Social Investment and Quality of Life: The Municipal Role

Friday, September 17, 2004 – The roots of Canada's social architecture – the ways and means our society adopts to respond to social risks, like the loss of a job, serious illness, or inadequate housing or education – lie in the immediate post war period, some fifty years ago. As much of CPRN's recent research argues, the time is ripe for redesigning that structure to reflect the enormous social and economic changes since.

Many of today's social risks – stemming from changing families, workplaces and communities – are accentuated in Canada's urban areas, whether big cities or mid-sized and smaller communities. Yet, the capacity of municipalities to respond is hampered by jurisdictional rigidities and lack of coordination among governments and bureaucracies, an inadequate tax base, and other constraints on action.

In a recent presentation to the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association Learning Symposium in Ottawa, Judith Maxwell, President of CPRN, reviews the challenges municipalities face in the 21st century and possible courses of action.

Maxwell points to the impact of the new social risks – low wages, new family responsibilities and stresses, single earner families, inadequate early childhood education and care, elder care responsibilities, among others – on the family, and especially on children. She points out that vulnerable children are to be found in all income groups and that policies and programs need to reflect that reality. She finds Canada's targeted responses compare poorly with the more systematic approaches of European countries and some U.S. states.

Maxwell concludes by examining the roles not only governments can play to improve child and family outcomes, but also the roles of neighbourhoods, communities, employers and municipalities. She draws on lessons from case studies of municipal action to list the ingredients of successful mobilization for change.

You can access or download a copy of her presentation, ***Social Investment: Makes the Difference in Quality of Life***, by clicking here

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New Director for CPRN's Health Network

Judith Maxwell, President of CPRN, is pleased to announce the appointment of Tom McIntosh as Director of the Health Network.

Tom is currently Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Regina, and Research Faculty at the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit (SPHERU), at the University. He joined the university after working as Research Coordinator for the Romanow Commission. Prior to that, Tom was a Research Fellow and Senior Policy Analyst at the Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy (SIPP), a Senior Policy Consultant for the Saskatchewan Department of Health and a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Intergovernmental Relations (IIGR) at Queen's University. He has a PhD in Political Studies from Queen's.

"Thanks to his time with the Romanow Commission, the SIPP and the IIGR, Tom brings to CPRN great policy savvy plus experience working with a wide cross-section of researchers across the country," says Maxwell. "He also boasts a considerable record of written contributions ranging from labour market policy to federalism and health care reform. We are very pleased to welcome him and his skills to our team."

Tom will take up his new post on Monday, September 20, 2004.

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