



April 20, 2020

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

We are writing on behalf of the more than 270,000 members of the Alberta Students' Executive Council and the British Columbia Federation of Students. We would first like to commend the actions of your Government for quickly providing a variety of economic support for Canadians in this trying time of the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate that these are unprecedented times.

COVID-19 has had significant impacts on all facets of Canadian society, and people from all walks of life have been impacted emotionally, physically, and financially. Post-secondary students and their families are facing unique challenges in this difficult time: their classes and exams have been abruptly transitioned online; they're experiencing widespread unemployment and underemployment; and their prospects for summer jobs or jobs post-graduation have all but dried up.

We have concerns that students and other vulnerable groups may be left behind by the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. Eligibility for the CERB is predicated on the notion that the applicant has lost their income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This requirement, however, ignores the reality for many workers, including students. For example, many students work hard each summer to save enough – possibly combined with student loans – to make it through the school year not working in order to focus on their academic success. As the school year draws to a close, these students' savings are nearly empty. This is typically the time when they would be seeking a summer job or an internship opportunity in their field of study. Now, with unemployment at its highest level since the Great Depression, these jobs simply do not exist.

The students in the above example do not qualify for the CERB because they cannot demonstrate that they have lost income or lost a job due to COVID-19; yet the reality is they cannot get a job because of the pandemic. Not only do these people currently miss out on federal relief efforts, they also miss out on provincial programs that use CERB or EI eligibility as their own criteria, such as BC's Temporary Relief for Renters.

Further, students who spend their summers or school year working in unpaid or low-paid internships may not have earned \$5,000 in 2019, thereby making them ineligible for EI benefits or the CERB.

With such an uncertain economic future, Canadians need relief. Expanding the CERB would allow Canadians to get an infusion of cash that is greatly needed to pay for rent, bills, groceries, or to invest back into our local economies. Our local economies would benefit immensely from such investments and protecting local small business and jobs is crucial to helping assist in the long road for economic recovery moving forward.

The Alberta Students' Executive Council and the British Columbia Federation of Students are calling on the Federal Government to:

- expand the current CERB program to be universally distributed to all Canadians;
- force banks to temporarily pause interest accruals on credit cards, loans, lines of credit, and mortgages; and
- work with provincial governments to place a moratorium on rent and mortgage payments across the country.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Bilodeau, Executive Director  
Alberta Students' Executive Council



Tanysha Klassen, Chairperson  
British Columbia Federation of Students