Working for Low Pay

February 28, 2003 – "Get a job!" Has long been the crude prescription of the callous for the poverty of others.

While it is true that employment is the key to escaping poverty, such simplistic recipes overlook systemic barriers to full participation in the economy. The plight of the working poor is a case in point.

Almost two million adult Canadians work for less than $10 an hour – a wage that falls far short of meeting basic needs. Even if you and your spouse work full-time at that wage, you can barely support a family. And more than half such low-wage jobs are only temporary or part-time.

Surprisingly, perhaps, low-paid workers are generally well-educated. Forty per cent are high school graduates. More than a third have post-secondary degrees or diplomas. Barriers in the workplace and in the failure of public policy make it difficult for low wage workers to improve their lot.

It all adds up to a costly human tragedy and a waste of economic potential.

In ***Working for Low Pay,*** a presentation to Alberta Human Resources and Employment, CPRN's President, Judith Maxwell, explores the dimensions and consequences of low-wage work, and examines where responsibility might lie for measures designed to make work pay.

You can access or download a copy of her presentation by clicking here.

e-network e-network work e-network e-net