The Social Policy Agenda and Labour Force Ageing: Two Presentations

Friday, April 1st, 2005 – A vast social agenda, high expectations, and tight money – that pretty much summarizes the current social policy context. It's not surprising that the word "challenge" is so prominent in today's policy discussions.

And yet, as CPRN's Social Architecture Papers so clearly demonstrate, there is room for doing things more intelligently, more effectively, and more economically in the long run. Part of the secret lies in rebalancing responsibilities among the different sources of social well-being – the market, government, the family and the community.

That is the thrust of a recent presentation by CPRN's President, Judith Maxwell, to senior Ontario government officials. In ***Dialogue on the Social Policy Agenda***, Maxwell argues that there are opportunities to fill in gaps in the foundations of social programs, programs that can make an important contribution to both the social and economic agendas. But it is the "how" of program delivery, or the governance question, that is fundamental to achieving social policy objectives.

Maxwell also sets out the agenda for intergovernmental relations: balancing the diversity of need across Canada, balancing fiscal risks and responsibilities, managing interdependence, defining the appropriate roles for the federal government in a changing context, and breaking the accountability impasse.

Finally, she draws attention to the critical importance of place-based policies that emphasize a new relationship between the public sector and communities and families.
She underlines the importance of developing new avenues for engaging citizens in an evolving conversation about social futures.

To access or download a copy of her presentation, click here.

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Labour Force Ageing

Will labour force ageing generate widespread skill shortages?

That's the question Ron Saunders, Director of CPRN's Work Network, and Julie McMullin, Director, Workforce Aging in the New Economy Project, University of Western Ontario, address in a recent presentation to the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario.

In ***Labour Force Ageing and Skill Shortages: Myth or Reality?*** Saunders and McMullin review the demographic data and the age structures and retirement ages of different industries and occupations. They then assess the impact of workforce ageing relative to a number of other factors that affect skill shortages.

They argue ageing of the workforce is not necessarily the most important factor affecting the likelihood of skill shortages. The length of time required to train workers, the geographic mobility of workers, working conditions, and growth of the industry in question are also important determinants.

They conclude that labour force ageing is unlikely to lead to widespread shortages of crisis proportions, and there is time for markets and policies to adjust. They do acknowledge, however, that there are some "hot spots" that need attention – nursing, teaching, public administration and some skilled trades. They propose appropriate policy measures to meet these challenges.

To access or download a copy of their presentation, click here.

Coming Next Week: A new tool for measuring the quality of post-secondary education.

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