

# Changes to Employment Insurance (EI)

**IS THIS FAIR?**

## Just the facts

Recent changes to Employment Insurance (EI) have generated a lot of interest, but not all of the information out there is complete. **Here some facts.**

- 1** Fewer than **40%** of unemployed Canadians can access EI benefits.
- 2** The average weekly benefit is low: **\$371 / week** in 2010 / 2011.
- 3** Budget 2012 **phased out** the *Extended Employment Insurance Benefits* pilot despite continued high unemployment in the affected regions.
- 4** Changes to the *Working While on Claim* pilot project **penalize EI claimants with low wages** and/or few hours of work, acting as a disincentive to taking available part time work.
- 5** The new *Variable Best Weeks* program to calculate benefit levels ignores the widespread presence of precarious labour in urban areas, and **lowers benefit levels** in high-unemployment areas.
- 6** The EI Appeals process, which was widely considered fair and effective, was **replaced** by a streamlined process concerned with efficiency.
- 7** The definition of **suitable employment** was moved from legislation into regulations, which are more easily altered.
- 8** The definition of suitable employment expects most claimants to accept **20% - 30% lower wages** in similar professions **after only six weeks** of job search.

For more information, contact the Social & Economic Policy Department of the Canadian Labour Congress at 613-521-3400 or [SEP@clc-ctc.ca](mailto:SEP@clc-ctc.ca)

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