Two New Presentations from CPRN's Family and Work Networks

December 14, 2001 – "Changes and Challenges in the Social Policy Environment" was the name of a workshop organized recently by CPRN for Alberta Human Resources and Employment in Edmonton. Both Jane Jenson, Director of the Family Network, and Graham Lowe, Director of the Work Network, made presentations designed to help focus discussions.

In her presentation, "The Convergence of Social and Economic Policy: Changes and Challenges", Jenson describes the changes in demographics, technology and economic structure of recent decades and reminds us that such changes don't automatically lead to conclusions about policy. Choices are necessary. In fact, we are coming to understand that quality social policies are an essential component of our economic strategy. The architecture of those policies is the challenge.

Redesigning social policies here means addressing the pillars of our citizenship regime - the respective roles of markets, families, voluntary associations and governments.

Jenson argues that we are moving from a citizenship regime based on the notion of "social rights" to one based on the idea of "social investment". She compares the two and identifies the key challenges facing the new "social investment" regime. In particular, this entails the need to synchronize the demands of the present with the demands of the future, and the need to ensure, *now*, the equitable distribution of access to good jobs, income and services if future social and economic goals are to be met.

You can read or download a Powerpoint version of her remarks by clicking here.

In his presentation, "Policy Convergence in the 21st Century Workplace", Lowe reviews emerging policy challenges in the workplace in terms of: changing contexts (changing labour market, changing demographics); trends in learning and skills (the need to use skills to the maximum, the need to improve access); and, quality of life (the impact of the demands of the workplace on the rest of life).

He calls workplaces "a new policy frontier", the place where big policy goals converge - from innovation and productivity to learning, health, social equity and family relations. Such a development makes employers key policy agents.

Lowe concludes by looking at the limitations of traditional public labour market policy. He suggests that it fails to respond to contemporary changes in employment relationships and work arrangements. Building workplaces into public policy, he argues, requires renegotiating the roles of individuals, employers, governments, and other stakeholders.

You can read or download a Powerpoint version of his presentation by clicking here.

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