and safety of precarious workers is primarily the responsibility of employers (94.8%) but shared with government (74.6%) and the workers themselves (78.4%).

## Employee Well Being

83.2% feel that work contributes to their overall stress load.



The top three sources of stress are:

- 1) Too much time pressure (48.5%)
- 2) Inability to control workloads or priorities (47.0%)
- 3) Lack of support from management (44.8%)

75% feel that their level of workplace stress has increased over the past five years.

## **Personal Experiences About Changing Workplaces**

### *High Tech Demands*

"Our organization provides Blackberrys, takes full advantage of the high tech exemption as far as OT goes, expects a minimum 10-hour work day, and often more from management-level and above. My direct supervisor works an average of 16+ hours per day, plus weekends."

### *Increasing Workloads*

"Having to do more with less resources even as enrollments rise. Hiring part-time student workers creates more stress rather than lightening the workload. With less experience, they do not have the same responsibility for safety as the permanent workers, who then become supervisors of these part-time people."

### *Inadequate Communication*

"We do not have a Safety Supervisor to inform us of new rules and regulations. We have no problem following all the rules and regulations, but they must be presented in a fashion that can be understood by the employees. Right now, it is too mixed up in terms of understanding what is required and what is recommended."

### *Job Instability*

"We have downsized so that means that jobs have changed with everyone taking on a little more. As long as everyone assists each other during busy times then it works, and at times is much more efficient. You can no longer say that something is not in your job description so you don't have to do it."

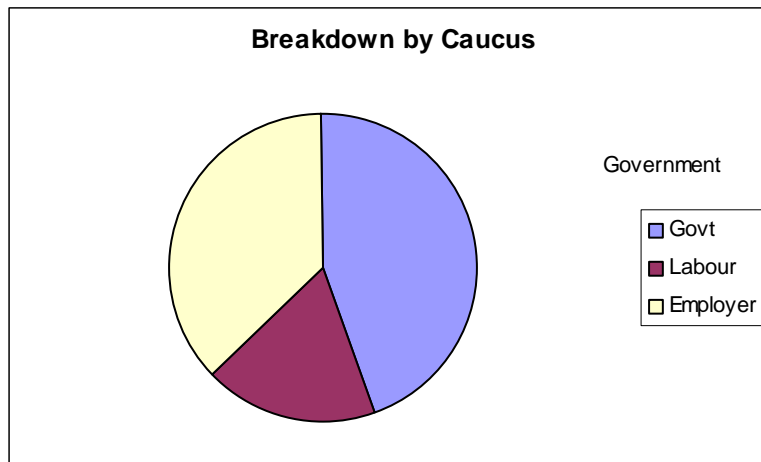
## Appendix

### Forum07 Participants

Canadian and International researchers, policy-makers, compensation specialists and other experts shared their knowledge of emerging issues impacting today's evolving workplaces.

### Breakdown by Caucus

Government	100	46.9%
Labour	37	17.4%
Employer	76	35.7%
	<b>213</b>	



### Representation by Province

AB	28	13.5%
BC	83	39.9%
MB	9	4.3%
NB	4	1.9%
NL	2	1.0%
NS	3	1.4%
NWT	2	1.0%
ON	59	28.4%
PE	1	0.5%
QC	12	5.8%
SK	4	1.9%
YT	1	0.5%

	<b>208</b>
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### Representation by Country

Canada	208	97.7%
US	2	0.9%
Australia	1	0.5%
Chile	2	0.9%
	<b>213</b>	

### Forum07 Presenters

#### Dr. Michael Quinlan

Dr. Quinlan is a Fellow of Safety Institute of Australia as well as a professor in the School of Organisation and Management at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. He also holds an adjunct post in the Business School at Middlesex University in the United Kingdom. Over the past 15 years Dr. Quinlan has served on a number of state and federal government bodies, advising and participating in OHS related policymaking, investigations, and inquiries. His research has focused on the effects of institutional organization, regulation and employment status on OHS. In recent years he has published widely on the effects of precarious employment on occupational health and safety.

#### Dr. Catherine M. Burns

Dr. Burns is an Associate Professor in Systems Design Engineering at the University of Waterloo, Canada. At Waterloo she directs the Advanced Interface Design Lab. Her research examines user interface design, visualization and cognitive work analysis. Dr. Burns' work has been applied to military systems, healthcare, power plant control, and oil and gas refining. She regularly consults with local companies in the areas of human performance in complex systems, interface design, and more traditional human factors. Dr. Burns is also the author of over 100 publications and recently co-authored a book on Ecological Interface Design. She is the Program Chair for the Cognitive Engineering and Decision Making Technical Group of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society and an Associate Editor for the International Journal of Human-Computer Studies.

#### Dr. Katherine Lippel

Dr. Lippel is a professor of law at the Faculty of Law (Civil Law Section) at the University of Ottawa and holds the Canada Research Chair in Occupational Health and Safety Law. She is also a full professor at the law department of the Université du Québec à Montréal, where she has been teaching since 1982, and a member of the Quebec Bar.

Prof. Lippel specializes in legal issues relating to occupational health and safety and workers' compensation and is the author of several articles and books in the field. Her research interests include: work and mental health; health effects of compensation systems; policy, precarious employment and occupational health; interactions between law and medicine in the field of occupational health and safety; women's occupational health; and regulatory issues in occupational health and safety. In 2005, she received a prize for academic excellence from the Canadian association of law teachers (CALT), a prize awarded yearly to a Canadian law professor for excellence in teaching and research.

#### Dr. Linda Duxbury

Dr. Duxbury is one of Canada's leading workplace health researchers. She has written hundreds of papers, journals, and books and is the co-author of a series of influential Health Canada reports about work-life balance in Canada.

Dr. Duxbury is a Professor at the Carleton University School of Business and the Director of Research at the Centre for Research and Education on Women and Work. In the last decade a major focus of her research has been on work/family balance in both public and private sectors, small business, and technology companies. In the course of this research, over 100,000 Canadians were surveyed or interviewed, making it one of the largest research studies of its kind. She has influenced government policy-making and significantly advanced the practices and attitudes toward work-life balance.

### **Forum07 Advisory Committee**

The Forum 2007 Advisory Committee consisted of the following representatives from the CCOHS Council of Governors:

- **Roberta Ellis** - WorkSafe BC
- **Jean Dalton** – Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters
- **Anthony Pizzino** – Canadian Union of Public Employees/CLC

Other Members of the Committee, from CCOHS:

- **Eleanor Westwood**, Communications Manager
- **Lorraine Davison**, Manager, Chemical Services
- **Bob Whiting**, Senior Project Manager
- **Renzo Bertolini**, Manager, Inquiries and Client Services
- **Jan Chappel**, Senior Technical Specialist, OHS

### **CCOHS Council of Governors**

#### **Chair**

- Scott Streiner, Government of Canada

#### **Labour**

- Anthony Pizzino, Canadian Union of Public Employees/CLC
- Nancy Hutchison, United Steelworkers of America
- Marie Clarke Walker, Canadian Labour Congress
- Mona Sykes, BC Government & Services Employees' Union/CLC

#### **Employer**

- Jean Dalton, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters
- Otto Peter, Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association
- Murray Sunstrum, Enform

#### **Provincial and Territorial**

- Douglas Stanley, New Brunswick WHSCC
- Roberta Ellis, WorkSafe BC
- Kimberly Dunphy, Newfoundland and Labrador Government Services
- Don Hurst, Manitoba Labour & Immigration
- Helle Tosine, Ontario Ministry of Labour
- Allan Walker, Saskatchewan Labour
- Stuart MacLean, Nova Scotia WCB