



March 21, 2020

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Re: Protecting Canadian Workers During COVID-19 Crisis

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

On behalf of the Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU), the largest affiliation of independent unions in the country, **I want to express to you my concern about the rights and well-being of workers in Canada during the COVID-19 health crisis.**

Although the spread of this illness in Canada has been relatively low compared to other countries, the federal and provincial governments, the medical community and labour unions have taken immediate action to mobilize resources and raise awareness about how Canadians can better protect themselves.

Our labour confederation has encouraged its membership and all Canadians to watch their health closely and engage in social distancing as much as possible over the coming weeks.

Yet working people and wage earners throughout Canada face additional struggles from this illness. Entire industries affecting millions of workers are shutting down completely, and it is unknown when they will be in full operation again.

The CCU is calling on the federal government, provincial governments and all employers to implement policies that will protect workers and consumers not only from the illness, but from the effects of reduced work hours, high risk work and/or unemployment. These include:

- Provide paid sick leave for workers to cover quarantine periods already specified by the federal and provincial governments. And waiving any requirement for a doctor's note to permit sick leave.
- Allow flexible work arrangements, including working from home, video and teleconferencing, ending non-essential travel, and postponing unnecessary meetings and events.
- Assist Indigenous communities throughout Canada which - even before the COVID-19 outbreak - already suffered from high levels of unemployment, and lacked decent housing, clean drinking water and other basic necessities.
- Work closely with health and safety committees in unions to provide accurate information about potential risks at work from COVID-19 and how to access additional benefits and support.

- Ensure full job protection for all workers, and safeguard them from any firings related to self-quarantining, recovering from infection, or needing to stay home to care for children or family members.
- Create an emergency fund to provide additional financial assistance to vulnerable populations, including precarious workers and those working in the “gig” economy, seniors, students, and those living in poverty.
- Increase the Canada Child Benefit paid to low and modest-income families.
- Cover workers not eligible for Employment Insurance.
- Lower the Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefit threshold, and increase support to 80% of weekly wages.
- Make additional government funds available to provide income relief for health care workers who may be ill or subject to any COVID-19 quarantines.
- Demand that banks, utilities landlords, credit card companies and other financial institutions to extend and relax rent, mortgage and bill payments, and any other responsibilities facing consumers.
- Immediately increase provincial health care budgets to meet the inevitable demand for COVID-19 assessment centres, community clinics and hospitals, and additional equipment for health care workers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made an already difficult situation for low-wage and precarious workers even harder. At this time, working people and unions everywhere need to come together and help each other during this most challenging time.

We have all been through worse, and we will get through this. It’s just going to take some time. If you have any questions or would like to discuss these policies with me further, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. Johnson', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Kelly Johnson
President, Confederation of Canadian Unions
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