



HR LINKS

March 15, 2005
Vol. 2 No. 3



“In the end, antiblack, antifemale, and all forms of discrimination are equivalent to the same thing, antihumanism.”
- Shirley Chisholm

Comings and Goings

Recent movement in the HR Community includes:

- ☺ **Margaret Melanson** leaves the Public Service Commission to join the Transportation and Public Works HR CSU as HR Manager of Operations (see pg. 4)
- ☺ Congratulations to **Bonnie Dobson** who has recently accepted an HR Consultant position with Community Services
- ☺ **Yvonne Rousseau** joined Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations as Administrative Assistant on February 14th.
- ☹ **Jim Furlong**, OH&S Manager left Transportation and Public Works HR CSU on February 25th for an opportunity in the private sector.

Upcoming HR Meetings and Events:

- ✓ HR Directors Forum: Thursday March 17th Joe Howe Building
- ✓ HRD Forum: Friday April 1st, Terminal Road Building
- ✓ HR Consultants: Thursday April 7th, Maritime Centre
- ✓ Next HR Breakfast: Wednesday May 4th 7:30 - 9:15, World Trade and Convention Centre
- ✓ HR Conference Day: Wednesday June 29th more information to come

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Introducing the next generation of Public Servants: GoverNEXT

by Colin MacSween, Coordinator NSYCC Environment and Labour



(In the Photo above standing left to right: Vijay Bhashyakarla, Colin MacSween, Mary Beth Gillis. Seated left to right: Sarah Barrett, Angela Matheson-Coutu and Patty Charlton.)

2005 has brought with it an exciting new development - the formation of a youth network called **GoverNEXT**.

GoverNEXT is the culmination of the work of six young Nova Scotia public servants. For the past three months Patty Charlton (Public Service Commission), Sarah Barrett (Public Service Commission), Mary Beth Gillis (Department of Education), Colin MacSween (Environment and Labour), Vijay Bhashyakaria (Transportation and Public Works) and Angela Matheson-Coutu (Intergovernmental Affairs) have come together to develop GoverNEXT which will see a diverse community of young public servants contributing to the government of today and tomorrow. On March 7th the current members of GoverNEXT presented their concept to the Deputy Ministers, receiving overwhelming support for their idea.

"We all share a commitment to the Public Service of Nova Scotia" says Patty Charlton, "we want to ensure a diverse and vibrant public service by aiding in the recruitment and retention of new public servants. GoverNEXT will help this process." By creating a network for young public servants GoverNEXT will provide a voice for youth in the renewal of the Public Service by

promoting a workplace that is diverse, rewarding and collaborative. Mary Beth Gillis adds, "The GoverNEXT network will not only provide opportunities for young public servants to share experiences and resources with their peers across the province, but also, access to the wealth of experience and expertise amongst senior public servants with the Government of Nova Scotia through networking."

The next step in development is a strategic planning session, to which the Deputy Ministers have agreed to identify representatives from their departments to attend. "We want to make this group inclusive to all young public servants. Once we have identified departmental representatives for GoverNEXT, we can start recruiting members from all areas of the public service," adds Angela Matheson-Coutu. The group would eventually like to see GoverNEXT working across the province and in all departments. GoverNEXT will offer young public servants the opportunity to further develop in all areas through workshops, networking sessions and outreach to other youth groups like Youth Connect, for federal public servants.

The organizing group anticipates having the steering committee, task teams and membership in place by late Spring 2005. For more information contact Patty Charlton at 424-2968 or via email at charlpa@gov.ns.ca.

HR Links Editorial Board

Donna Hendy Vanessa Hammock
Michelle Collins Jane Allt
Jeannette Smith

Next Issue: Monday April 11th deadline
for submissions Wednesday April 9th.

Send information to any of the Editorial
Board members or to
smithjm@gov.ns.ca

What Beer Commercials Don't Tell You The Truth about Alcohol

by Kimberley MacDonald, Jr. EAP Consultant

What's the problem?

Family violence, depression, crime, and health problems are some of the issues faced by many Canadians who are affected by alcohol abuse. When left untreated, problem drinking can lead to deteriorating personal lives and health, even contributing to some major - or fatal - medical conditions. These conditions include: cirrhosis, diabetes, high blood pressure, fetal damage and psychiatric disorders. Problem - drinking has tremendous impacts on families as well. Children of problem - drinkers, for example, can exhibit behavioural problems.

