

The Hon. Randy Boissonnault
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages
randy.boissonnault@parl.gc.ca

August 23, 2023

Dear Minister Boissonnault

**Re: Emergency EI Measures for Workers Impacted by Widespread Fires
including Migrant Workers**

We are writing on a matter of some urgency. Now and in the aftermath of the fires ravaging the West and North of this country, we are calling on your government to direct its attention to the dire circumstances facing workers in various sectors including migrant workers who have been displaced from their work and housing without income.

Many of these workers, including migrant workers, will face difficulties accessing EI benefits even though they pay EI premiums. The large number of community and labour organizations supporting the Interprovincial EI Working Group have long called for substantial EI reforms and better access for all workers, including the migrant workers often excluded from basic rights because they are denied permanent resident status. The case for making such improvements has never been more compelling.

It is worth recalling that the Liberal Party earlier anticipated the need for an [EI Disaster Assistance Benefit](#). However, there has been no follow through to date which means, at this critical juncture, we need **Emergency EI Measures** that are responsive to a climate emergency with the fires still burning:

- Extend EI to affected migrants in all impacted regions of the West and the North; and cover all Temporary Foreign Worker streams including agricultural work, live-in caregiving and low wage occupations in a variety of sectors.
- Provide relief from EI's standard 420 to 700 qualifying hours which, given the current circumstances, will prove too onerous for migrant workers as well as many other workers who are not migrants but in part-time, temporary, and precarious jobs.
- Include a minimum EI benefit, as during the Covid emergency, to protect low-income workers and support EI's automatic economic stabilization role.
- Ensure other supports for displaced workers who are undocumented or on other temporary resident visas.

We support the work of the Okanagan Wildfire Task Force and the [attached letter from the BC Migrant Workers Centre](#) to Minister Marc Miller, specifically their call for emergency open work permits for migrants and emergency access to EI.

If you have any questions, please contact us by email or telephone 416-917-0047.

Sincerely,

on behalf of the Interprovincial EI Working Group

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