



**JAGMEET SINGH**

DÉPUTÉ | MP, BURNABY SOUTH | BURNABY-SUD

April 7, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons,  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you today on behalf of the millions of people across the country who are worried about their health, their loved ones, and how they will pay their bills as we continue to face this pandemic.

I'm sure you would agree that we must find a way to make sure everyone in Canada can get through these unprecedented times with enough money to pay their bills, a job to go back to, and a safe place to live. As we have been saying for weeks, the quickest and best way to ensure that government help gets to everyone who needs it is to immediately send direct assistance to all Canadians.

I want to again encourage you to move away from the complicated means-based system and implement the universal direct payment we have proposed.

I acknowledge and want to again thank you for several other steps your government has taken to help Canadians. New Democrats were very encouraged, for example, to see you implement our calls to extend tax filing deadlines, suspend student loan fees and payments, and raise the wage subsidy to 75 percent.

We were also initially supportive of your announced plan to transfer \$2,000 to Canadians who need the support. Unfortunately, your CERB – even with changes you've been making to it – has proven to be complicated and leaves out many Canadians who need support. In fact, one study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that one third of Canadians in need are not eligible for the benefit at all.

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A universal direct payment of \$2,000 for every adult (and an additional \$250 per child), as we have proposed, would eliminate the need to correct errors in the application process that unintentionally push people out of eligibility. In addition to instantly helping to stimulate the economy, it would ensure everyone gets the help they need now, and the government could sort things out with the people who didn't need the money at tax time next year.

The universal direct payment - or universal basic income – has been implemented in several countries. Support for it is growing around the world and across the country.

While the universal direct payment is the best solution, I am not prepared to let the perfect be the enemy of the less bad. Should you continue to refuse to get help to everyone across the country, I ask you to at least consider two changes to your legislation for CERB when we next sit.

Here are three simple amendments that would ensure that more people are eligible for the benefits:

1- Amend s.6(1)(a):

Replace this "the worker, whether employed or self-employed, ceases working for reasons related to Covid-19 for at least 14 consecutive days"

By "the worker, whether employed or self-employed, is unable to work for reasons related to Covid-19, and has total earned income below \$1,000[1] over 14 consecutive days" within the four-week period for which they are applying.

2- Amend s6 (1) (b):

Replace "(b) they do not receive, in respect of the consecutive days on which they have ceased working, (i) subject to the regulations, income from employment or self-employment, (ii) benefits, as defined in subsection 2(1) of the Employment Insurance Act, (iii) allowances, money or other benefits paid to the worker under a provincial plan because of pregnancy or in respect of the care by the worker of one or 15 more of their new-born children or one or more children placed with them for the purpose of adoption, or (iv) any other income that is prescribed by regulation."

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By “(b)They do not receive, in that 4-week period; (i) total income from employment or self-employment of more than \$1000 (ii) benefits, as defined in subsection 2(1) of the Employment Insurance Act, (iii) allowances, money or other benefits paid to the worker under a provincial plan because of pregnancy or in respect of the care by the worker of one or 15 more of their new-born children or one or more children placed with them for the purpose of adoption, or (iv) any other income that is prescribed by regulation; (v) any payment from an employer receiving funds through the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy

3- Amend the bill to give a courage pay to all essential workers:

Make sure all essential workers make at least \$15 per hour and give all essential workers a danger pay of 20% by topping their income with the CERB.

These amendments would ensure that people who are currently left out of the CERB – such as students, those who were unemployed before the pandemic that were not eligible for EI and workers who continue to receive some form of modest income – would also get the help they need.

The consequences of having a program that excludes the most vulnerable are as tragic as they are human.

More people will run out of food, more people will lose their homes, and more people will end up on the street.

The fact is, in every crisis, those who are most vulnerable are most at risk. We need to ensure support is getting to people without housing, those who live with disabilities and mental illness, children and youth at risk, victims of domestic violence, and seniors.

Indigenous people in communities across the country need to also be a primary concern - they live with the consequences of historic injustice and neglect. Overcrowded housing, no or limited access to health care, and a lack of basic infrastructure - like clean water – leave the people who live in these communities even more at risk. On top of that, several Indigenous communities face the need to evacuate because of possible massive flooding.

Supports to the people themselves are just the beginning. I'm calling on you to work with us to make sure we can deliver for these communities.

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Mr. Prime Minister, New Democrats believe in Canadians' desire to care for each other. And we believe that Canadians should be able to expect their government and all parliamentarians to lead. They want us to do our best and do all we can to help them.

By working together, I think we can do just that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jagmeet Singh'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jagmeet Singh, MP  
Burnaby South  
Leader, Canada's New Democrats