

September 15, 2022

The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, PC, MP,
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

Via Email



Dear Prime Minister:

I am writing on behalf of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) to express our concern about the problems that will be created if measures put in place to address the shortcomings of the Employment Insurance (EI) program end on September 24, 2022. These measures are the uniform 420-hour entrance requirement for Employment Insurance benefits and administrative measures that have reduced delays in processing claims.

A combination of years of cuts and the growing number of precarious jobs meant that, for an increasing number of unemployed workers, EI was not providing the safety net that they need and deserve. The gaps that had been allowed to develop in the Employment Insurance program were all too clear when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Your government deserves credit for bringing in measures that ensured Canadians who lost their jobs were not left without an income. Your government has also recognized that the pre-pandemic EI system is inadequate and promised that changes to address its shortcomings would be brought forward in the summer of 2022.

Unfortunately, in spite of the fact that you and your government have acknowledged that the system is inadequate, your decision to end on September 24 the remaining enhancements to the EI program that were put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic means that workers will be left with the inadequate pre-pandemic program.

This is breaking faith with workers who were led to believe that your government was serious about improving EI. With the COVID-19 pandemic far from over, and unemployment expected to rise as interest rates increase, it also amounts to abandoning many workers who are worried about losing their jobs.

In the long term, the federal government needs to follow through on its commitment to reform the EI program, so that it can again provide a meaningful safety net for workers losing their jobs. Until that happens, measures put in place during the pandemic to address the shortcomings of the EI program need to be kept in place.

I look forward to your response. I would also be happy to meet with you about the National Union's concerns if you would like more information.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bert Blundon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Bert Blundon
President

cc: Jason MacLean, Secretary-Treasurer
Chrystia Freeland, PC, MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
Carla Qualtrough, PC, MP, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and
Disability Inclusion