

## William Leiss, O.C., Ph.D., FRSC

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William Leiss is a Fellow and Past-President (1999-2001) of the Royal Society of Canada and holds the NSERC/SSHRC Research Chair in Risk Communication and Public Policy in the Faculty of Management, University of Calgary. This five-year chair program, with total funding of \$1.25 million, is part of the MOTC (Management of Technological Change) strategic grants program; a consortium of Alberta-based industrial sponsors from the chemicals and petroleum sectors has provided one-half of the chair funding.

From 1994 to 1999 he held the Eco-Research Chair in Environmental Policy at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, where he is also Professor in the School of Policy Studies. The five-year Eco-Research Chair program was funded at a total of \$1.3 million by the Tri-Council Secretariat (using funds from Environment Canada) and Imperial Oil Ltd. His earlier positions were in political science (Regina, York), sociology (Toronto), environmental studies (York), and communication (Simon Fraser). At Simon Fraser he was also Vice President, Research.

He was the founding Chair of the Committee on Expert Panels of the Royal Society of Canada, established in November 1995. This Committee is charged with developing in Canada a consistent and credible procedure for the conduct of expert panel processes, which are used to provide definitive judgements on the state of scientific knowledge relative to issues in the management of health and environmental risks.

He is author, collaborator or editor of twelve books and numerous articles and reports. His most recent book, *In the Chamber of Risks: Understanding Risk Controversies*, was published by McGill-Queen's University Press in November 2001; it includes risk management case studies of genetically-modified foods, radio-frequency fields, pulp mill effluent, MMT, genetic engineering, voluntary initiatives, and CEPA.

Two earlier volumes on risk themes are *Mad Cows and Mother's Milk: The Perils of Poor Risk Communication* (co-authored with Douglas Powell, 1997) and *Risk and Responsibility*, 1994 (both from McGill-Queen's University Press). They contain detailed case studies of controversies over environmental and health risks in Canada and elsewhere, including:

pesticides, electric and magnetic fields, food risks ("mad cow" disease, "hamburger disease"), chemicals (dioxins, PCBs), silicon breast implants, agricultural biotechnology, and bovine growth hormone. Earlier books include *The Domination of Nature* (1972), *The Limits to Satisfaction* (1976), *Social Communication in Advertising* (1986), *C. B. Macpherson* (1988), and *Under Technology's Thumb* (1990), all of which are currently in print.

Over a period of fifteen years he has worked extensively in a consulting capacity with industry and with Canadian federal and provincial government departments in the area of risk communication, risk management, public consultation, and multi-stakeholder consensus-building processes. He has been an advisor on issues dealing with pesticides, toxic chemicals (chlorine, dioxins, and others), tobacco, prescription drugs, electric & magnetic fields, genetic engineering, and others.

He was a member of the Senior Advisory Panel for the Walkerton Inquiry and in 2000 was Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation for Canadian Blood Services.

He designed a web-based public information resource for endocrine disruptor issues, at <http://www.emcom.ca>, and prepares regular web-essays on a variety of topics, including:

1. "Two Stinking Cows – and the way forward for Canada," January 2004:  
<http://www.leiss.ca/articles/134>
2. "Smart Regulation and Risk Management," November 2003, prepared for the Privy Council Office, Government of Canada: <http://www.leiss.ca/articles/137>
3. "The Case for Mandatory Labeling of GM Foods," November 2003, prepared for the Consumers' Association of Canada: <http://www.leiss.ca/articles/129>
4. "The Risk-based Approach to Long-term Management of High-level Nuclear Waste in Canada," October 2003, prepared for the Nuclear Waste Management Organization:  
[http://www.nwmo.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.asp?DocID=279,206,199,20,1,Documents&MediaID=860&Filename=15\\_Comments\\_Leiss.pdf](http://www.nwmo.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.asp?DocID=279,206,199,20,1,Documents&MediaID=860&Filename=15_Comments_Leiss.pdf)
5. "BSE Risk in Canada: Finally, the penny drops," July 2003:  
<http://www.leiss.ca/articles/135>
6. "West Nile Virus," <http://www.leiss.ca/chronicles/122>, March 2003
7. "Elementary, my dear Watson," <http://www.leiss.ca/chronicles/88>, February 2003
8. "Mr. Bush's Panopticon," <http://www.leiss.ca/chronicles/89>, February 2003
9. "Higher life-forms before the law," <http://www.leiss.ca/chronicles/90>, February 2003
10. "The Idea of Risk and its Relevance to Genomics," <http://www.leiss.ca/articles/97>, February 2003

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