

The Right Hon. Justin Trudeau
And Members of Canada's COVID-19 Cabinet Committee
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

April 14, 2020

Dear Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Members of Cabinet,

Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) for migrants and undocumented residents

You announced on April 11, 2020 a commitment to close the gaps in CERB that denied access to seasonal workers, those who have exhausted their EI benefits, students, owner/operators, those who continue to receive a modest income from part-time work, and essential workers who receive low wages. While you do this important work this week, please also close the gaps that deny needed income support to migrant and undocumented residents in Canada, and those who are unable to be here despite having contracts. **We need income supports for people without valid Social Insurance Numbers.**

This letter is an update to our [letters from March 26th and March 16th](#).

There are at least 1.8 million migrant and undocumented residents in Canada, or 1 in 22 people. This includes seasonal agricultural workers who are essential to Canada's food supply, care workers in long term care homes, and taking care of children, sick and the elderly. It includes cleaners in hospitals and homes, and it includes many warehouse, food delivery and grocery store workers. Many of Canada's essential workers are migrant and undocumented and deserve income support. They deserve to stay home if they are sick, and they deserve income if they have lost work or have had hours of work reduced.

This week, we urge you to make the following changes:

1. **Ensure residents without Social Insurance Numbers have access to Canada Emergency Response Benefit through the provision of accessible Individual Tax Numbers where information is not shared with immigration authorities.** We reiterate our request for a meeting to develop a dedicated delivery mechanism to ensure that all migrants are aware of and able to apply for income supports.

2. **Extend access to CERB for those whose SIN has expired.** Many workers in implied status or recently out of immigration status have been unable to renew Social Insurance Numbers because of delays from Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada. This particularly impacts workers on study permits, who are struggling to make ends meet.
3. The government rightly decided to ensure seasonal workers affected by COVID-19 can access CERB. This measure should be extended to seasonal migrant workers. **Seasonal TFWP and SAWP workers should have access to income supports for delays in contracts, both inside and outside the country.** Many agricultural workers have been delayed from starting their contracts due to border closures. Most have still not arrived. These workers must be able to apply for income supports for lost wages in this period.
4. **Ensure that migrant workers who are forced to leave jobs or those that aren't starting contracts right now are not deemed to have "quit voluntarily" and receive income supports.** Many migrant care workers have been forced by their employers to move in with them. While their work hours have greatly increased, they are not being remunerated. Some migrant agricultural workers are choosing not to come for health and safety reasons, because of lack of protections while traveling or working in Canada. Migrant workers on employer dependent work permits are uniquely vulnerable to exploitation, and most cannot leave bad jobs easily. When they do leave, they are often in egregious conditions, and need income supports to transition to safety.
5. **Extend income supports to migrant and undocumented residents who did not earn at least \$5,000 in the previous 12 months.** Many workers had lost jobs, or seen their hours cut in the months prior to CERB becoming available. Others have just arrived in Canada - an average of 48,000 new migrants arrive in Canada each month. Many workers have clung to jobs, even as hours have been reduced. Migrant workers on employer dependent visas who have left one job, but have not been able to secure an alternative LMIA approved employer are falling just below the \$5,000 mark. Recently arrived refugee claimants have not earned \$5,000

Right now, Canada needs workers who are sick or are potential carriers to immuno-compromised people to stay home. This will simply not be possible if migrant and undocumented residents aren't given adequate income supports. To flatten the curve, to protect the economy, and to ensure human rights, we urge you to ensure income supports for all.

We urge you to meet with us to discuss ensuring healthcare and community supports for migrant and undocumented residents as well as guaranteeing immigration changes in this critical period.

MIGRANT RIGHTS NETWORK

Please contact Syed Hussan, Executive Director, Migrant Workers Alliance for Change at hussan@migrantworkersalliance.org or 416 453 3632 to set up a meeting.

Migrant Rights Network Members:

1. Butterfly (Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network)
2. Caregivers' Action Centre
3. Centre des travailleuses et travailleurs immigrants
4. Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto
5. Collaborative Network to End Exploitation
6. Cooper Institute and the Prince Edward Island Action Team for Migrant Workers' Rights
7. Durham Region Migrant Solidarity Network
8. FCJ Refugee House
9. Fuerza Migrante Vancouver
10. Fuerza Migrante, Vancouver, BC
11. GABRIELA Ontario
12. IAVGO Community Legal Clinic
13. Income Security Advocacy Centre
14. Migrant Students United
15. Migrant Worker Solidarity Network - Manitoba
16. Migrant Workers Alliance - Niagara, Ontario
17. Migrant Workers Alliance for Change
18. Migrante Alberta
19. Migrante BC
20. Migrante Canada
21. Migrante Manitoba
22. Migrante Ontario
23. No One Is Illegal - Toronto
24. No One Is Illegal – Halifax
25. No One Is Illegal – London
26. No One Is Illegal – Vancouver
27. Migrant Resource Centre Canada
28. OCASI – Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
29. OHIP For All
30. PCLS Community Legal Clinic
31. Radical Action with Migrants in Agriculture (RAMA), Okanagan region, BC
32. Sanctuary Health
33. Solidarity Across Borders
34. South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
35. UFCW
36. UNIFOR
37. Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers Rights
38. Workers Action Centre.
39. Workers United