A look at the numbers.

- Approximately 78% of Canadians consult a physician each year
- Of these, 6% are heavily dependent on alcohol, and up to 25% have or are at risk for alcohol related health problems
- About 10% of premature deaths in Canada are caused by hazardous drinking, and more than 50% of fatal traffic accidents involve alcohol
- The health, social and economic costs of alcohol abuse may be as high as 8.6 billion, of which \$1.3 billion is spent on direct health care costs

Is there help?

So why is it that with all this information so few people seek treatment? Often, because of the stigma associated with alcoholism, there is deep-rooted denial that a problem exists. Family members, employers and even physicians are often reluctant to intervene because of lack of awareness, uncertainty of how to approach an individual, doubts about treatment interventions and their effectiveness, and unawareness of appropriate resources and fear.

Some Signs and Symptoms

- missing time from work
- poor performance at work
- problems with family or friends as a result of drinking
- financial problems

- increasing frequency of alcohol use
- personality changes
- insomnia
- depression or anxiety

What comes next?

Ask yourself these questions to help determine if you or a loved one may be experiencing problems with alcohol:

- have you ever felt the need to cut down on your drinking?
- have you ever been annoyed by other people's criticism of your drinking?
- have you felt guilty about your drinking?
- do you drink in the morning for an eye-opener?

A yes to any of the above questions may indicate a problem and the need for further assessment.

So Where to from here?

Once a problem has been identified, further assessment by a professional is needed to determine the right treatment plan for the individual. To get help, call your local Addiction Services, speak with your physician or contact your **EAP 1-800-769-2511**. **All calls to EAP are completely confidential.**

###

International Women's Day was March 8th. To further support this initiative the following events are scheduled:

- Women Matter! Women Vote! Taking Action! Women's Political Forum for Social and Economic Justice: Saturday March 19th 10-3:30. St. Mary's University Theatre Auditorium. For more information: contact hunter.group@ns.sympatico.ca
- Women's Employment Outreach 25th Anniversary Celebration March 24th, come anytime between 10-2. Location - 1888 Brunswick Street, Suite 807. For more information 422-8023.

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A New Beginning for Margaret Melanson

Recently one of the HR Links Cub reporters linked up with Margaret Melanson who has accepted a position as Manager of Human Resources with Transportation and Public Works. Margaret begins her new role Monday March 14th. The Links posed a few questions to Margaret prior to her departure from the Public Service Commission.



Margaret began her public service career in 1972 when she was employed as the secretary to the Director of the School of Nursing at the Victoria General Hospital. When Margaret left the VG Hospital in 1989 she was the Coordinator of Student Services.

HR Links: How long have you been with the Public Service Commission?

Margaret: In 1989 I welcomed the opportunity to join the Civil Service Commission, so I have been here 15 years gone October, but who's counting?

HR Links: When did you decide that you were going to pursue a career in Human Resources?

Margaret: I didn't actually. I had applied for a "Personnel Technician" position with the Civil Service Commission when there was rumour of the VG transitioning from the Province. Although I had no direct 'personnel' experience I believed my experience was transferrable and the Civil Service Commission job looked to be a great opportunity. It was the Staffing Officer position that had always held some allure, so I had visions that with the Personnel Technician position under my belt it would pave the way to the Staffing Officer.

HR Links: What challenges do you see coming for those in Human Resources?

Margaret: The greatest challenge for me has been, and continues to be, responding to the many complexities in Human Resources. My esteemed colleague Dave McEachern reminded me recently that for every individual there are any number of "issues" that might be encountered. Considering that we are working with literally thousands of civil servants, each with unique problems and causes, there isn't always a typical resolve. Therefore it becomes increasingly significant to interact and partner with each other - throughout the HR community - to learn from our experiences. The challenge, then, will be to tap into that historical knowledge.

HR Links: What are you most looking forward to in your new role as Human Resource Manager at TPW?

Margaret: I'm actually looking forward to work at the front end, so to speak. Developing new working relationships, working with line managers and staff. Really, the unknown is quite exciting!

HR Links: What will you miss the most at the Public Service Commission?

