

Employment Insurance and Training

“We must invest in helping workers to continuously enhance their skills to keep pace with constantly evolving workplace requirements. To that end, the Government will develop a new Workplace Skills Strategy, including steps to enhance apprenticeship systems, and to boost literacy and other essential job skills.”

Speech from the Throne
as delivered, October 4, 2004

“...to recommend measures that would ensure that all future uses of the Employment Insurance program would only be for the benefit of workers and not for any other purpose.”

Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne
as amended, October 18, 2004

The Canadian Labour Congress has long promoted the idea that EI benefits should be available to cover lost wages during training for all workers, just as it has been available for apprenticeship training for decades.

To that end, the **Workplace Skills Strategy** promised in the Throne Speech should include a **Training Insurance** program to ensure the skills of Canadian workers keep pace. This new Training Insurance program would:

Cover wage loss during training for all workers, modelled on coverage that is already available for apprenticeship training.

Provide minimum levels of annual training for workers without loss of pay.

Reward employers who exceed minimum workplace training investments with reduced EI premiums.

To start, the Canadian Labour Congress has proposed **pilot projects** in the health care and manufacturing sectors, where the need for skills training reform is urgent. Workers would receive EI benefits for time off the job to upgrade their skills and employers who fund training would receive a rebate on their EI premiums.

For an innovation like Training Insurance to benefit as many workers as possible, the Government of Canada needs to act on the all-party recommendation of the House of Commons Human Resources Committee:

A substantial reduction of the number of hours required to qualify for Employment Insurance benefits. The hours needed to qualify for all EI benefits should be set at 360 hours per year. This would replace the current patchwork of rules that varies from 420 to 910 hours.

...over



