



Colin Carrie MP Oshawa

Carrie Asks Parliament to Support Extension of EI Benefits to Long-Tenured Workers

For immediate release.

Ottawa, ON September 17, 2009 – Today, Dr. Colin Carrie, Member of Parliament for Oshawa and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health rose in the House of Commons and asked Parliament to pass the Conservative Government’s proposed legislation that would temporarily provide additional Employment Insurance (EI) regular benefits to unemployed long-tenured workers.

“This is important legislation,” stated Colin Carrie. “There are Canadians who have worked for many years, paid into the EI Program who are still looking for work and need our help. This government is committed to working for Canadians who have been hit hard by this global economic recession. I urge Parliament to pass this legislation.”

A long-tenured worker is someone that has contributed to the EI program (paid at least 30 percent of the annual maximum EI premiums) for at least seven out of ten calendar years, and has received regular EI benefits for no more than 35 weeks in the last five years. The proposed legislation is designed to help unemployed long-tenured workers, like Oshawa’s autoworkers, who have been paying EI premiums for many years, and need more time to find work.

The proposed legislation would extend regular benefits for eligible long-tenured workers anywhere between 5 and 20 weeks, depending on the number of years they have worked and paid EI premiums. It is estimated that this temporary measure would benefit approximately 190,000 long-tenured workers.

“While we are cautiously optimistic about signs that the economy is starting to recover, there are still many Canadians who desperately need these benefits. I am disappointed that at a time when we should be working together, the Liberals continue to put their interests before Canada’s unemployed,” stated Carrie. “Over the course of the summer I had the opportunity to talk to many unemployed citizens of Oshawa and this is the type of reform they’ve asked for.”

“I hope that after consistently failing to support other measures that this government has proposed to help Oshawa and the auto industry, the federal NDP finally decide to support our government’s positive action for the unemployed,” concluded Carrie.

For more information on the Conservative Government’s actions for the unemployed, please find the attached summary.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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Conservative Support for the Unemployed

Improvements to Job Training Programs:

Through the Career Transition Assistance Program the Government of Canada will provide an estimated \$500 million to help laid-off long-tenured workers with many years of experience to upgrade their skills. This program will also extend the duration of EI benefits for eligible workers who participate in longer-term training for up to two years. Additionally, workers who are investing in their own training using all, or a portion of their severance packages, will be able to access EI benefits earlier.

Extending Work Sharing Programs

The Government of Canada plans to extend, over the next two years, work-sharing agreements by 14 weeks, to a maximum of 52 weeks, to help businesses recover from the global economic downturn. It is expected that this extension will cost \$200 million over the next two years.

Work-Sharing programs allow qualifying workers to receive EI benefits in exchange for a reduced work-week while their employer recovers.

Working Sharing programs help:

- Workers avoid the hardship of a temporary lay-off;
- Businesses retain valuable employees;
- Maintain company morale; and
- Avoid unnecessary re-training costs.

Extension of Unemployed Benefits

In the Conservative Government's Economic Action Plan, unveiled in Budget 2009, EI benefit entitlements were extended by an extra five weeks, an increase to 50 weeks from 45 weeks. Additionally, \$1.9 billion was allocated to strengthen benefits for the EI program, as well as an additional \$4.5 billion to keep EI rates low for 2009-10.

EI Pilot Programs:

In the fall of 2008 the Conservatives introduced three EI pilot programs. These pilot programs include the:

- Working While on Claim Program: This project was designed to test whether an increased earnings threshold will provide a greater incentive for individuals to accept all available work while receiving EI benefits. This pilot project will be expanded nationally to all EI regions;
- The New Entrant/Re-entrant Program: The purpose of this program is to test whether enabling individuals new to the labour market, or returning after an extended absence to gain access to EI benefits after 840 hours of work rather than 910 hours, and informing them of EI employment programs that will improve their employability and help reduce future reliance on EI benefits; and
- The Best 14 Weeks Program: This program will continue to test methods to make EI benefit levels more reflective of full-time work earnings for those with sporadic work patterns, and to encourage claimants to accept all available work by calculating EI benefits based on the "best 14 weeks" of earnings over the 52 weeks preceding a claim.