Margaret: The comfort level I have with my colleagues - knowing my resources and having the benefit of group discussion. (We joke that all of that will change now and I'll become an adversary!) Truthfully, we share a lot of memories, so I'm sure I'll have some separation anxiety. For sure, I'll miss my newest co-workers in Strategic Services - they bring out my ability to laugh at myself.

HR Links: What was the most memorable moment for you with the Public Service Commission?

Margaret: There have been too many memorable events and some that are recalled by others! However I do credit the Public Service Commission for being instrumental in my career advancement and educational support. Thanks to the Public Service Commission, I've achieved long-standing personal and professional goals - and, by the way, I had the pleasure of working as a Staffing Officer in two secondment opportunities. But, it's the friendships I've developed that are most memorable.

HR Links: Margaret, you will be missed at One Government Place, we wish you well in your new role!

###

Upcoming IPMA Events

by Allison Chubbs, Programs Director

- **March 23 - Career Planning Workshop** by Kelcy Benedict, Senior Consultant CGI and certified in Barbara Moses Career Planning and Career Coaching and Franklin Covey, 7 Habits of Highly Effective People 8AM - 12:30 PM Art Gallery of NS for more info contact Shelley Stone 424-3709.
- **April 20 - Succession Planning and Management** by Jeff Young, Professor, Department of Business and Tourism, Mt. St. Vincent University 8:00 - 10:30 AM
- **May 18 - Executive Coaching** by Shaun Newsome, Industrial Psychologist 8:00 - 10:30 AM

###



**Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Greater Halifax**

Bowl for Kids Sake

Can you remember someone in your life who always had a kind word and a generous heart? This is the gift a mentor gives to a child.

Big Brothers Big Sisters matches qualified volunteers with children in one-to-one friendships.

Together they discover how everyday moments are full of magic!

There will certainly be magic at the **Fairlanes Bowling Centre** in the Halifax Shopping Centre on Saturday April 2, 2005 when a team from the Public Service Commission consisting of world renown bowlers the likes of whom you have never seen bowl all in one location before: **Jane Allt, Dawn Hann, Mike MacDonald, Debora Clements, Gord Adams, Rick Nurse, Minister Carolyn Bolivar-Getson and Candy Palmater.**

Be afraid, be very afraid. Everyone is welcome to join the throngs cheering on this amazing team. If you would like to make a donation to this very worthy cause please contact any one of the members of the team, tax deductible receipts will be provided by Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Last year Candy Palmater bowled as "Elvis" (see photo below) Be afraid, be very afraid.



###

PSC Strikes it's first Communications Committee

by Michelle Collins, Executive Recruitment

On January 10, 2005 the Public Service Commission Communication Committee held it's first meeting. The group's goal is "a communication environment that facilitates timely, consistent, accurate, and clear information sharing among groups within the PSC in order for PSC staff to be better able to contribute to PSC goals. This goal is applicable to our key internal audiences as well to strengthen ties to our external audiences."

The working group has divided its activities into three phases:

- Phase One is to establish really great communication within the PSC. A communication needs assessment survey is currently underway so staff can have a say about how they want communication to improve.
- Phase Two will see our communication strategy grow beyond the PSC to include our key partners and clients.

- Phase Three will give us an opportunity to assess our activities and to improve. We will also reassess our audiences to see if we need to stretch even further (eg. Across departments or outside of government)

If you have any comments, questions or concerns, members of the PSC Communication Committee want to hear from you. That's the only way we can improve the way we communicate - by listening and addressing your concerns.

The team includes: Effie Anderson, Colleen Gareau, Carrie Hotton, Sheila Landry, Julie Smith, Lisa Palermo, Michelle Collins and Rebecca MacKay.

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Employees Plan eMerge Transition

by Joanne Kerrigan, eMerge Project

If you're at all familiar with Project eMerge, you're familiar with the idea of "going live" - beginning to do business in the new system. What you may not realize is that the first order of business in the new system, loading the data that all other activities will use, takes days. Loading the complete set of data is expected to take until April 11, making that date the first for all other activities in the system. Of course, between April 2 and April 11, thousands of people will be working around the province, earning pay and benefits and so on. What happens to all the activities that would normally be done in the system during that period?

This is purpose of what is known as Cutover planning, underway in a series of meetings between March 7 and 16. The project team is working with employees to create the checklist for decommissioning HRMS and commissioning SAP, including contingencies. A big part of this

is planning the temporary procedures that will ensure that the activities between April 2 and 11 are accurately and efficiently captured, outside the system until the 11th and then inside.

