Innovation in Government Workplaces

June 8, 2001 – "The incidence of flexible job designs in the government sector is triple that reported for the private sector in Canada."

That's just one conclusion to be found in "Changing Government Workplaces", a new report from CPRN by Anil Verma and Zsuzsanna Lonti of the Centre for Industrial Relations at the University of Toronto. It speaks to the evident change underway in the public sector.

This paper is one in the series of reports completed for the Work Network's Human Resources in Government project . Project funders include the governments of Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Ontario, three federal agencies - Human Resources Development, the Public Service Commission and the Treasury Board Secretariat - and the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

The report is based on the Survey of Workplace Issues in Government (SWIG) carried out in the above jurisdictions as well as five in-depth case studies. It provides, for the first time, systematic empirical evidence on the extent of change in workplace practices in government. That evidence points to significant transformation.

The authors conclude that many of the changes in public sector workplaces are driven by external pressures such as budget constraints, public accountability pressures and shifting government priorities. These have led to adoption of such practices as performance measurement, divestiture of service functions and concentration of knowledge work, flexible job designs and a greater emphasis on training and employee involvement.

These changes, many claim, have lead to enhanced quality and productivity (though these are often difficult to measure). At the same time, the changes have lead to fewer jobs, but jobs that are better paid and that may need enhanced, or completely new, skills.

You can access or download the complete report by clicking here.

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