

Canadian Social Policy Renewal and the National Child Benefit ^[1]

SIPP Scholar Series

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Source: University of Regina. Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy.

Format: Report

Publication Date: 27 Oct 2005

AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts from the report:

The 1995 Federal Budget became a catalyst for social policy reform. In an attempt to limit the fiscal deficit, the federal government reduced financing for social programs and shifted costs to provincial and territorial governments through the creation of the Canada Health and Social Transfer. This exacerbated existing financial pressures on the provincial and territorial governments and precipitated a provincial/territorial initiative to lead a process of intergovernmental collaboration to reform and renew Canadian social policy.

The resulting Social Policy Renewal initiative established a framework for intergovernmental collaboration and cooperation, established precedents for intergovernmental relations, addressed issues of federal and provincial/territorial roles and responsibilities, and defined measures for ongoing policy development. It resulted in significant developments in Canadian social policy including the National Child Benefit, the National Children's Agenda, and the Social Union Framework Agreement, and it established a context and direction for future discussions on Canadian social policy.

The Social Policy renewal initiative is of particular interest because it was a major pan-Canadian endeavour that required substantial commitment and resources by the federal and the provincial/territorial governments, and demanded a high degree of intergovernmental organization and cooperation that was unanticipated in an environment of heightened federal-provincial animosity. The Social Policy Renewal initiative raises numerous questions about the effects and implications of international economic integration, the role of governments in facilitating social and economic adjustment, and the specific structures and mechanisms that link political and bureaucratic mandates to effect policy development in the interests of common objectives. All of these matters deserve to be examined. However, this document is limited to the more focused objective of reviewing the events of the Social Policy Renewal initiative from 1995 to 1999, and documenting the intergovernmental process by which the federal and provincial governments and their bureaucracies came to develop the National Child Benefit. The information contained in this document has an intergovernmental relations perspective and is largely based on government documents and statements.

This examination of social policy development, exemplified by the National Child Benefit, demonstrates the connection between the general economic and social pressures associated with international economic integration and the particular social policy challenges and specific programmatic responses as they were expressed through the Social Policy Renewal initiative and the development of the National Child Benefit.

Region: Canada ^[3]

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