Seventy employees in total are mapping out the plan for tracing everything from organizational structure changes to vacation days.

In other eMerge news, training is underway, with hundreds of employees around the province now versed in the basics of SAP navigation, and moving on to Time Entry. Lunchtime demonstrations will conclude on March 23 with an overview of reporting in the system.

###

How's Work Going?

By Carrie Hotton, Evaluation and Audit

As mentioned in the February newsletter, Government is continuing with its commitment to regularly ask employees for input about our work environment. A mini-survey, asking questions about topics such as employee involvement, safety, leadership, and diversity, was released on February 21st. The response rate thus far has been encouraging - we have exceeded our target and completed surveys are still arriving! We will have a final response rate to communicate later in March.

The mini-survey was administered to a representative group of 1,500 civil servants, highway (CUPE Local 1867) and correctional workers (NSGEU Local 480). Results will be analysed in the coming months and like last year, a results report will be released and posted to the survey website this summer. For more information, please visit the website, www.gov.ns.ca/psc/survey or contact Carrie Hotton (902-424-6655 hottonca@gov.ns.ca) in the Evaluation and Audit division of the PSC. To learn more about corporate-level responses to the results, please contact Jeannette Smith at the PSC (424-7504 smithjm@gov.ns.ca).

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HR Strategy for the HR Community: Moving Forward

by Vanessa Hammock, Consultant, HR Strategies

As you all know by now, a foundational step in the development of an HR Strategy for Government's HR Community is a shared definition of this Community. Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to meet with the Executive HR Forum to discuss the feedback they received from their HR teams regarding the draft definition of the overall HR community as well as the disciplines/functional areas and levels of work within the Community.

So what happens now? Well...now that feedback has been received and Government's HR Community defined, the exciting work begins.

The entire HR Community will be sent the revised definitions, disciplines/functional areas and levels of work by e-mail over the next week. Thank you all for your feedback, the definitions are that much better now that everyone within the Community has had an opportunity to review and provide feedback. Such opportunities will be available throughout the entire HR Strategy process as Community - wide involvement is critical.

In addition to the revised definitions, information will be provided on how these definitions will be used in moving forward with the HR Strategy. For example, in Phase 1 (research, analysis and priority setting), one use will be identifying focus groups participants. For Phase 2 (identifying, developing and implementing HR Strategy initiatives), this may include identifying career paths for different levels of work within the HR Community. **Please mark Wednesday, June**

29 on your calendars, this day has been set aside as an HR Conference Day for the entire HR Community, it is on this day that Phase 2 will be confirmed and HR strategy initiatives for the Community will be discussed.

An HR Community profile will be prepared next. This profile based on employee demographics and the results of the HR Community's learning needs assessment will provide information on what the Community is like today, for example employee counts, average age and years of service, highest level of education completed, number of years in worked in HR etc. as well as what the Community might look like in the future including the impact of earliest possible retirements, desired future roles in HR, most critical HR job skills within the next 5 - 10 years etc.

This profile will certainly provide an excellent current state and possible future state assessment from a demographic and learning needs perspective but what is also needed at this point is an understanding of the HR Community's most pressing issues, challenges and priorities. In other words, what really needs to be addressed by the HR Strategy for the HR Community.

This work will be done primarily with focus groups. Before holding these focus groups which will include representation from all levels of work within the community, I will do some preliminary work with HR forums across Government (HR Managers, HRD, OH&S, HR Consultants) to determine what questions really need to be asked, what information needs to be obtained. The term "focus" is important in developing a strategy that will best meet the Community's needs now and into the future.

All of this work will be done over the next few months in order to reach a very important goal which is to identify the HR initiatives that will comprise the HR Strategy for the HR Community.

###

The Drum Beat

by Candy Palmater, Diversity Management Advisor



As we move forward with our diversity initiative, I have been spending lots of time in reflection. I've been reflecting on the work that has been done before us and the experiences of some of my peers who also work in this field.

Diversity, employment equity or affirmative action...these are some

of the names given to the work of fighting racism and exclusion. When describing experts in this work, I use terms such as “change agent” or “anti-racist activist” and will use both words throughout this article. Burn out and turnover among experts in this field is quite high and it is this aspect of the work that I have been reflecting on.

