



April 22, 2020

The Hon. Carla Qualtrough, PC, MP
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion
140 Promenade du Portage
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0J9

The Hon. Maryam Monsef, PC, MP
Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development
Women and Gender Equality Canada
P.O. Box 8097, Station T CSC
Ottawa, ON K1G 3H6

The Hon. Ahmed Hussen, PC, MP
Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development
140 Promenade du Portage
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0J9

Dear Ministers Qualtrough, Monsef, and Hussen:

Thank you for the work you are doing to serve Canadians during this unprecedented crisis. Our Conservative team has also been hard at work, putting forward constructive solutions to help Canadians affected by COVID-19. During our conversations with Canadians from coast to coast, an issue regarding the delivery of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) has been brought to our attention that requires your immediate attention.

Many expectant mothers who applied for Employment Insurance after March 15, 2020, have not received their CERB payments, despite your government's assurances that individuals who applied for EI after March 15 would automatically be processed through the CERB.

In addition, several pregnant women have reported that Service Canada has told them that they must start taking their maternity benefits immediately, even if their child is not due for several months. This would reduce the amount of time available for mothers to receive their full benefit after their child is born.

Additionally, due to layoffs and closures resulting from COVID-19, many parents who were planning to take maternity and parental benefits have been unable to accumulate the requisite number of hours to meet the eligibility criteria for these special benefits. Unfortunately, this is causing additional stress at a time that should be filled with the joy that comes with expecting a newborn.

In light of these concerning examples, Canadians have the following questions:

1. When will expectant mothers who have applied for EI begin receiving the CERB payments they are entitled to?
2. Why is your government advising expectant mothers who have been laid off to use up their maternity benefits?
3. What is your government's plan to assist parents who were on track to qualify for maternity and parental benefits but, due to COVID-19, have been unable to accumulate enough hours to qualify because they were laid off or have had their hours reduced?

The government has a responsibility to promote gender equality, and we expect that you and your Cabinet colleagues will recognize the disproportionate impact that these gaps in service have on women. We expect you to act quickly to address these issues and to prevent them from happening again.

Canadians are under a tremendous amount of stress due to the ongoing pandemic. Families expecting children are faced with increased expenses during normal circumstances and the pandemic has added additional financial uncertainty for many Canadians. By immediately addressing these issues, your government can help families, and in particular expectant mothers, regain a sense of stability.

Thank you for your immediate attention to these crucial questions and for your ongoing work during this crisis. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Dan Albas
Shadow Minister for Employment, Workforce Development & Disability Inclusion
Member of Parliament for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola



Karen Vecchio
Shadow Minister for Women and Gender Equality
Member of Parliament for Elgin—Middlesex—London



Stephanie Kusie
Shadow Minister for Families, Children and Social Development
Member of Parliament for Calgary Midnapore