

# **Employment Relationships as the Centrepiece of a New Labour Policy Paradigm**

by  
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## **Abstract**

This paper examines changes in employment relationships in Canada during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite well-documented transformations in labour market structures and work contexts, we are only now grasping the significance of these trends for the relationships between workers and employers. Considerable debate revolves around the extent and nature of new employment relationships. Still, it is clear that fewer workers fit the historical benchmark of the post-WWII ‘standard employment model’. Consequently, the labour and employment policy framework fashioned during the post-war decades no longer meets the needs of an increasingly differentiated workforce. Furthermore, the current policy emphasis on learning and skills for innovation and productivity requires a fuller understanding of how trust, communication and other elements of employment relationships mediate human capital development. The ideal focus for the next generation of labour policy must be the workplace, which is where relationships among coworkers and between workers and management can either hinder or enable the achievement of major social and economic goals.

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## **Introduction**

The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by profound industrial, labour market and workplace restructuring. Just as the structures in which economic activity occur have been transformed, so too have the underlying relationships of work. Yet changes in employment relationships have received far less attention by researchers or policy makers. While there is much evidence of transformations in labour market structures and work contexts – the expansion of service industries, the growth of knowledge-based occupations, the rise of non-standard jobs – we are only now grasping the significance of these changes for the relationships between workers and employers. It is at this micro level that significant future policy challenges are found.

While considerable debate revolves around the extent and nature of these changes, and whether they constitute a new employment paradigm (e.g., Gilles 2000; Verma and Chaykowski 1999; Cappelli et al. 1997; Freeman and Rogers 1999), it is clear that fewer and fewer workers fit the historical benchmark of the ‘standard employment model’ that emerged in the decades following World War II. Thus, the labour and employment policy framework fashioned during the post-war decades no longer meets the needs of an increasingly differentiated workforce. Furthermore, given the current policy emphasis on learning and skills for innovation and productivity, it is crucial to understand how trust, communication and other elements of employment relationships mediate human capital development.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the key trends, features and impacts of employment relationships in Canada over the past several decades. I suggest that late 20<sup>th</sup> century configurations of employment relationships have significant intended and unintended consequences for workers, employers, unions and other labour market actors. I argue that there is a pressing need for a new policy paradigm to respond to the consequences of current work structures and relations. The ideal focus for the next generation of labour policy must be the workplace, which is where relationships among coworkers and between workers and management can either hinder or enable the achievement of major social and economic goals.

## **Employment Relationships Recast**

Labour market and organizational transformations have recast the underlying relationships of work. Employment relationships embodying the rights, obligations, expectations and values that shape the interactions among coworkers, between employees and an employer, and between the self-employed and their clients. However, neither of the major perspectives on employment relationships – industrial relations and law – fully captures the fundamental changes occurring in the social and economic norms that govern labour market transactions (Lowe et. al. 1999).

Industrial relations researchers distinguish labour relations, on one hand, and employment relations, on the other hand (Huiskamp 1995; Godard 1997). Employment relations are between employers and individual employees; labour relations occur between employers and unions and, thus, are institutional relations. Increasingly, the concept of employment relations has been expanded to include the regulation of jobs through the institutions of union management relations and, within workplaces, human resource management policies and practices (Bamber and Landsbury 1998; Gilles 2000). Research on human resource management (HRM) suggests that new forms of work organization – quality circles, work teams, high performance workplaces, lean production – directly affect workers’ and managers’ expectations of what constitutes acceptable effort and, as such, require new forms of employment relations (Verma and Chaykowski 1999; OECD 1999). Two major policy issues for the future, then, are unions’ strategic adaptations to new forms of employment and work organization (often couched in terms of “survival”), and the extent to which innovations in HRM provide alternative forms of “voice” for workers (e.g., Freeman and Rogers 1999).

However, the industrial relations perspective offers a narrow view of how third parties shape the form and content of employment relationships. This research looks mainly at the unionized workforce, understating the forms of collective representation available to employees. Findings from the *CPRN-Ekos Changing Employment Relationships Survey* (Lowe and Schellenberg 2001, p. 28) show that while 32 per cent of employees are unionized, another 16 per cent are not union members but do have some collective representation through membership in either professional or staff associations. We can expect these alternatives to unions to grow in a knowledge-based economy, making the role or effectiveness of staff and professional associations a future research priority (e.g., Taras 1997). It seems clear that these organizations contribute to formalized employment relationships, namely through written contracts that specify the terms and conditions of employment.