Fighting racism and exclusion is like dancing with a ghost. Quite often it is a ghost that others cannot see. In 2005, we have entered an era of extreme political correctness, so much so, that people lose track of the true issues. It seems that we spend so much time ensuring that we are using the right words, that we have become afraid of words like “racism” or “racist”. If we are to fight this disease, we must be able to name it; we must speak its name aloud.

In our current environment we try to ensure our doors have automatic buttons and we ensure that our employees don't tell racist jokes. However, in this day and age issues of racism and exclusion have become very covert. What I mean by this, is that the issues still exist but they have become far more subtle and discreet. Quite often it takes experts in the field to identify them to an organization and recommend actions for change.

The hurdles faced by these experts are common to most. One of the most difficult modern phenomena is the embracing of incompetence in the work of diversity management. As we look at organizations that have embarked on this work it

seems that incompetence in diversity work is the rule rather than the exception. For an activist to be effective they must be willing to take on the difficult issues, they must be willing to speak truth to power and they must “call out” instances of racism and exclusion when they discover them. Quite often this behaviour is looked at as being too aggressive. More often than not, people doing this work are members of designated groups. They are also identified by others as tokens in the organization, in other words they are the only one, or one of a very few, people like them in the organization. The result is that the organization fails to take responsibility for its shortcomings by simply labelling the activist/expert as over sensitive or too aggressive. An incompetent activist, however, will make an organization far more comfortable. By incompetent, I mean an activist who does not work for change, but simply does what she or he has to do to get along and fit into the organization. I don't sit in judgement on people who use this tactic. It is an act of self-preservation that usually occurs after a few instances of being deemed “difficult” to get along with. In the field of anti-racist/anti-exclusion work this phenomenon is referred to as “go along to get along”. Diversity is also one of the very few areas where a person's experience and expertise is disrespected or undermined. When an organization hires an “expert” in occupational, health and safety, they expect that person to make the work place a safe environment. When the safety expert points out something in the workplace that is unsafe, the organization does not usually say that the expert is over sensitive; they do not question the expert's expertise. In the work of diversity, however, this is a common occurrence. When the diversity expert points out something in the workplace that is racist or exclusionary, the expert is often questioned and ultimately dismissed. After a number of instances of this the expert finds themselves isolated and often targeted. Resulting in the expert leaving their job or “going along to get along”. As time passes, if the organization is accused of failing in the area of diversity management, by an outside party, the organization will place the blame for that failure on the incompetence of the diversity expert. Creating a “no win” situation for the expert.

The skill required to be an effective and successful diversity expert is two fold. The expert must be an expert in their field, but they

must also possess great powers of strategy to be able to protect themselves while getting their work done. Much of the strategic work of a diversity expert is not in dealing with those opposed to the initiative but in “managing” the liberal thinkers who verbally support the notion of diversity but are uncomfortable with the conflict that must occur for change to happen.

Ultimately then, an organization’s success in the area of diversity does not depend on the diversity expert, but on the willingness of the rest of the organization to try to “see the ghost”. An organization that is serious about the work of diversity management must be prepared to take responsibility for the problems that already exist and be purposeful about fixing those problems. An organization must not be defensive about the issues that are identified, but instead must be mobilized and proactive in fixing them. An organization must embrace the work of those who are tasked with identifying these problems and provide them with the support they need to get their work done...especially when that support results in conflict within the organization.

When I graduated from law school the Director of Personnel Services at Dalhousie University, Mike Roughneed (my former boss) gave me a card which stated: “Those who hear not the music, think the dancers mad.” I have framed that card and have it in my office. I was moved by the simplicity of the statement and by how clearly it identified the situation that all change agents face.

As we move forward as a government, and more particularly as a community of HR professionals, my wish for us in the area of diversity is that we, at the very least, “hear the music”.

Now for the **Dear Candy** section of my column:

Dear Candy:

I hear that Charlie MacDonald has just come on board. I don’t get why there are two of you. What do each of you do?

