A New Citizenship for a New Mandate

January 25, 2001 – The country's healthy balance sheet means the time is ripe to engage Canadians in a debate over our future.

According to CPRN's President, Judith Maxwell, "It's time to create a new synergy between our social and economic policies, one that will define what it means to be a Canadian in the 21st century."

"Synergy means there is a positive interaction between social and economic policies. They reinforce each other, strengthening both the economy and the social fabric at the same time."

Mrs. Maxwell's argument is set out in her paper, ***Toward a Common Citizenship: Canada's Social and Economic Choices***, a CPRN *REFLEXION* released today.

The paper traces the roots of an earlier conception of Canadian citizenship – one that developed out of the remarkable synergy between economic and social policy in the post-war era.

That citizenship involved a balance of rights and responsibilities, as well as access to the means to play a meaningful role in contemporary society. It grew out of our history and represented a unique Canadian response to social and economic conditions.

"The past 20 years or so of economic restructuring and fiscal retrenchment have left that notion of citizenship in tatters," says Maxwell. "Today, we are in a position to redress the balance and redefine our citizenship for a post-deficit era, and in the context of global economic and technological integration."

In the process, Maxwell argues, Canadians will have to decide on where they stand on the competing demands of market and state, of integration and independence, and of the values of compassion and self-reliance.

In particular, she outlines the challenges and choices facing the country with regard to four core elements of social and economic policy:

- tax reform
- health care
- learning, and
- social transfers

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Mrs. Maxwell concludes that a "durable synergy between economic and social policies" would include the following;

- a commitment to pay down the public debt faster
- competitive corporate tax rates, made-in-Canada personal income tax rates
- rethinking the governance of the health care system and finding a way to extend universality to include home care and drugs
- the removal of barriers to equality of access to lifelong learning
- a system of income supports designed for the new economy to include;
  (a) a comprehensive system of supports for families with children, and
  (b) a good balance between social protection and incentives to work.

"A package of policies along these lines would give Canada the scope to build a common citizenship consistent with economic success," Maxwell says. "The scope to build the Canada we want."

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