For legal analysts, central issues in employment relationships include rights, entitlements, responsibilities and control over work. A key issue is “who is the employer?” This reflects the proliferation of work arrangements, particularly the diverse forms of non-standard employment relationships, and the difficulty of identifying who is an employee (England 1987; Fudge and Vosko forthcoming). Legislation and regulations governing employment standards, collective bargaining, health and safety, and workers’ compensation were designed for the traditional ‘standard’ job. Thus, legal reform must be grounded in a thorough understanding of the diversity of employment relationships within the non-standard category.

Changes in employment relationships highlight tensions around some broad legal principles. For example, the evolving conflicts of interest between employers and employees lead to arguments for a legal framework that facilitates fair and balanced negotiations (Edwards 1993; Sims et al. 1995; Muckenburger 1996). For public policy, this juxtaposes a legal infrastructure based on broad societal principles against one that assumes that the rights of employers are paramount (Dannin 1997). As well, discussion of directions for legal reform often are based on competing normative assumptions: that

law and policy ought to encourage the diffusion of sound human resource management practices (Beaumont 1995); that employment growth as an economic goal should guide employment regulation (Lyon-Caen 1996); that equal protection should be extended to non-standard workers (England 1987); and that competitive markets are only possible in the absence of government regulations (Gwartney and Lawson 1997). Given these competing claims, consensus on policy directions will be difficult to achieve.

In Canada, discussions of employment and labour law frameworks appropriate for today's employment relationships have lacked solid information on the contractual nature of these relationships. To begin to fill this gap, CPRN examined the nature of employment contracts in a 2000 national survey (Lowe and Schellenberg 2001, pp. 21-30). This study found that about 60 per cent of all employees in Canada have a written employment contract that defines the conditions and requirements of their job. Between 74 per cent and 82 per cent of such contracts spell out job responsibilities, hours of work, terms for separation, while 66 per cent specify methods of performance evaluation. While all unionized workers have a written contract, employment terms and conditions are less formalized among non-unionized workers. Among all non-union employees, more than one in four have only a verbal agreement with their employer, yet we know little about the implications of less formal employment contracts for workers and employers. Also of policy interests, despite employers' preference for more flexible and therefore less regulated labour, two-thirds of temporary workers reported having written employment contracts. Thus, employers (or temporary agencies) legally define the contingent nature of employment. Formalized employment contracts also align with employers' productivity goals, given that these are more likely than verbal agreements to lay out methods for evaluating job performance. In short, there are considerable gaps in our understanding of the role of other third parties besides unions or the contractual arrangements linking buyers and sellers of labour.

The public policy framework that supports employers and workers, such as Employment Insurance, the Canada/Quebec Pension Plans, Worker's Compensation, collective bargaining and labour law, and employment standards are based on outdated assumptions about the kinds of employment relations that characterize the labour market. Current discussions of employment changes are often set against the historical benchmark of the 'standard employment model' (a full-time, continuous job located with one employer on their premises) that emerged in the decades following World War II. The standard job was embedded in what is labelled the 'Fordist' paradigm of technology-intensive mass production within large bureaucracies. This describes a male work world, in which workers provided adequate effort and labour peace in return for a family wage and job security.

The stability, predictability and universalism of the 'standard job' no longer describe the dominant work experience (Cappelli et al 1997; Verma and Chaykowski 1999). By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Fordism had given way to a globalized, post-industrial economy built around services. Employment relationships had become more diverse, individualized, deregulated, decentralized, tenuous and transitory. Two trends exemplify these changes: the rise of 'non-standard' work in the labour market; and new 'rules' of

employment within the large organizations that once were the providers of ‘standard’ jobs. The trends have redefined the social-psychological foundations of work relations, with profound implications for income support, education, training and other public goods.

### **Non-standard Work: Blurring the Structural Boundaries**

Most employed Canadians still have a full-time, year-round, continuing paid job. However, what has changed is the traditional 9-5 schedule during weekdays, given that one-half of standard jobs now require shift or weekend work (Lipsett and Reesor 1998). In contrast, the share of the employed population (ages 15-64) in *nonstandard work* arrangements – part-time, temporary, own-account self-employed, and multiple jobs (not counting overlaps) – rose from 28 to 33 percent between in 1989 and 1998 (Gunderson and Riddell 2000, p. 22).

