

April 15, 2020

The Right Honourable Prime Minister
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Trudeau,

We, the undersigned, are a grouping of student organizations and coalitions calling on the federal government to extend the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) to all students and recent graduates, regardless of employment status and previous income.

Students and recent graduates who are just starting their careers now face the most uncertain job market since the Great Depression. The devastating economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are being felt across the country. While the government's focus has understandably been on ensuring that those who lost their livelihoods in the last few weeks have the support they need to keep a roof over their heads and put food on the table; students and recent graduates also find themselves in an extremely precarious financial situation.

Because of skyrocketing tuition fees and the rise of the cost of living, the more than 2 million students in Canada were already in a dire financial situation. The COVID-19 crisis has only exacerbated this. On top of tuition fees, students also need to pay for rent, groceries and other necessities, for which they usually rely on summer employment. With non-essential businesses across the country shutting down to fight the virus, we hear from students every day who tell us they have lost their jobs, summer internships and employment offers. In addition, graduating students are entering a job market where 4.5 million people have already been laid off.

Your government has told students that you have heard our pleas, that you are listening, and that more help is on the way. On Wednesday, April 8th, you announced the expansion of the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program. While a welcome first step to address the financial uncertainty students and recent graduates are facing, your government estimates the CSJ will only create 70,000 jobs. Yet, there are millions of students and recent graduates in Canada who have lost their income or employment opportunities. Furthermore, not all students are eligible for the CSJ due to eligibility restrictions, most notably students over 30 and international students.

By introducing CERB, the government has acknowledged that subsidizing employment alone will not meaningfully mitigate the devastation that this economic crisis is causing workers and businesses across Canada. It is clear that students and recent graduates are also in need of income support right now. We continue to believe that the only way to ensure that no one is left behind during the COVID-19 pandemic is by making all students and recent graduates eligible for the CERB. We, the undersigned, readily anticipate the introduction of this measure.

Sincerely,

Don't Forget Students

Canadian Federation of Students / Fédération canadienne des étudiantes et étudiants

Carleton University Graduate Students' Association

University of Windsor Graduate Student Society

University of Windsor Students' Alliance

York University Graduate Students' Association

Brandon University Students' Union

L'Association générale des étudiants de l'Université Sainte-Anne

University of New Brunswick Graduate Students' Association

The University of Guelph's Graduate Student Association Executive

Nipissing University Student Union

Lakehead University Student Union

Algoma University Students' Union

Grenfell Campus Student Union

Alma Mater Society of Queen's University

University of Guelph Central Students' Association

Brock University Graduate Students' Association

Laurentian University Graduate Students' Association / L'Association des étudiant(e)s aux études supérieures de l'Université Laurentienne

Student Union of NSCAD University

McMaster Students Union

University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union

Continuing Education Students' Association of Ryerson

York Federation of Students

Trent Central Student Association

Association of Part-Time Undergraduate Students at the University of Toronto

University of Toronto Students' Union

Memorial University of Newfoundland Students' Union

Graduate Students' Union of the Memorial University of Newfoundland

Wilfred Laurier University Graduate Students' Association
Glendon College Student Union / Association Étudiante du Collège Glendon
University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union
University of Western Ontario Society of Graduate Students Executive
Simon Fraser Student Society
Ontario College of Art and Design Student Union
Public Service Alliance of Canada Local 901