

Toward a common citizenship: Canada's social and economic choices ^[1]

Reflexion series, issue number 4

Author: Maxwell, Judith

Source: Canadian Policy Research Networks

Format: Report

Publication Date: 25 Jan 2001

AVAILABILITY

^[2]

Full paper in pdf ^[3]

Excerpts from the highlights:

Citizenship is more than a passport. It defines who "we Canadians" are, and describes the kind of community "we" wish to become. Citizens have rights, they have responsibilities, and they need access to jobs, services, and supports. The balance among these rights and responsibilities changes over time in response to the core values of citizens, their implicit contract with the state, and the economic and political context. This Reflexion focuses on the key economic and social choices that will shape our common citizenship in coming years...

This Reflexion is designed to provoke a broader discussion so that alternatives can be considered and choices made. Part I looks back over the past 50 years, describes how the country has changed, and looks briefly at how Europeans and Americans are reshaping their notions of social protection. Part II maps the challenges and choices we face with respect to four core elements of social and economic policy - tax reform, health care, learning, and social transfers.

The Reflexion argues that our goal should be a new and durable synergy between economic and social policies:

- Federal and provincial governments have reduced their spending significantly in the 1990s, but this smaller role for government is not visible to Canadians because 18 cents of every dollar of taxes is devoted to interest on the public debt. The faster Canada pays down that debt, the more degrees of freedom we will have to set the overall levels of personal taxation and program spending in the future.

- While corporate and business income taxes must be designed to be competitive with other jurisdictions, differences in personal income tax rates and structure are sustainable over time even as economies become more integrated. Personal tax rates for middle- and high-income Canadians in 2001 will be the lowest they have been since the early 1970s.

- Canada has the combination of money, technical expertise, and management skills to deliver the kind of health care citizens want. But current patterns of access, accountability, and governance are not up to that challenge. In particular, we need to talk through ways to extend the principles of universality and accessibility to include home care and pharmaceuticals.

- Learning is fast becoming the centrepiece of citizenship rights in Canada, from early childhood to retirement. But the education system has failed to adapt to a world where lifelong learning is essential. Even worse, Canada has a learning system that actually mirrors the inequalities in the labour market - people with low incomes face greater barriers to learning than do those in higher income brackets.

- Income supports for adults without work - Employment Insurance and social assistance - are still stuck in the old industrial model. What will be the right mix of social protection and incentives to work in the future? Income supports for families with children have been adapting to the new social and economic realities since 1998, but much remains to be done to provide families with the support they need to make choices about work and caregiving.

- A further gap is created by the cuts to public services affecting middle- and upper-income groups. These Canadians are asked to contribute a large share of tax revenue while receiving a shrinking share of public services, even as their confidence in the quality of those services is in decline. This in turn erodes the common bonds among citizens.

Region: Canada ^[4]

Tags: economics ^[5]

poverty ^[6]

funding ^[7]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/01/01/toward-common-citizenship-canadas-social-and-economic>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/01/01/toward-common-citizenship-canadas-social-and-economic> [2] <https://cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=185&amp;l=en> [3] http://cprn.org/documents/19324_en.pdf [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/economics> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/poverty> [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [8] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/childrens-rights> [9] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/family-resource-programs>