Yours truly,
Whose on First

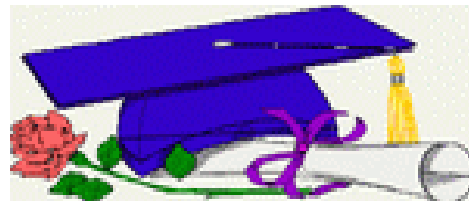
Dear Whose on First,

Charlie and I have very different roles as defined in the following way. Charlie is a **Diversity Management Consultant** who has accepted a permanent position with the PSC and will be doing the operational work for diversity management into the future. I am a **Diversity Management Advisor** who is with the PSC on a one to two year secondment from the Office of Aboriginal Affairs. My role is to provide some expertise to the deputies and senior management with regard to Diversity Management in an effort to prepare them for the requirements that lay before them in this area. I hope this clears things up for you.

Yours truly,
Candy

(Please send your confidential questions to palmatcj@gov.ns.ca or leave a voicemail at 424-8625)

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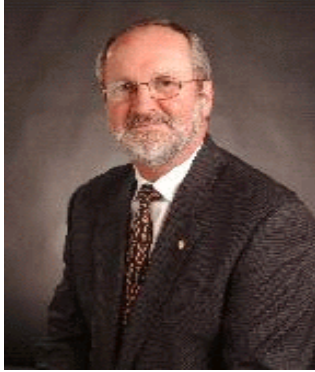


Congratula

tions to those in our HR Community who have recently completed the **Leadership Development Program** and graduated on Wednesday March 9, 2005. Graduates include:

- ★ Martha Coburn, Public Service Commission
- ★ Candy Palmater, Public Service Commission
- ★ Sharalyn Young, Transportation and Public Works

###



A Word or Two

by Rick Nurse, Public Service Commissioner

STAY FIT TO LEAD

Leadership is not a matter of rank or position, it is an attitude or frame of mind. We all lead at some point in our work day and at other points we follow. This month I offer a few words about the importance of keeping fit as you consider the roles you play as a leader (or as a public servant in any role).

On the question of “being fit” I want you to think about 2 things:

- 1) What does being “fit to lead” really mean and
- 2) How does one get and stay fit to lead.

To begin with, it is perhaps not always something we think about but, physical fitness is a key ingredient to leadership - and shouldn't be taken lightly!!

Leadership is hard and challenging and sometimes stressful, if we are to rise to the challenge of leadership, we'll need stamina. Stamina, to cope with the sprints or dashes required for day-to-day problem-solving, issues management and for the marathon of longer term goal-setting and achievement. We need to have an understanding of what causes, and how to manage some of the stress that we face.

It is important to be emotionally and spiritually fit. You need to know what your values and beliefs are, and they also have to be exercised on a regular basis as part of your Leadership Behaviour.

Before you can do that, however, you have to have given thought to what your core personal values and beliefs are, and to how they influence your leadership behaviour. It is important to develop and maintain certain skills and knowledge to remain fit to lead. Otherwise, like the **boiled frog** (some of us were reminded of by

Dr. Linda Duxbury, when she spoke at a government sponsored seminar on the workforce and work life) who, because things changed around him/or her slowly, insidiously and unnoticed, stayed in the “water”, boiled and died.

From the point of view of leadership fitness, failure to know and to exercise your values and beliefs will amount to “boiling from the inside out.” Without exercising good leadership, your beliefs and values and ethics may slip - just a little - and just a little more - , so that, not having exercised them, you also fail to notice that your fitness level has gone down and that you need to do something.

To remain “fit to lead” I urge you to be mindful of your physical, emotional, and spiritual (ethical) fitness levels as you continue to pursue your career in the public service.

Just as you will strive to contribute to the mission of your organization, it is important to have a personal mission. Ask yourself these questions: What motivates you? What do you measure your leadership performance against? Ask yourself - Do I engage in professional, ethical, moral fitness behaviours purposefully, or, does laziness, fear, self-interest, or old injuries (from earlier attempts to maintain your fitness level) get in the way? If so, what new beliefs and values are you considering and is it time to identify a “personal trainer” (more commonly called a mentor or coach).

Ask yourself frequently, am I fit to lead? Am I engaging in the right exercises (behaviour) to remain fit to lead? If you are fit to lead, you will be fit to follow - and, in time, others will follow your example and will follow in your footsteps!

Stay fit.

###

“Somewhere out in this audience may even be someone who will one day follow in my footsteps, and preside over the White House as the President's spouse. I wish him well!”

- Barbara Bush in remarks that she made at Wellesley College Commencement, June 1, 1990