



January 17, 2022

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C.,
M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C.,
M.P.
Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P.
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
Privy Council Office
Room 1000
85 Sparks Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A3

The Honourable Marc Miller, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Employment, Workforce
Development and Disability Inclusion
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Indigenous Services
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers:

Re: Canada Disability Benefit

As members of the Senate of Canada, we write to thank you for your ongoing work to ground Canada's COVID-19 recovery in values of compassion, courage and determination, and to indicate our support for the adoption, on an urgent basis, of the proposed Canada Disability Benefit legislation.

One in five people in Canada has a disability. While the systemic discrimination and exclusion they face is long-standing, COVID-19 has exacerbated these inequalities and support programs like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) have been inaccessible to many due to annual income requirements.

We also want to take this opportunity to communicate our support for you to continue to take bold policy steps in order to realize your laudable goal of leaving no one behind. Given their requests for a partnership, we also encourage you to work with PEI to launch a demonstration project that will allow us to assess the benefits of investing in a guaranteed livable basic income for all below the poverty line.

We urge that these vital measures, the Canada Disability Benefit and support for PEI's request, be included in Budget 2022.

As we are witnessing together first-hand, vital direct income support measures like the CERB have helped many people stay safe, healthy, housed, and fed as we all weather the pandemic. Equally importantly, economic benefits provide Canadians with much needed hope for a better future. Regrettably, however, these measures have not reached many of those who are most economically, racially and circumstantially marginalized. Those who exist at the intersection of these marginalized identities are most vulnerable and need targeted support.

The link between income and health is starkly reflected in the toll that illness and death is taking on individuals, families and communities. Poor and racialized neighbourhoods are bearing the brunt of this pandemic and of health systems stretched to the brink.

As the Calls for Justice and the national action plan of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, as well as the impact of COVID-19 underscore, systemic racism and inequalities intersect with and exacerbate economic inequities.

The overwhelming majority of those seeking financial supports lack resources sufficient on which to live. Too many—including people working full time in minimum wage jobs—have been forced to rely on shelters, food banks and emergency services during this pandemic.

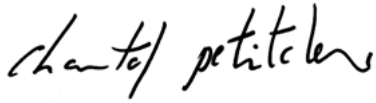
Economic instability was a reality before the pandemic for too many, including artists, who make significant contributions to Canada's communities and economies and are struggling for survival during COVID-19. While measures like the CERB provided temporary relief for some, many more have faced increasingly precarious situations as the pandemic stretches on.

While we remain concerned about all who continue to subsist in poverty and crisis and we see the implementation of a guaranteed livable basic income as a concrete and meaningful step toward reconciliation and decolonization, we recognize and support your commitment to introduce a basic income for those with disabilities. We applaud the implementation of the new benefit as an initiative that could help to generate a better future for many.

Throughout this pandemic, you have demonstrated that the government is ready and able to take courageous policy steps. We urge you to consider guaranteed livable basic income for all who live in poverty as the next logical step in your legacy.

We are ready to work alongside you to ensure that economic recovery is truly inclusive and for all.

Sincerely,



The Honourable Chantal Petitclerc, Senator
Senator for Québec (Grandville)



The Honourable Kim Pate, Senator
Senator for Ontario

With and on behalf of:

The Honourable Margaret Dawn Anderson, Senator for Northwest Territories
The Honourable David M. Arnot, Senator for Saskatchewan
The Honourable Wanda Thomas Bernard, Senator for Nova Scotia (East Preston)
The Honourable Robert Black, Senator for Ontario
The Honourable Gwen Boniface, Senator for Ontario
The Honourable Yvonne Boyer, Senator for Ontario
The Honourable Patrick Brazeau, Senator for Quebec (Repentigny)
The Honourable Bev Busson, Senator for British Columbia
The Honourable Dan Christmas, Senator for Nova Scotia
The Honourable Bernadette Clement, Senator for Ontario
The Honourable Brent Cotter, Senator for Saskatchewan
The Honourable Mary Coyle, Senator for Nova Scotia (Antigonish)
The Honourable Donna Dasko, Senator for Ontario
The Honourable Colin Deacon, Senator for Nova Scotia
The Honourable Marty Deacon, Senator for Ontario (Waterloo Region)
The Honourable Pat Duncan, Senator for Yukon
The Honourable Éric Forest, Senator for Quebec (Gulf)
The Honourable Brian Francis, Senator for Prince Edward Island
The Honourable Rosa Galvez, Senator for Quebec (Bedford)
The Honourable Amina Gerba, Senator for Quebec (Rigaud)
The Honourable Diane F. Griffin, Senator for Prince Edward Island
The Honourable Nancy J. Hartling, Senator for New Brunswick
The Honourable Mobina S.B. Jaffer, Senator for British Columbia
The Honourable Stan Kutcher, Senator for Nova Scotia
The Honourable Frances Lankin, Senator for Ontario
The Honourable Sandra M. Lovelace Nicholas, Senator for New Brunswick
The Honourable Mary Jane McCallum, Senator for Manitoba
The Honourable Marilou McPhedran, Senator for Manitoba
The Honourable Marie-Françoise Mégie, Senator for Quebec (Rougemont)
The Honourable Julie Miville-Dechéne, Senator for Quebec (Inkerman)
The Honourable Lucie Moncion, Senator for Ontario

The Honourable Rosemary Moodie, Senator for Ontario
The Honourable Ratna Omidvar, Senator for Ontario
The Honourable Jim Quinn, Senator for New Brunswick
The Honourable Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia, Senator for Newfoundland and Labrador
The Honourable Pierrette Ringuette, Senator for New Brunswick
The Honourable Raymonde Saint-Germain, Senator for Quebec (De la Vallière)
The Honourable Karen Sorensen, Senator for Alberta
The Honourable Howard Wetston, Senator for Ontario
The Honourable Vernon White, Senator for Ontario
The Honourable Hassan Yussuff, Senator for Ontario