



February 17, 2021

Honourable Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Via email: Carla.qualtrough@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Qualtrough,

While UNITE HERE! Canada commends the Canadian government for creating much needed enhancements to Canada's Employment Insurance program last year, the reality hospitality workers face remains dire. Our 18,000 members across Canada were the first and worst hit by COVID-19, and EI has served as a significant lifeline to them. They will lose that lifeline very soon, and they need to know how the government will support them.

Over 90% of the hospitality industry's workers were laid off in March 2020. They are still out of work and will begin to exhaust their EI or CRB benefits by March 27, 2021 – especially our members who are seasonal banquets, hotel restaurant, and concessions workers. They are predominantly women, immigrants, and people of colour. Canada's hardest hit workers need EI reform and other income supports that do not leave them behind.

Given hospitality employers' overwhelming failure to use CEWS for their full staff and the government's unwillingness to correct key design flaws, most hospitality workers – many of whom have worked at the same hotel or restaurant for decades and want to return when the business recovers – will fall through the cracks. Hospitality workers are being abandoned by their employers. Most hospitality workers lack meaningful recall protections to stay connected to their jobs – and CEWS provides neither the job security nor income support that was promised.

We call on the Federal government to extend COVID-19 Income Supports until the end of the pandemic:

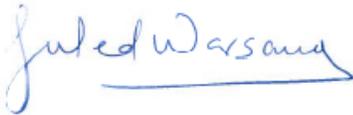
1. Increase the number of Canada Recovery Benefit and Recovery Caregiving Benefit weeks
2. Increase the number of Employment Insurance benefit weeks for all
3. Increase, as promised, the number of EI Sickness/Quarantine benefit weeks
4. Extend all benefit coverages to all migrants
5. Provide low-income workers with debt forgiveness of Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) repayments, including forgiveness of any taxes owed on CERB. Ensure access to justice and a fair appeal process for all benefits.

Furthermore, the pandemic revealed the many systemic issues within the EI program. The [recommendations put forth](#) by Canadian Labour Congress will create an Employment Insurance system for the 21st century. We strongly support these recommendations and look forward to working with you to ensure EI does not leave workers behind.

Sincerely,



Ian Robb
Canadian Director
President/Administrator, UNITE HERE Local 47



Guled Warsame
President, UNITE HERE Local 75



Zailda Chan
President, UNITE HERE Local 40

cc: Honourable Filomena Tassi, P.C., M.P., Minister of Labour;
President Hassan Yussuff, Canadian Labour Congress