Shirley lives in Woodlawn, Ontario (part of the amalgamated City of Ottawa) on a farm that has been in the family since 1842 and where she and her family run a cash crop business.

Shirley attended Algonquin College where she trained in Information Technology. This led to her joining the Information Technology Branch at Statistics Canada where she served a full career. Shirley retired from StatCan in 2002 with over 36 years of service. Ongoing education and training while on the job included courses in new IT techniques, project management, and risk analysis. In addition to managing an IT team as an Assistant Director, Shirley also contributed as a technical writer, developing a threat and risk assessment process for the department's IT systems.

Shirley has always had an interest in Rural Affairs and, shortly after West Carleton was amalgamated into the City of Ottawa she worked on two Rural Summits and was a member of the Rural Issues Advisory Committee (RIAC). Unfortunately, the Rural Summits failed to deliver the voice promised to rural Ottawa and RIAC was cancelled by the City. This led, in part, to her involvement in activist groups interested in better government and the protection of private property rights as well as being engaged in the political process at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels.

She is currently president of the Ottawa-Carleton Landowners Association and a governor on the executive of the Ontario Landowners Association where she continues to work to promote the rights of all citizens to use, enjoy, and profit from their property.