

NEWS BULLETIN

Updates from the Commissioner for Employers

Announcements

1 Rapid Response Supports for Workers and Employers

On August 28 as part of a package of measures the Government of Canada included several measures to support workers and employers affected by tariffs. Funding for this will come from the EI program. It is estimated to cost \$3.5 billion.

Government is anticipating 50,000 layoffs under the current tariff/counter tariff situation. Government's intent is to avert as many layoffs as possible. They hope this will be achieved by the supports for business development and the Worker retention program. The Worker Retention Program was described as an enhanced Work sharing program and worker retention grant.

They plan to introduce more flexibilities to the work sharing program including

- increasing the minimum number of weeks; allowing workers to work as little as 2 days a week and the rest would be on work sharing EI.
- reducing the administrative burden.
- “loosening” the training requirement
- more workers on work sharing to get 70% of their usual earnings for the days they are typically on EI work-sharing.
- streamlining how SME's file for all the tariff relief measures by having just one portal. The \$1000 training bonus will be delivered by Regional Development Agencies
- They plan to do outreach with Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce so that they are reaching SME's. I emphasized local industry associations are also important.

Specifically for Employers the announcement included measures to assist employers in keeping their workforce through a difficult period.

- A new Workforce Retention and Retraining Program will be established, combining the existing EI Work-Sharing program and Worker Retention Grant into a single, streamlined program designed to be more accessible and generous.
- Under this single-offering, new and existing Work-Sharing flexibilities will be supported, and employers will be eligible for additional funds to cover training and administrative costs (up to \$1,000 per participant).

For Workers

“This will enable workers to access income support when they need it by:

- Extending by one year the temporary Employment Insurance (EI) measure to waive the 1-week waiting period.
 - 60-70% of claimants will receive an extra week of benefits*
 - It was originally estimated that this measure would cost \$1.2 billion to the EI program to date it has cost \$890 million**
- Extending by one year the temporary EI measure that allows workers to receive EI benefits without first using up their separation payments (such as severance or vacation pay).
 - 426,000 claims have benefited from the suspension of monies upon separation since March 30, 2025. Monies on separation – 10% of claimants received monies on separation. A bit higher for tariff impacted*
 - Original estimate \$1.1 billion to date \$800 million**
- Extending by 8 months the temporary EI measure that provides an extra 20 weeks of EI regular benefits for long-tenured workers.
 - 30% of claimants meet definition of long-tenured worker*
 - Originally estimated \$1.9 billion as of June 23 it had cost \$200 million(44,000 claims) (59,000 claims estimated to cost \$262 million)*
 - Plan to do policy work as to how they can encourage retraining**
- Introducing a new temporary measure for one year so that workers who have voluntarily left jobs in recent months are no longer penalized when they want to access EI, as long as their most recent job loss is through no fault of their own.
 - [According to an evaluation](#) of this measure during the pandemic - The simplified treatment of RFS was needed to establish 3.6% of EI regular claims and 2.5% of EI special claims*
 - The average weekly EI benefit rate for regular claims that would not have been established was:
 - \$475 for claims only needing the simplified treatment of RFS***
- This will also help them move quickly into new opportunities by:
 - Increasing supports to match workers with jobs on [JobBank.gc.ca](#), including highlighting opportunities made available through investments in major projects, Build Canada Homes, and defence procurement.**

EI Premium 2027

This will impact the EI Premium for 2027. The Commission has accepted the Actuarial Report which sets the 2027 rate, however new assumptions will be sent to the actuary to reflect these measures. I anticipate a rate increase in 2027

Labour Unions welcome these changes to EI and want them to be made permanent
[Unifor welcomes Canadian tariff countermeasures, calls for additional action | Unifor](#)
[As Trade War Escalates, Support for Workers Must Keep Pace | Canadian Labour Congress](#)

- The government announced \$4 billion in new funding for businesses. For workers, most of today's EI measures extend temporary protections already in place, including waiving the waiting period, protecting severance and vacation pay, and providing additional weeks for eligible long-tenured workers.

"Too many workers still fall through the cracks of EI, and for many who qualify, the benefits aren't enough when a good-paying job disappears," said Bruske. "The government needs to be ready to go further, making EI easier to access, increase the amount workers receive, and ensuring workers have the support they need for as long as this trade war lasts."

