Changing Labour Markets, New Challenges

Friday, June 13, 2003 – Major social, economic and demographic changes in recent years have had an impact on Canada's labour market and promise to alter its structure further in future. Some of these changes are welcome, some accentuate inequality or create worrying shortages of skills and experience.

Some examples:

Globalization – Free trade and higher mobility of capital, highly-skilled workers, highly-skilled jobs, and corporations themselves, have boosted the importance of competitiveness and workplace practices. Globalization has increased opportunities for high-skilled, high paid work, but it has also increased wage inequality between lower and higher skilled workers.

Demographic change – Labour force growth has slowed and a retirement bulge looms. We increasingly look to immigration to meet the demand for skilled workers and to support economic growth.

Technological change – Technological change, too, increases the demand for highly skilled work relative to less skilled work. But left behind are significant numbers of workers in low-paid jobs, without representation, and with poor prospects for improving their conditions of work, despite the fact that many are highly educated.

Labour market policies need to take the implications of changes like these into account.

In ***Changing Labour Markets: Key Challenges Facing Canada***, a paper prepared for Human Resources Development Canada, CPRN President, Judith Maxwell, and Work Network Director, Ron Saunders, examine these forces of change, identify some of the labour market challenges to which they give rise and some of the questions they raise for public policy.

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