The boundaries between discrete labour market locations, as measured by Statistics Canada, have become blurred. For example, freelancers, consultants and contract workers now comprise over 10 per cent of total employment. While the Labour Force Survey counts these individuals as self employed (own-account), the 2000 *CPRN-Ekos Changing Employment Relationships Survey*<sup>1</sup> (Lowe and Schellenberg 2001, p. 15) suggests that as many as 12 percent of this group may be disguised employees, based on ‘ownership’ of tools and equipment and ‘control’ over their tasks and working conditions. While the ownership of tools or property has been a key criterion of self-employment throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g., Revenue Canada 1998), it is of diminishing relevance in a knowledge-based economy that provides returns to human capital and other forms of intangible assets.

Temporary employment is not new in Canada, being an historical feature of resource-based industries. What is new is the growth rate of temporary employment and its prevalence across a growing range of industries and occupations.<sup>2</sup> In 2000, 13 percent of the workforce was in temporary positions, up from 11 percent in 1997 (Statistics Canada 2001). Indeed, this is the fastest-growing form of non-standard work. Yet, ambiguities surround the definition and measurement of temporary employment, mainly due to the expansion of temporary help agencies (Vosko 2000). Many temporary agency workers consider themselves to be permanent, by virtue of an on-going relationship with a single agency. Consequently, according to the 2000 CPRN-Ekos survey, the Labour Force Survey likely underestimates the incidence of temps by 4.5 percentage points (Lowe and Schellenberg 2001, p. 12).

At the same time, the meaning of ‘permanent’ employment has been recalibrated by on-going workplace restructuring. During the 1990s, many employers sent a clear message that a lifetime job is a relic of the past. Employees were instead encouraged to continually

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<sup>1</sup> This was a nationally representative survey of 2500 employed and self-employed individuals.

<sup>2</sup> A job is considered to be ‘temporary’ if it has a specific end-date.

hone their 'employability skills' as insurance against disruptive changes in the environment or corporate strategy (Lowe 2000).

### **Freeing Work from Time and Space Constraints**

The standard employment relationship assumed that work would be performed on the employer's premises, under the watchful eye of a 'boss.' This separation of the workplace from the household was a hallmark of 20<sup>th</sup> century industrialization. But this historical trend is being reversed by information and communication technology, which enables work to be decentralized and performed continuously, freed from the confines of a particular place or time (Betcherman and Chaykowski 1996).

Telework, telecommuting or other kinds of virtual or decentralized work entail working away from a central workplace for all or part of the workweek. Telework and homebased work reflect a looser geographic and physical basis for employment relationships. However, current data can identify (often imprecisely; see Qvortrup 1998) only three categories: individuals operating home-based businesses, which would include just over half of the own-account self-employed; employees who are permitted by their employer through flexible work arrangements to do some of their formally scheduled work at home; and employees who informally do work at home as a way of keeping up with their workload. Not only may there be other categories but, within each, more research is needed on the resulting changes in individuals' work relationships.

For example, families and households are integral business resources for Canada's self-employed, providing human, financial and social capital (Lowe and Schellenberg 2001, pp. 16-19). Among self-employed individuals, one in four access medical and dental benefits through spousal benefit plans. As a policy gap, even more important is that 55 per cent of the self-employed have no supplementary medical/dental coverage, and the vast majority lack pensions, sick leave protection or paid maternity leave – all of which puts added social, psychological and economic strains on families. Two-thirds have a home-based business. More than one in five rely on family members as employees or business partners. Furthermore, about one in four employees do some work at home, likely as a way of coping with heavy workloads. This is one sign of the growing integration between family and personal life and work life. This has stimulated calls for more "horizontal" policy thinking so that the health, family and productivity issues related to work-life imbalances can be addressed (Duxbury and Higgins 2001).

To summarize, the shift from standard to non-standard forms of work has been illustrated in the rise of self-employment, temporary work, and decentralized work locations. Each of these work arrangements is varied and the demarcations within and between the categories are becoming less distinct.<sup>3</sup> At one level, these are structural changes in labour markets and workplaces. At a deeper level, they also signify important shifts in work relationships.

