

Canada at 150: The social agenda ^[1]

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Description:

This paper is the text of the speech delivered at the Canada at 150 Conference held in Montreal on March 26-28, 2010. The country will face three main social challenges in future: Canada as productive society, Canada as a caring society and Canada as an aging society.

From a social perspective, the productive society focuses on a learning agenda and on measures to reduce poverty and assist the unemployed. Canada as caring society is concerned with early childhood development and high-quality affordable child care. The caring society should also take action on supports for informal caregivers and the reform of health care, including investment in home care. Canada as aging society must tackle pending labour shortages and shore up the retirement income system. The aging society must be concerned as well with creating accessible communities to ensure the active participation of all citizens.

For those who hear nothing but cash registers when they hear the term "social agenda," various revenue options are presented. These include tax reform, shifting spending from expensive late-stage interventions to preventive actions and tapping into markets that are not well recognized, such as the social economy.

Equally important is a discussion about the distribution of revenue to tackle the current fiscal imbalance among orders of governments. Provinces face high and rising costs related to health care. Municipalities throughout the country are assuming an increasingly significant social role.

While the voluntary and private sectors are active players in the social agenda, governments are vital to help alter the unequal distribution of income, goods and services in society. They are conveners of important national conversations. Governments are the primary vehicle for translating into action core ideas - and ideals.

Region: Canada ^[3]

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