

VIA EMAIL

April 1, 2020

The Honourable William Francis Morneau
Minister of Finance
90 Elgin Street
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0G5

RE: CUPW Urges Removal of CERB Access Barriers for Gig-Economy Workers

Minister Morneau,

I am writing on behalf of over 50,000 postal workers, including Foodora couriers, whom we've filed an application to represent, and in support of the thousands of gig-economy delivery workers who have been deemed essential during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

We call on the Federal Government to extend the *Canada Emergency Response Benefit Act* (CERB) to all workers who have seen a reduction or elimination of work due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We were heartened to see steps taken to protect workers affected by COVID-19, including the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). However, under the CERB, it deeply concerns us that its requirements mean that many gig-economy workers across the country will be unable to access the resources they need to survive during this crisis. The CERB needs to have the broadest possible reach with the lowest threshold for access to ensure that no worker is forced to choose between their health and their bills.

Two requirements in particular have the effect of exacerbating these workers' already precarious status.

First, we urge you to eliminate the requirement that a worker not receive compensation for 14 consecutive days to be eligible for the benefit. This requirement fails to take into consideration the realities of many workers, particularly gig-economy workers.

Essentially, if a worker's schedule has been reduced to one shift every 13 days as a result of COVID-19, they would be ineligible to receive the CERB.

This is of particular concern to gig workers doing deliveries during the crisis. I will give an example to illustrate the issue.

Foodora couriers have their schedule determined through a shift selection process that occurs each week on Wednesday. Each courier attempts to pick up available shifts based on their earned priority status.

This means that some workers can take many shifts, while others only get one or two during the course of a week. For those couriers with little in the way of work opportunities, they struggle to cobble together enough work to live, those one or two shifts with Foodora are integral to their survival. Yet, under the CERB, they would fail to meet the current requirements to obtain income support. They have not been laid off, and some work is available to them. They won't meet the threshold of 14 consecutive days without income, most are living day-to-day financially and many have dependents and expenses that cannot wait. The reality is, most food delivery couriers are seeing shifts be reduced and/or capped as the supply and demand of food delivery is reduced.

In addition to this, many couriers in the gig-economy have multiple employers, and their standing with those employers, including the priority status I mentioned above, are dependent on continuing to accept shifts and orders as they come up. Because of this, it is unreasonable to expect these workers to forgo any income for 14 days or more lest they hinder their ability to maintain meaningful work after this crisis.

Second, we ask that you remove the requirement of a Social Insurance Number to access benefits. Many workers may not meet this requirement, but nonetheless are, or have been affected by this crisis and are in desperate need of assistance.

There are many precarious workers in delivery and logistics across this country, both documented and undocumented, who will be ineligible for benefits based on this requirement. These workers already lack basic protections, and almost never have access to benefits like paid sick leave. Their vulnerable status forces them to work, even if doing so poses a health risk to them or the public. This is unacceptable.

On Friday, March 13, 2020, Prime Minister Trudeau said, "No one should have to worry about paying rent, buying groceries, or additional childcare because of COVID-19." We agree. Unfortunately, under the CERB as it is currently enacted, those worries are still very much front of mind for gig-economy workers, and those workers whose legal status is less determined.

At a time of so much uncertainty, the assurance that your government will protect and defend all workers across Canada and Quebec through extending these benefits, can help provide both peace of mind, and security of person at a time when it is needed most.

We are available to discuss this matter with you as soon as possible. We must ensure that the most vulnerable workers in our society have the resources they need to survive.

Sincerely,



Jean-Philippe Grenier
3rd National Vice-President

cc: The Honourable Mona Fortier, Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate
Minister of Finance
The Honourable Anita Anand, Minister of Public Services and Procurement
Canada
The Honourable Filomena Tassi, Minister of Labour
CUPW National Executive Board

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