

# Beyond Employment Insurance <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Format:** Speech

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## AVAILABILITY

Presentation slides in pdf <sup>[2]</sup>

Description from E-network newsletter:

Like so much else in our social policy apparatus, the federal Employment Insurance program is out of step with today's social realities.

CPRN's president, Judith Maxwell, makes this point in Beyond EI, a presentation to the House of Commons Human Resources Committee, May 2004.

Maxwell argues that today's EI program, responding as it does to the post-war risks of cyclical and seasonal unemployment, is not appropriate for the new risks of the 21st century. Those risks derive from global competition and resulting pressure on wage levels, the shift to a service economy, new technologies, and new family roles without adequate public supports.

The new risks are: a low wage economy, insecure employment relationships, growing skill requirements for good jobs, persistent unemployment that is structural, not seasonal or cyclical.

Maxwell provides evidence of the impact of these new risks: the fact that 2 million adults work for less than \$10/hour; real minimum wages are 15-25% below 1975 levels; a high dependence on charity; unmet demand for affordable housing. In short, the problem is not unemployment, but low-wage employment.

Maxwell calls for both employers and governments to change their policies to take account of these new realities and makes some suggestions.

**Tags:** poverty <sup>[3]</sup>

gender <sup>[4]</sup>

work/life balance <sup>[5]</sup>

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