[Déclaration du CNC sur les mesures pour répondre à la guerre commerciale – Le CNC](#)

My concerns

I am concerned that this helps set a precedent and lays the groundwork to make permanent waiving the 1 week waiting period, ignoring monies upon separation. It also sets precedent for EI eligibility if you quit your job – a slippery slope that if it became blanket would costs the EI system Billions of dollars.

I will provide more details as they become available, in the meantime, I look forward to hearing from you and supporting your organizations as the policy is being finalized.

2 Funding for Employer Association projects

[The Sectoral Workforce Innovation Fund](#) aims to address major skilled labour shortages. Not for profit Employer organizations are eligible to apply. If you have a project idea to help employers in your sector with their labour shortages, this fund could apply to you.

3 [A Smarter Immigration Strategy - RBC Thought Leadership](#)

Canada's immigration system needs to be reset in order to face ongoing economic challenges, says RBC

Factors such as population shocks, frequent rule changes, a weakened points system and a diminished focus on skills and experience have created an unstable environment, report says.

4 [Minister Hajdu establishes the Energy & Electricity Workforce Alliance](#)

The new Energy and Electricity Alliance will bring together respected leaders and experts known for their work in the sector, including employers, workers, educators and Indigenous partners, to help build the skilled workforce needed to support energy development, grid modernization, and a more productive energy and electricity sector.

5 [Minister Hajdu launches the Transportation and Supply Chain Workforce Alliance](#)

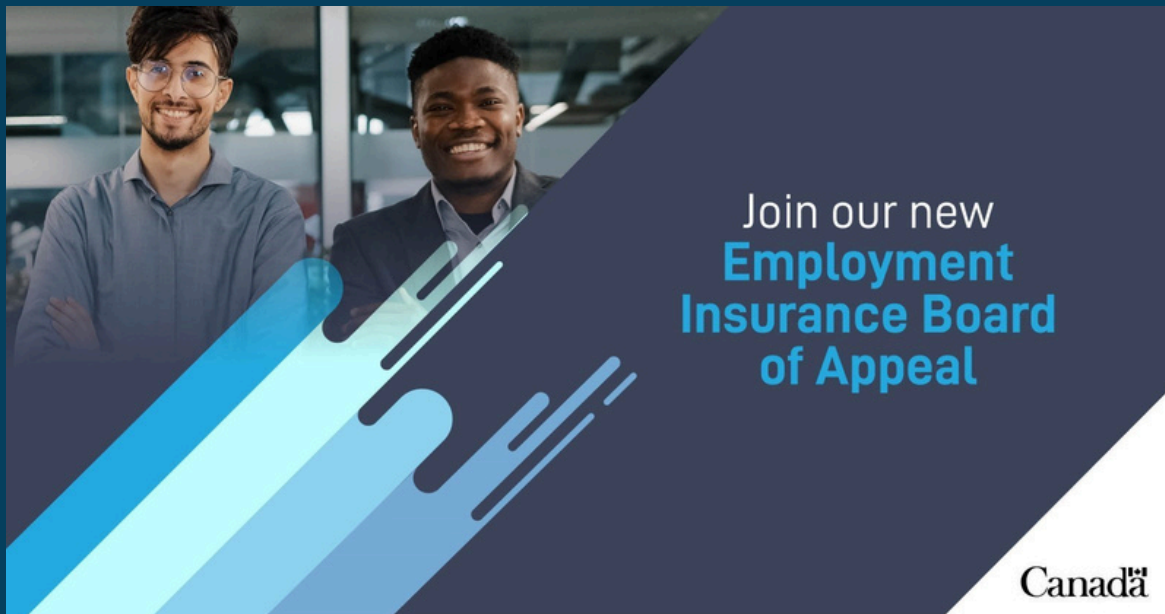
Led by Trucking HR Canada, in partnership with CIFFA - Canada's Association of Logistics Providers, the new Transportation and Supply Chain Alliance will bring together employers, educators, labour organizations and Indigenous partners to identify workforce challenges and develop coordinated solutions. The Alliance will support initiatives to strengthen skills development, attract new talent, adapt to new technology and improve collaboration across the sector.

6 [Join the EI Board of Appeals](#)

The EI Board of Appeals is seeking employer candidates in the following regions:

- Alberta
- British Columbia
- Manitoba
- Ontario
- PEI
- Quebec
- Saskatchewan

This board will be hearing and deciding on first-level EI appeals.



Apply [here](#)