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<sup>3</sup> This is a strong rationale for using supplementary surveys on the Labour Force Survey to fully capture the features of non-standard work.

## **De-Standardized Life Courses and the Risk Society**

Just as work has taken on greater diversity as it is ‘de-standardized’, the same process has been occurring in people’s lives. A “life course” perspective offers a timely alternative to the well-established ideas of the ‘normal’, ‘standardized’, or ‘typical’ life course – ideas that are implicit in much of contemporary social policy. Crucial in this regard is the trend toward greater diversity in the timing and sequencing of life course events, and how choices and activities in the spheres of paid work, learning and family have become intertwined (Marshall et al., 2001).

Life course researchers debate whether there is more disorder in the life course now compared with 30, 50 or 70 years ago (Rindfuss et al. 1987). While we lack the historical evidence needed to settle this issue, we can draw inferences from the experiences of cohorts of young workers in the 1980s and 1990s. Their life course patterns are defined by multiple and overlapping roles, a dynamic integration of work/family/learning, and non-linear careers.

The crucial point is that we can no longer assume that most people follow a ‘standard’ life course and to experience common transitions at similar times. Policy makers now must take into account how an individual’s unique life course trajectory may influence her or his work needs, expectations, and behavior at different stages along the way. Consider the situation of older (50 +) workers who started their paid work careers later in life, or who have young dependent children in a second marriage, or experienced transitions in and out of the labour market, or are not full-time ‘standard’ employees. We can’t assume that a traditional, linear model of retirement will be suited to the needs of these individuals.

One conclusion that can be drawn from a life course perspective is that, as more and more individuals depart from assumed ‘normal’ trajectories or transitions, various labour market and social policies lose their effectiveness. As responsibility increasingly shifts to the individual, the personal costs associated with departures from the norm increase, creating a ‘risk society’ (Beck 1992). This also adds complexity to forms and variations of employment relationships.

## **Workplace Contexts and Relationships Enable Learning**

The notion of a risk society can be applied to human capital. Economic and social policy has converged around the importance of human capital development. This coincides in Canada with an off-loading of responsibility for learning away from the state and employers to the individual. In the 1990s, governments and employers sent strong signals to individuals that they must acquire employability skills. This is the new, individualized social safety net that emphasized greater individual responsibility (Torjman 2000).

One unintended consequence of the employability skills discourse has been an erosion of employee commitment and trust, especially in large organizations wracked by downsizing and restructuring. One of the few sources of trend data on employee commitment, covering the period from 1991 and 2001, suggests that Canadian employees became less committed (Duxbury and Higgins 2001, p. 20). Another study that examine commitment found that workers in sectors that had undergone the extensive restructuring – such as health care – had the lowest levels of commitment to their employer in 2000 (Lowe and Schellenberg 2001, p. 41). This came at a time when leading human resource management experts (Drucker, 1999; Pfeffer, 1998; Ulrich 1997) urged firms to treat knowledge workers as assets, not costs, and to create work environments that support continuous learning. Huge investments in information technology (IT) raise the bar further, as working and learning converge in IT-intensive organizations.

Yet we know little about how work environments and relationships enable organizational learning. Many of the skills required in a knowledge-based economy depend more on analytical and social skills than on traditional technical competencies. The federal government's Expert Panel on Skills (2000) found no evidence of a generalized shortage of technical skills in the five sectors it examined. It did identify, however, a pressing need for individuals who combine technical skills with skills in management, communication, teamwork, thinking, problem-solving, as well as positive work attitudes and behaviour. Management, communication, teamwork and communication all depend on good quality interpersonal relations throughout an organization. The demand for these 'soft' skills can be expected to grow as the information technology revolution transforms business and government, creating even more complex human and social problems.

Two other features of employment relationships are relevant for learning and skills development. The first is access to training. The most educated and skilled workers, often located in large public and private sector organizations, get the greatest opportunities for job-related training (Betcherman et al. 1998). However, the non-standard work trends noted above raise concerns about future barriers to training for groups of workers who lack the resources often associated with a standard employment contract in a large organization.

