## To Escape the Trap: The Predicament of Vulnerable Workers

**Friday, October 8, 2004** – One in seven employed adults in Canada, two-thirds of them women, work for less than $10 an hour. Surprisingly, 38% have a post-secondary certificate. More than half a million work for less than the minimum wage. Even a household with two such earners can't earn enough to raise a family.

To make matters worse, low-wage work like this is associated with a lack of job stability and lack of access to benefits and training. Almost half those who were low-paid in 1996 remained in that situation five years later. Low-wage work is a trap.

The workers and their families aren't the only ones to pay a price. Low wages and poor job quality mean a lower commitment to the job, higher turnover, absenteeism and low productivity, all of which cost the economy dearly.

Exploring the public policies and workplace practices that could put an end to the low-wage trap and the predicament of vulnerable workers is the subject of a recent presentation by Ron Saunders, Director of CPRN's Work Network, to Opportunities Waterloo Region in Ontario.

Saunders summarizes the challenges – better wages, and better access to training, benefits and affordable, quality childcare, among others. He outlines the components of the Work Network's vulnerable workers research project and a number of policy options available to both the public and private sectors that need investigation.

You can access or download a copy of his presentation, ***Low Wage Work: Issues and Policy Options***, by clicking here.

## Two Important Conferences of Interest

CPRN will be participating in two upcoming conferences of interest to our subscribers.

***Health, Work and Wellness Conference 2004*** features an international line-up of presenters offering practical strategies for improving the productivity, competitiveness and well-being of organizations. Judith Maxwell, CPRN's President will be speaking.
**When and Where**: October 28-30, 2004, Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel.
**Web site** for more information: www.healthworkandwellness.com

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***New Century, New Risks: Challenges for Social Development in Canada;*** co-convened by Social Development Canada and the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, this conference examines the new social risks facing Canadians, the challenges they present and the effects of political context on governing a new social architecture. CPRN's Social Architecture Papers will be profiled at the conference, along with work by the Canadian Council on Social Development and the Laboratoire de recherché sur les practiques et les politiques. Speakers include Judith Maxwell, CPRN's President, Jane Jenson, former Director of the Family Network and author of the final report in the Social Architecture Papers, and Bruno Palier, author of a major comparative paper in the same series.
**When and Where**: November 18-19, 2004, Hôtel Omni Mont-Royal, Montreal, Quebec.
**Web site**: http://www.misc-iecm.mcgill.ca/social/socialEN/conferenceEN.html

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