



We're Together Ending Poverty (Calgary)

Statement to Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

June 18, 2020

Response to COVID-19 and Shifting Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)

We're Together Ending Poverty (WTEP) is calling the federal Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and the Status of Persons with Disabilities to transition CERB to a basic income social policy for all adult Canadians 18 to 64 years and to ensure equitable benefits from social programs like the Canada Child Benefit to CERB (or replacement) to the senior's Guaranteed Income Supplement and Old Age Security.

Recent months and the pandemic have revealed inequitable policies and systems in Canada, especially for women, non-binary, racialized, Indigenous and differently abled individuals. CERB is not available to those who support family members with unpaid work for childcare, elder support and community volunteer roles, largely women¹. The gender divide continues. Over 55% of women are in front line jobs, often paying minimum wage, which demands frequent exposure to the public and ultimately COVID19².

Government policies that improve Canadian financial security and overall wellbeing include the Canada Child Benefit, Guaranteed Income Supplement and Old Age Security. The cohort without financial security are adults with no children who are 18 to 64 years of age. When financial security for all has been piloted with basic income, people tend to increase their education levels, spend on transportation to access better paying jobs, purchase their own foods and substantially reduce stress from a shortage or unpredictable income³. In addition, this money tends to be spent in Canada supporting the Canadian economy⁴.

¹ Moyser, M. 2018. Time use: total work burden, unpaid work, and leisure. *Statistics Canada*. Catalogue no. 89-503-x. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/54931-eng.pdf?st=dljzuTYh>

² Scott, K. 2020. COVID19 crisis response must address gender fault lines. *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*. <http://behindthenumbers.ca/2020/03/20/covid-19-crisis-response-must-address-gender-faultlines/>

³ Griffin, M. N.D. Canada finally reveals the results of it's Universal Basic Income. *Fanatical Futurist*. <https://www.fanaticalfuturist.com/2020/03/canada-finally-reveals-the-results-of-its-universal-basic-income-experiment/>

⁴ . CANCEA. 2019. Economic Contribution of the Canada Child Benefit: A Basic Income for Canadian Families with Children <https://ubiworks.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Economic-Contribution-of-the-Canada-Child-Benefit.pdf>

The gig economy is growing in Canada and disproportionately affects women⁵. Workers in the gig economy have limited opportunities to access traditional support of Employment Insurance and the cost of participating in voluntary Employment Insurance for the self-employed may be a high-priced luxury⁶.

Automation, especially the services and clerical sector, will leave many searching for different types of employment and disproportionately affects women. Women will need additional training to find employment⁷.

The COVID19 pandemic and roll-out of CERB revealed the need to quickly distribute money to individual Canadians. A basic income model supports this need as the money given to an individual will vary with their taxable income.

WTPE supports Basic Income Canada's request for \$2000 per month per adult with gradual decreases as income increases into the middle-class deciles and that other benefits remain in place (i.e. dental, pharmacy and health supports). For information on how the financial support can be implemented see https://www.basicincomecanada.org/policy_options

In conclusion, too many people especially women, non-binary, racialized and Indigenous individuals have fallen through the CERB safety net (recently left a job, self-employed and have some work). The time has come for fair and just Canada that includes Basic Income.

We're Together Ending Poverty (WTPE) is a diverse grassroots group of Calgary activists which came together in 2008 to educate and empower ourselves and others to take action on root causes of poverty. Two of our founding beliefs are relevant to income inequality in Canada.

- To understand the root causes of poverty we need to examine our society from many different perspectives including but not limited to gender, race, class, ability, age and sexual orientation.
- The concentration of wealth in a few hands, locally and globally, and the continued existence of patriarchal and classist attitudes and practices are fundamental causes of poverty.

We acknowledge that we live and work on the traditional lands of the peoples of Treaty 7 region which includes the Blackfoot, Tsuut'ina and Stoney Nakoda nations as well as Metis Nation Region #3.

Signed:

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⁵ Lim, J. 2019. Gig economy work in Canada is growing, Stats Can says. <https://ipolitics.ca/2019/12/16/gig-economy-work-in-canada-is-growing-stats-can-says/#:~:text=The%20report%20from%20the%20federal,in%202005%2C%205.5%20per%20cent.>

⁶ Government of Canada. 2020. EI special benefits for self-employed people: overview. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-self-employed-workers.html>

⁷ Madgavkar, A., Krishana, M. and Ellingrud, K. 2019. Will automation improve work for women – or make it worse? *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2019/07/will-automation-improve-work-for-women-or-make-it-worse>