

The great social transformation: Implications for the social role of government in Ontario ^[1]

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Excerpt: This paper was commissioned in the Spring of 2002 by the Panel on the Role of Government, chaired by Ron Daniels, Dean of the University of Toronto Law School. It was one of a number of papers designed to set the scene for the Panel's research program and consultations with the people of Ontario. It therefore provides a very broad survey of the way in which the patterns of family, work and community life of the people of Ontario have been transformed in recent decades. The new paradigms all require social investments which will generate higher rates of productivity growth in the future in early childhood services, in compensation for low-paid jobs, and in social supports for elderly and disabled people. Making low-paid work pay seems to produce a quick payback, as workers immediately do more and better work. But investments in early childhood and elder care also lead to a more efficient allocation of resources and thus greater productive capacity. The conclusion is that the social policy principles developed in the 1960s and 1970s no longer provide adequately for the needs of these citizens. However, the seeds of social policy reform have begun to emerge. The new thinking on social policy rejects the preoccupation with short-term efficiency which dominated policy development in the 1990s, and shifts the focus to social investments which generate longer range paybacks in human development and productivity growth.

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