Second, learning is an active process that requires a longer-term perspective on human capital investment (Rubenson and Schuetze 2000). For organizations to enable learning, it is essential that human resource management practices, job design, culture, leadership, and the overall business strategy support collaborative forms of work. There also needs to be a sense of security, otherwise workers will take an individualized approach to learning, maximizing benefits for themselves, and giving lower priority to engaging in the collective aspects of knowledge sharing and use within their current work setting. As research on high-performance work systems suggests, it is the regular interaction of workers – such as occurs in self-managed teams – that results in more creativity (Yeatts and Hyten 1998). Here, too, employment relationships are a critical factor in creating organizational innovation.

Supporting learning also means supporting employees in finding a better work-life balance. Work-life conflict has increased markedly among Canadian workers over the

past ten years. According to research by Duxbury and Higgins (2001), this conflict shows up as increased workload and hours of work, more stress, declining physical and mental health, increased absenteeism, lower job satisfaction, and lower commitment to employers. This overall intensification of work reflects an escalation of expectations and increased insecurity – in other words, an implicit rewriting of the employment contract (Burchell et al. 2002). It is not surprising, then, that time scarcity is the main barrier to pursuing further education and training. Clearly, this broad problem requires urgent attention by employers and government.

### **The Social and Psychological Dimensions of Employment Relationships**

Employment relationships matter for individuals and employers. Strong employment relationships positively influence job satisfaction, skill use and development, workplace morale, and worker absenteeism. Strong employment relationships contribute to the quality of work life and the performance of the organization. What's more, the usual structural characteristics used to identify 'good' and 'bad jobs' – permanent or temporary status, employee or self-employed, full- or part-time hours, firm size, and industry – do not help to explain variations in these outcomes. This highlights the importance of employment relationships in defining a good job.

Essentially, there are four key social-psychological dimensions of employment relationships: trust, commitment, influence and communication. This multi-disciplinary perspective on the 'soft' side of workplaces is rooted in an extensive review of management studies (e.g., Kramer and Tyler 1996), organizational behaviour (e.g., Mowday et al., 1982), sociology of work (e.g., Lincoln and Kallberg 1990), human resource management (e.g., Betcherman et al. 1994) and industrial relations (e.g., Freeman and Rogers 1999) research. The 2000 *CPRN-Ekos Changing Employment Relationships Survey* found that the strength of these four dimensions of an individual's employment relationships depends on their work environment (Lowe and Schellenberg 2001). Simply stated, a healthy and supportive work environment that provides adequate resources to do the job well are the crucial factors in creating robust employment relationships.

More specifically, individuals with strong employment relationships tend to have helpful and friendly coworkers, interesting work, assess their workplace as both healthy and safe, are supported in balancing work with their personal life, and have reasonable job demands. High levels of employee trust and commitment, in particular, are linked to perceptions that their employer cares about them. Furthermore, while actual pay is associated only with employee influence, positive perceptions of pay (which no doubt reflect workers' views about fair treatment by their employer) are linked to all four dimensions of employment relationships. Also important, receiving the training, equipment and information needed to do one's job well strengthens employment relations. Perhaps this reinforces to workers their employer's commitment to them, generating reciprocity.

Organizational change can damage these fragile workplace relations. Indeed, downsizing and restructuring are associated with reduced levels of trust, commitment, communications and worker influence. Through the 1990s, downsizing and restructuring has been most evident in large, public sector organizations, where a large proportion of unionized workers are employed. Hence, these workers have been disproportionately affected by these changes. Even as late as 2000, when the CPRN-Ekos survey was conducted, 9 percent of respondents said their job had been directly affected by downsizing in the past year and another 19 percent had been affected by organizational restructuring (CPRN 2000). These people still had jobs in the same organization, suggesting that we need to focus more closely on the impacts of working in contexts where change has become ‘a way of life.’

Union membership is associated with weaker employment relationships on all dimensions. This may reflect higher expectations and awareness among union members of relations with their employer. Unions also may add transparency to the conflicts of interest between workers and employers. But perhaps the most likely explanation is that this is the lingering effect of budget cuts, restructuring and downsizing in the 1990s in the public sector, where half of all union members work (Statistics Canada 2000, p. 44)

In short, employment relationships are embedded in work contexts. This point is underscored by the absence of variation in these relationships by age, gender, education, and other personal characteristics. When compared to the self-employed, the employees responding to the CPERN-Ekos survey generally had weaker employment relationships. Indeed, self-employed workers have relatively strong relationships with their clients. But this comes at a price, given that fewer self-employed individuals have access to the range of benefits available to many employees.

