

The world we have: Toward a new social architecture ^[1]

New social architecture series

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AVAILABILITY

Report in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts from the report:

There are at least two lines of thinking about fashioning a new [social welfare] equilibrium. One is that there is an inevitable trade-off between economic development that creates jobs and provides a rising standard of living, and social development that tries to ensure equality of life chances and a level of social protection for all. As this argument goes, markets are driven by the pursuit of gain and if individuals do not retain enough of their own product because of high taxes, wealth creation will suffer, and if people are too protected by social programs, incentives to work will diminish. In this view, economic development necessarily trumps social development.

Another point of view is that the instruments of social welfare policy can help nations adapt to and prosper in the new knowledge-based economy. Those instruments can include investments not only in human capital, such as early childhood development, public education and training, but also in social capital to strengthen networks of social consensus and reduce societal inequities. Indeed, there are large economic costs attached to poverty, marginalization and inequality. From this perspective, tinkering around the edges of the current social architecture will not be enough. A new period of social innovation is needed.

This paper leans unapologetically to the perspective that Canada should aim for both rising living standards with good jobs, and the most equitable, just and inclusive society we can create together. While we may not be able to do it all, we can certainly do better, much better. The experience of other nations indicates that such a goal is not beyond our reach.

In order to get there, a wide-ranging discussion is needed & to reassess the appropriate roles and responsibilities of markets, families, states and communities in securing the social welfare of Canadians, and to forge a new, shared understanding of what we mean by social development and how we will ensure social progress in the new millennium.

This paper is the first in a new series which discusses the key challenges Canada faces and some of the promising directions for change.

This discussion paper is intended to promote a dialogue on social policy reform and in particular, to stimulate discussion about the Canada Social Transfer (CST). It is an important tool in the Council's ongoing commitment to raise awareness about the CST and add to the debate about the future of Canada's social programs.

Redrawing a blueprint for a vibrant social architecture, one that is comparable to and as innovative as what was developed in the post-war period of the last century, is both an exciting & and daunting & task.

We are pleased to submit this paper as an early first step in preparing the ground for that dialogue.

Related link: Notes for Social Architecture Introduction, Canadian Social Welfare Policy Conference, June 2005 ^[3]

Region: Canada ^[4]

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