TUNING IN

CERB AMNESTY FOR LOW-INCOME CANADIANS

Anti-poverty advocates are urging the federal government to implement a broad repayment amnesty for those who received the CERB but were later deemed ineligible

Asking low-income Canadians to repay their emergency funds is immoral, impractical and could sink people into deeper poverty

Why amnesty is the right choice

1

CERB distribution was complicated by the lack of communication between provinces/territories as well constantly changing eligibility criteria. It is not surprising that some people may have applied truly believing they were eligible despite not meeting the criteria.

2

Service providers across Canada were encouraged by the government to direct their clients to access CERB despite ambiguous eligibility. The pressure to "apply now and find out later" led many people to access the benefit despite not being eligible.

3 The money distributed to low-income CERB applicants who are now deemed ineligible has already been used to pay for essential resources. The time and federal resources needed to collect these payments would not be worth the value of the re-payments.

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AMNESTY RECOMMENDATIONS

Campaign 2000, an advocacy organization committed to ending child and family poverty, has been pushing for CERB amnesty since spring 2020. They recommend the Government:

Implement repayment amnesty to all people who received the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) whose incomes are below or near the Low-Income Measure and to all youth transitioning out of care.

CURRENT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

1. Self-employed individuals who applied for CERB and would have qualified based on their gross income will not be required to repay the benefit, provided they meet all other eligibility requirements. Those who voluntarily repaid the CERB will be repaid the amount they forfeited.

2. Will provide targeted interest relief to Canadians who received COVID-related income support benefits. Once eligible individuals have filed their 2020 income tax and benefit return, they will not be required to pay interest on any outstanding income tax debt for the 2020 tax year until April 30, 2022.

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