This multi-dimensional view of employment relationships offers a new way of thinking about what constitutes a ‘good job’. In fact, ‘standard’ jobs are not necessarily the ones with the highest levels of trust, commitment, influence and communication. Thus, employment relationships are not a function of industries or occupations but are, rather, of human resource management practices and work organization – all of which are within the purview of management decisions.

Individual workers cannot do much to improve their employment relations, other than quit or seek collective representation, which may have mixed effects. Cultivating stronger employment relationships could have a direct impact on absenteeism, morale, and skill use – important outcomes that affect organizational performance. Employment relationships require balance and reciprocity if there are to be mutual gains. Employers demonstrate that their employees are valued through the quality of the work environment they create. Managers at all levels, but especially those at the front line, need to understand this basic point.

For unions, this view of employment relationships poses major challenges. Many unions consider ‘new’ human resource management practices aimed at cultivating employee trust, commitment, and involvement as a threat. How do unions reconcile this stance with evidence that employees stand to benefit, through improved quality of work life, from

stronger trust and commitment in their employment relationships? Clearly, the future of unions partly depends on creative responses to employment relationship issues.

Will unions have competition in this arena from professional and staff associations? These organizations likely will be attractive to the growing number of knowledge workers who no longer think in terms of standard careers and who value having high-trust relationships based around active communication and personal influence.

### **A New Labour Policy Paradigm**

Workplaces are the sites where big policy goals can be achieved most effectively. Innovation, productivity, skill development and learning, rights, and the quality of life are enabled or hindered by job design, work organization and human resource policies and practices. In the past, public policy has addressed workplace issues through occupational health and safety, employment standards, employment and pay equity, and labour legislation. There is no agreement on the role of policy beyond these areas. Indeed, issues such as trust, commitment, communication and employee influence fall outside North American approaches to labour market policy.

Almost by default, this places employers in the role of leading policy agents who determine outcomes important to labour market ministers across the country. Rarely is this a self-conscious role. In fact, the single greatest barrier to addressing employment relationships is that most Canadian employers do not place human resources at the centre of their business strategy. According to the 1999 Workplace and Employee Survey, management in 30 percent of workplaces consider employee participation a “very important/crucial” part of their business strategy and 36 percent consider skill development as a “very important/crucial” part of their business strategy (Statistics Canada 1999). Furthermore, the decline of standard jobs among full-time employees – combined with self-employment, temporary work, and home-based work trends – leaves a growing segment of the workforce in policy limbo, included by few if any regulatory frameworks and unable to benefit from enlightened employer human resource management practices.

For governments, the key policy challenge is to design levers that can influence the transition away from the standard job, the standard life course, and the central work location. This requires either adapting existing policy frameworks or inventing new ones. Most of this will fall to the provinces, given that the vast majority of workplaces are within their jurisdiction. Still, the federal government can take a strong leadership role, particularly by engaging the stakeholders in discussions about new approaches. High on this agenda would be the question of the appropriate platform for worker rights and entitlements: should these be tied to the contract of employment (as in the case of Workers’ Compensation), to citizenship (as health care now is), or to labour market status (like QPP/CPP)? Predictably, debate will revolve around the trade-offs between labour market flexibility and employment security – a debate that could be usefully informed by recent European developments in active labour market policies that seek a balance

through the concept of 'flexicurity' (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions 1999; Klammer 2001.)

There is a pressing need for legal reforms that can address the diversity of employment relationships within both the standard and the non-standard categories. Legislation and regulations governing employment standards, collective bargaining, health and safety, and workers' compensation were designed for the traditional 'standard' job. The protections they provide are available to a declining proportion of workers, a trend that is accelerating due to the weakening of employment standards in several provinces during the past decade (Block and Roberts 2000). More broadly, progress depends on creating a new mix of policy instruments and partnerships that respond to a flexible, dynamic, individualized, 'non-standard' labour market environment. A more horizontal, integrative approach to policy development would build on the synergies between labour market issues and other social and economic policy areas. Workplaces are a major site for reaching multiple social and economic policy goals, from learning and enhanced quality of life to innovation and productivity. It is time to elevate work contexts and relations to the core of labour policy.

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