

PANDEMIC POLICY DEMANDS

Unifor position on public policy needs, worker support measures

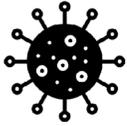
March 18, 2020

ALL JURISDICTIONS (FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL)

- **Institute a minimum of 14 days of paid sick leave** whether a worker has been formally quarantined by a health official, or been asked to self-isolate
- Establish special provisions that **provide workers paid leave to care for children** affected by government-mandated school and daycare closures
- **Establish direct, emergency income assistance measures to all workers and families** – including those ineligible for Employment Insurance benefits

FEDERAL JURISDICTION

- **Waive the one-week waiting period for regular Employment Insurance benefits** and temporarily eliminate the qualifying hours needed to access benefits to ensure more workers – especially vulnerable workers in the hospitality, tourism and retail sectors – have access in the event of job displacement
- **Waive the EI regular benefit requirement for seven consecutive days without work or wages** in the previous 52 weeks to provide workers suffering from reduced work-hours access to EI benefits
- **Increase the duration of EI sick leave** from 15 to 26 weeks
- **Waive the one-week waiting period** for EI sickness benefits (*Federal Government announced on March 11*)



- **Waive the hours requirement for EI sickness benefits** and the requirement for a medical certificate
- **Expand EI coverage to include workers who are caring for children** affected by mandatory school, daycare and other child care facility closures
- **Implement emergency special income assistance payments to vulnerable workers** (including precarious workers, and independent contractors), who otherwise would not receive EI benefits
- **Introduce special “income relief” measures for full-time and part-time workers in the health care sector** (as was done during the SARS outbreak), who are more susceptible to contracting COVID-19
- **Ease federal Work-Sharing rules**, to maximize eligibility, and enhance benefits to mitigate job losses especially within vulnerable sectors (like tourism). The federal government should actively promote work-sharing across workplaces, and commit to accelerating the approval process (*Federal Government announced enhanced Work-Sharing, extended eligible weeks from 38 to 76*)
- **All jurisdictions should waive requirements for employees to produce doctor’s notes in cases of illness** (at the very least, consider other less onerous ways to substantiate absences due to illness)
- **Provide special assistance to workers returning from maternity and parental leave** who have exhausted their EI benefits and do not have enough hours to cover lay off benefits
- **Implement enhanced EI or other wage replacement measures that accommodate those workers whose income is partially derived from gratuities**, including those employed in hospitality, gaming, and the taxi industry
- **Service Canada must issue a directive to employers to code layoffs as “Layoff/Shortage of Work”** instead of “other” to ensure no administrative bottlenecks prevent impacted workers from receiving money
- **Expand the number of Service Canada staff in order to process claims in a timely manner.** Staff should be hired and on-boarded immediately, given the extreme demands placed on the system.