



NATIONAL COUNCIL
OF UNEMPLOYED WORKERS

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS CONFERENCE IN PARLIAMENT: THE LACK OF ACTION ON EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE IS “NONSENSE”

Ottawa, September 22nd, 2022 – After leaving Montreal on September 14th, Pierre Céré, spokesperson for the National Council of Unemployed Workers (NCUW) and Nicolas Miot, social rights advisor at the Comité Chômage de Montréal (CCM), completed their march by arriving on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, accompanied by social, political, labour union and Indigenous allies. On each day of the march, supporters walked along the NCUW representatives.

The purpose of the march was to draw attention to the expiration of temporary EI measures, the absence of a reform of the program to take over these measures, the failure to extend sickness benefits from 15 to 26 weeks and the unacceptable administrative delays faced by claimants. The NCUW also requested a meeting with the Prime Minister to inform him of the situation.

At the same time, the NCUW launched a public opinion [campaign](#) to raise awareness of the situation among the public and political decision-makers.

In the Parliament Foyer, at the conclusion of the march, a press conference was held with Larry Rousseau, executive vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), Louise Chabot, MP for Thérèse-de-Blainville and human resources critic for the Bloc Québécois (BQ), Charles-Olivier Picard, labour relations coordinator for the Syndicat québécois de la Construction (SQC), Luc Fortin, president of the Guilde des musiciens et musiciennes du Québec (GMMQ), Alexandre Boulerice, MP for Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie and deputy leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP), and Pierre Céré, spokesperson for the NCUW, accompanied by representatives of its member groups.

Quotes:

“The Liberal government does everything for its billionaire friends but drags its feet when it comes to helping workers who are struggling with the cost of living. The NDP is calling for an extension of the temporary measures of the EI program until real reform comes into effect. I will continue to put pressure on the Liberals to make the EI system work for everyone, including the self-employed and seasonal workers.”

– Alexandre Boulerice, MP for Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie and deputy leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP)

“On September 25, EI will revert to its outdated and unfair rules, leaving thousands of people behind. This is nonsense. We should not wait for the next crisis to think about a reform, and the current situation of the job market does not belittle the importance of a strong social safety net, adapted to the realities of the 21st century and protecting workers. I say to the government: don't let the current rise of the conservative right stop progress on the social safety net and EI reform!”

– Pierre Céré, spokesperson of the National Council of Unemployed Workers (NCUW)

“The Liberal government must urgently implement a comprehensive reform of Employment Insurance because the current system no longer meets the needs of workers. The problems they are experiencing are too numerous and are well known. The government has repeatedly committed to reforming the system, now is the time! The status quo is not an option.”

– Louise Chabot, MP for Thérèse-de-Blainville and Bloc Québécois critic for Human Resources

“The Liberal election platform promised to reopen the Employment Insurance Act, to include artists and self-employed workers in the program. After the socio-economic devastation of the pandemic, the government must now address the urgent need for a sustainable social safety net for Canadian artists.”

– Luc Fortin, president of Guilde des musiciens et musiciennes du Québec (GMMQ), Section 406 of the Canadian Federation of Musicians

“EI reform is necessary for construction workers who need a social safety net that provides greater income stability between shifts and improved support during sickness absence. It is urgent that the federal government implement the promised reform so that benefits are more economically responsive to the needs of construction industry workers.”

– Charles-Olivier Picard, labour relations coordinator for the Syndicat québécois de la Construction (SQC)

“It is very unfortunate that the government is letting down thousands of workers who will see their benefits and accessibility reduced or cut off altogether. We call on the Prime Minister to reconsider this decision and continue the path his government committed to at the beginning of the pandemic, which continues to have a serious impact on the Canadian workforce and economy.”

– Larry Rousseau, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

THE NCUW DEMANDS

- **We call for an extension of the temporary measures until the necessary EI reform is implemented, including the expansion of the program to self-employed and gig workers.**

It is unacceptable to return to the status quo as of September 25th, to the failed program we have known since the 1990s, with severely reduced eligibility, unfair rules and the exclusion of thousands of workers. We need EI reform, with expanded coverage and improved protections.

- **We ask that the enhanced EI sickness benefits (from 15 to 26 weeks) take effect immediately.**

The 2021 and 2022 federal budgets indicated that EI sickness benefits would be extended from 15 to 26 weeks in the summer of 2022. The government has always implied that the extension would come into effect in August 2022 and there is still nothing on the horizon. Over the years, several political parties and civil society representatives, including the NCUW, have called for an extension of sickness benefits, deeming the 15-week cap to be far too low.

- **We consider that the administrative delays experienced by EI claimants are unacceptable and we ask that they be resolved as soon as possible.**

Citizens are currently experiencing major delays, often waiting several months for their file to be processed.

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Source:

National Council of Unemployed Workers (NCUW)

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