

April 2, 2020

**SENT VIA EMAIL**

The Right Honourable Prime Minister Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
[pm@pm.gc.ca](mailto:pm@pm.gc.ca)

Dear Prime Minister,

**Re: Don't reward unethical employers using scabs**

I am writing to you today about the eligibility criteria for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS).

First, I want to thank you for heeding the advice of organizations, including mine, which argued that the 10 per cent subsidy offered by the Temporary Wage Subsidy program was totally insufficient and its eligibility criteria far too narrow. By introducing a 75 per cent wage subsidy under the CEWS, the government will provide a far more meaningful incentive for employers to keep workers on their payroll. Other crisis measures, including the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, are also welcomed by workers who desperately need income support during these unprecedented times. Unifor looks forward to working with you to better tailor these programs for the needs of working people in the coming weeks and months.

As you begin to finalize the eligibility criteria for CEWS, it is important that you prohibit employers currently involved in labour disputes choosing to deploy replacement workers (aka scabs) from accessing the subsidy.

Under no circumstances can these employers be rewarded by the federal government for union-busting tactics. Should federal funds be allocated to companies benefitting from scab labour, it will only serve to prolong labour disputes, doing greater harm to local workers, their families, and their community.

Scab labour is illegal in two provinces, Québec and British Columbia, and ought to be outlawed in the federal sector, as we have discussed in the past.

Take the case of the Co-op Refinery in Regina. More than 700 Unifor members have been locked out by the employer since December 5, 2019. Co-op was quick to fly in scabs using helicopters and has chosen to house them in cheap, temporary facilities. Co-op has resisted bargaining a settlement for more than 118 days and has recently snubbed recommendations from an independent mediator appointed by Premier Scott Moe.

The obstacles facing these locked out refinery workers are many. The last thing these oil and gas workers and their families want is a generous federal subsidy directed to an inflexible and greedy employer bent on breaking their spirits.

The dreadful conditions of the crowded worksite housing is also something Unifor has raised with municipal and provincial authorities. Whatever one's view of replacement workers, nobody deserves to be the subject of Co-op's bizarre housing experiment during a public health crisis. Those workers should be immediately sent home to their families before an outbreak happens.

I appreciate that initiating programs such as the CEWS under an impossibly short time frame is a very challenging undertaking for policy-makers and civil servants. That said, we are proposing implementing simple criteria to prevent Canada's most unethical employers from benefitting from emergency relief. Let's work together to put working people first.

Sincerely,



Jerry Dias  
National President

cc. The Honourable Bill Morneau, P.C., M.P., The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P., The Honourable Scott Moe, M.L.A.

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