



NATIONAL COUNCIL
OF UNEMPLOYED WORKERS

PRESS RELEASE

“MAJOR PROGRESS”, SAYS THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF UNEMPLOYED WORKERS

Montréal, April 19th, 2021 – The National Council of Unemployed Workers (NCUW) welcomes the great progress on Employment Insurance (EI) that was announced in the federal budget.

“The planned establishment of a universal eligibility standard of 420 hours is a major gain. This is a historic demand from the movement of the unemployed, ”said Pierre Céré, spokesperson for the NCUW. “The announced relaxation of termination penalties is also good news, as is the extension of the EI sickness benefit period from 15 to 26 weeks. This is the first time since its inception in 1971 that this segment of the program has been enhanced. A first step has been taken with this extension and the expanded eligibility. ”

The NCUW recommends a universal benefit period of 50 weeks, for both regular benefits and special and sickness benefits.

“Also worthy of attention is the renewal of the pilot project for seasonal workers, that offers five additional weeks of benefits in 13 regions of the Atlantic, Quebec and Yukon.”

EXTENSION AND CONSULTATION

“We welcome the decision to extend the Recovery Benefits: the crisis is not over, and the third wave is severe. It is therefore necessary that workers can receive help. This is a good decision, but questions will have to be raised next September at the end of these programs, because a plan is still missing for self-employed workers.”

It appears that the government is also committed to a consultation aiming at a comprehensive and permanent reform of EI, that could potentially to cover self-employed and “gig economy” workers.

“We are staying the course: this program must be thoroughly reviewed and modernized, so as to better reflect the diverse realities of employment, and able, if necessary, to face new crises. It must be able to cover self-employed workers. With today's announcements, we feel that the government has sought to strengthen the social safety net: we must keep building on this momentum,” concluded Pierre Céré.

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Source:

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