

December 12, 2022

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance
Hon. Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development, Disability Inclusion
Hon. Karina Gould, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

Joint Community and Labour Statement on Employment Insurance (EI) Reform

Ministers, we are writing on behalf of the Inter-provincial EI Working Group to call for urgent action on reforms to Canada's EI social insurance system. We need to restore its role as an automatic economic stabilizer and ensure we have an EI system that works for workers.

Over 80 years ago workers joined an On to Ottawa Trek to demand, among other reforms, a social insurance system that would provide income maintenance during periods of unemployment. In the decades since the 1940 UI Act, the system has played a critical role in the health of the larger economy as well as individuals and their families. A 1990s federal study found that EI was *'the single most powerful automatic stabilizer'* reducing both GDP and job losses by up to 14% during recessions. But much of that earlier capacity has been lost after repeated cutbacks and only 40% of the unemployed receive EI at any given time.

Your government has repeatedly promised to deliver *'EI for the 21st Century'* and provide income security for workers in a changing labour market. In election platforms you promised *'changes to the program that ensure more Canadian workers particularly those in more insecure work can get access to the benefits they need.'* The Minister responsible for EI was mandated to consult and introduce legislation. **We are still waiting.**

Ministers, there are economic storms ahead and for many workers, a difficult winter. We call for immediate action and your attention to these community and labour priorities:

1. **Extend temporary EI measures as a bridge** until permanent improvements take effect.
2. **Expand access**
 - Set a universal 360-hour (12-week) qualifying rule for Regular and Special Benefits
 - Provide up to 50 weeks of Regular EI
 - End harsh disqualification rules that leave many vulnerable workers without EI access
 - Extend EI access to all migrant workers
 - Ensure misclassified self-employed workers have access to EI
 - Extend the benefit period for combined Regular and Special EI (parental, etc)
 - Restore temporary flexibilities (banked hours, no deduction of separation pay, etc.)
 - Provide EI income benefits for workers so long as they are in approved training.
3. **Improve benefits**
 - Substantially increase the 55% benefit rate
 - Set a reasonable minimum benefit.
4. **Restore annual government contributions to EI** to help pay for improvements and to ensure EI acts as an effective automatic economic stabilizer especially at times of crisis.

Thank you for considering our position. We look forward to early action on EI reforms.

On behalf of the Inter-provincial EI Working Group and the following signatories:

*Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg
Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
ACORN-Canada
Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights
Action Populaire Rimouski-Neigette
Action-Chômage Côte-Nord
Advancement of Women Halton
Alberta Federation of Labour
Atkinson Foundation
Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS) Vancouver
BC Employment Standards Coalition
BC Federation of Labour
BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU)
Campaign 2000: End Child & Family Poverty
Canada Employment and Immigration Union (CEIU)
Canada Without Poverty
Canadian Arab Foundation (CAF)
Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)
Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU)
Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)
Canadian Labour Congress
Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW)
Canadian Union of Public Employees / Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique
CBTU (Coalition of Black Trade Unionists)
Centre for Future Work, Vancouver BC
Child Care Now (Child Advocacy Association of Canada)
Childcare Resource and Research Unit (C.R.R.U)
Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (CSALC)
Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice
Citizens for Public Justice
Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change
Community Advocacy & Legal Centre (CALC)
Community Legal Assistance Society (CLAS BC)
Community Legal Clinic - Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk
Conseil central du Bas-Saint-Laurent CSN
Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)*

CUPE 1190, NB
Daily Bread Food Bank
Decent Work and Health Network
Dignidad Migrante Society
Disabled Women's Network of Canada (DAWN Canada)
Downsview Community Legal Services
Ending Violence Association of Canada
Family Service Toronto
Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ)
Feminists Deliver, BC
First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society
Fish, Food & Allied Workers Union (FFAW-Unifor)
Good Jobs for All Coalition
HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO)
Hospital Employees' Union (BC)
Income Security Advocacy Centre
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers BC Locals 213, 230, 258, 993 & 1003
International Longshoremen's Association Local 273, Saint John, NB
Justicia for Migrant Workers (J4MW)
MacKillop Centre for Social Justice
Manitoba Federation of Labour
Marie Clarke Walker Consulting
MASSE (Mouvement autonome et solidaire des sans-emploi) Québec
Migrant Workers Alliance for Change (MWAC)
Mouvement Action Chômage Lac-Saint-Jean
Mouvement Action Chômage Pabok GÎM (Gaspésie et les Îles de la Madeleine)
National Council of Women of Canada
National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE)
NB-ACORN
Neighbourhood Legal Services (London & Middlesex) - NLSLM
New Brunswick Federation of Labour
New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity
Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour
Nova Scotia Action Coalition for Community Wellbeing
Nova Scotia Federation of Labour.
Oakville and District Labour Council
OCASI - Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
Ontario Alliance to End Homelessness
Ontario Community Legal Clinics EI Working Group
Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association
Ontario Federation of Labour
Open Policy Ontario

OPSEU / SEFPO
Parkdale Community Legal Clinic
Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre
Peel Alliance to End Homelessness
PEI Coalition for a Poverty Eradication Strategy
PEI Federation of Labour
Poverty Free Halton
Prosper Canada
PSAC Atlantic / AFPC Atlantique
Public Interest Alberta
Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)
Public Service Alliance of Canada, BC Region
Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS)
Renfrew County Community Poverty Action Network (CPAN)
Rexdale Community Legal Clinic
Saint John Human Development Council
Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
Social Planning Council of Winnipeg
South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO)
Southern Nova Scotia Seasonal Workers Alliance
Table des Groupes Populaires Côte-Nord
Teamsters Canada
Toronto & York Region Labour Council
Unemployed Workers Help Centre, Saskatchewan
UNIFOR
United Steelworkers
United Steelworkers Toronto Area Council
UNITE HERE!
West Coast LEAF
West Scarborough Community Legal Services
Wisdom2Action
Women's Centre for Social Justice / WomenatthecentrE
Women's Shelters Canada
Worker Solidarity Network, BC
Workers' Action Centre
Workers Action Network (NL)
Workers' Health and Safety Legal Clinic
YWCA Canada

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