

Joint Statement by Community and Labour Groups Concerning Federal Changes to Employment Insurance

To the Prime Minister of Canada:

Our unemployment insurance program has served this country well since 1940. When the Great Depression gave rise to mass unemployment and large public demonstrations, workers demanded a program of unemployment insurance to address the obvious, painful need. They were supported by mayors, business leaders and others who understood how important an income replacement program was for families trying to weather bad times and for communities trying to maintain economic stability. The program has continued this vital role in the decades since and especially during periods of economic crisis.

It is deeply disturbing to watch your government now make such destructive, harmful changes to our EI program. There is no excuse for such unilateral action. The people directly concerned have not given their agreement or even been consulted. Since 1990 workers and employers have entirely funded the UI/EI program without any government contributions. What's more, between 1994 and 2009, the funds of the EI program were used for other purposes than the protection of workers; those funds should be restored.

We are united in calling on your government to **Scrap the EI Changes!**

We believe that:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes our fundamental human right to economic supports in case of unemployment as well as the freedom to choose our own employment;
- Unemployment is an economic and social phenomenon. It requires a collective response;
- Unemployed workers have a right to a fair and worker-friendly appeal system when contesting EI Commission decisions;
- EI requires improvements that improve access, duration and benefit levels. Less than 40% of unemployed people are now collecting EI benefits.

We say NO to:

- the impoverishment of workers and degradation of working conditions;
- changes which are not necessary or desirable, and for which no impact studies have been provided;
- new rules that reinforce the myth that Canadians do not wish to work and abuse the system when they are unemployed. In fact, fewer than a third collect the total benefits to which they are entitled;
- the attack on communities throughout Canada especially rural communities and those which rely on seasonal industries;
- the erosion of coverage for people without full-time, full-year employment. Temporary, part-time and migrant jobs mean insecure, erratic employment, especially for aboriginal workers and workers of colour, women and youth.
- an obligation to accept work regardless of training, experience or willingness;
- the focus on individual rather than collective responses to unemployment;
- intimidation, surveillance and intrusion into our private lives;
- a new Social Security Tribunal which will gravely restrain access to justice;
- the attempt to dismantle our EI social insurance program by stealth.

We seek Employment Insurance reforms that benefit workers and their communities. We therefore urge the PARLIAMENT of Canada to:

1. Rescind all 2012 and 2013 Budget measures related to EI.

2. Improve EI benefits:

- Improve access by reducing qualifying hours in all regions to the lesser of 360 hours or 13 weeks.
- Increase duration to at least 50 weeks in all regions. Provide a Special Extension when unemployment exceeds 6.5%, paid from federal general revenues.
- Increase benefits to at least 60% of earnings using workers' 12 best weeks. Raise the maximum benefit. And eliminate severance pay allocations and the 2 week waiting period.
- Provide EI income benefits so long as workers are in approved training.
- Expand supports for work-sharing arrangements under EI to reduce layoffs, and build links between work-sharing and training.

3. Provide Temporary Foreign Workers with meaningful EI entitlements.

Joint Statement: Signatories / Déclaration Commune: Signataires

1. Good Jobs For All Coalition (Toronto)
2. CUPE (Ontario)
3. Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change
4. United Steelworkers Toronto Area Council
5. Toronto & York Region Labour Council
6. Labour Community Services
7. Social Planning Toronto
8. CUPE Local 416
9. SEIU Local 2
10. Unifor
11. Unifor Local 591G
12. Unifor Local 27 London
13. Elementary Teachers of Toronto
14. Hamilton & District Labour Council
15. London & District Labour Council
16. Brampton Mississauga & District Labour Council
17. Unite HERE Local 75
18. Urban Alliance on Race Relations
19. Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario Office
20. Ontario Federation of Labour
21. Labour Education Centre
22. Migrant Workers Alliance for Change
23. ACORN Canada
24. Workers Action Centre, Toronto
25. Campaign 2000: End Child Poverty in Canada
26. Council of Agencies Serving South Asians
27. Chinese Canadian National Council – Toronto
28. Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) - Ontario
29. IATSE
30. Community Unemployed Help Centre, Winnipeg
31. University of Manitoba Faculty Association
32. CUPE Manitoba
33. CUPE Local 3909
34. CUPE Manitoba School Division Sector Committee
35. Association of Employees Supporting Education Services (AESES)
36. Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux
37. Alliance québécoise des techniciens de l'image et du son
38. Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante
39. Centrale des syndicats démocratiques
40. Centrale des syndicats du Québec
41. Confédération des syndicats nationaux
42. Conseil national des chômeurs et chômeuses
43. Conseil provincial du Québec des métiers de la construction (International)
44. Fédération autonome de l'enseignement
45. Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec
46. Fédération des femmes du Québec
47. Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec
48. Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec
49. Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec
50. Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec
51. Fédération Québécoise des municipalités
52. Mouvement autonome et solidaire des sans-emploi
53. Mouvement d'éducation populaire et d'action communautaire du Québec
54. Solidarité Rurale du Québec
55. Syndicat de la fonction publique et parapublique du Québec
56. Syndicat de professionnelles et professionnels du gouvernement du Québec
57. Union des artistes
58. Union des municipalités du Québec
59. Union des producteurs agricoles
60. Coalition de l'Est (Québec)

61. FRAPRU - Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain
62. Union des consommateurs
63. RCLALQ - Regroupement des comités logement et associations de locataires du Québec
64. New Brunswick Coalition Against EI Cuts – Coalition du N.-B. contre les coupures à l'Assurance-emploi
65. Société des acadiens et acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick
66. NB Federation of Labour- Fédération des travailleuses et travailleurs du N.-B.
67. Canadian Union of Public Employees- NB Division – Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique- Nouveau-Brunswick
68. Fédération des étudiants et étudiantes du Centre universitaire de Moncton
69. New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice inc. – Front commun pour la justice sociale du N.-B. Inc.
70. Council of Canadians - Saint John Chapter. Conseil des Canadiens, chapitre de Saint-Jean
71. Union of Municipalities of NB - Union des municipalités du N.-B
72. New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity -Coaliton pour l'Équité salariale du N.-B.
73. NB Association of Social Workers - Association des travailleurs sociaux du N.-B.
74. Association des aînés francophones du N.-B.
75. Groupe des 12
76. New Brunswick Building Trades Council –Syndicats des métiers de la construction du N.-B.
77. Maritime Fishermen's Union - Union des pêcheurs des Maritimes
78. Association des municipalités francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick
79. Association acadienne des artistes professionnel.le.s du Nouveau-Brunswick
80. Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick
81. Moncton & District Labour Council
82. Fredericton & District Labour Council
83. Miramichi & District Labour Council
84. Conseil de travail Edmundston et region
85. Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of Labour
86. CUPE – Newfoundland & Labrador
87. Fish, Food & Allied Workers – Unifor
88. Social Justice Co-operative of Newfoundland and Labrador
89. Labrador West & District Labour Council
90. Nova Scotia Federation of Labour
91. PEI Coalition For Fair EI
92. PEI Federation of Labour
93. Cooper Institute
94. MacKillop Centre for Social Justice
95. CUPE – PEI
96. PEI – Status of Women
97. Council of Canadians, PEI Chapter
98. PEI Health Coalition
99. CUPE Saskatchewan
100. CUPE Alberta
101. Vancouver & District Labour Council