



INCOME SECURITY ADVOCACY CENTRE
Centre d'action pour la sécurité du revenu

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Version française à venir

VIA EMAIL (Carla.Qualtrough@parl.gc.ca)

August 17, 2021

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Carla Qualtrough:

RE: Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) ineligibility for seniors who accessed the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB).

The Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) is a specialty legal clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario. ISAC's mandate is to advance the rights and interests of low-income Ontarians with respect to income security and employment. We carry out our mandate through test case litigation, policy advocacy, community development and public education.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have followed closely the interaction of CERB with other benefits. We are very concerned about the recent developments regarding the interaction between CERB and GIS. In recent days, we have heard from lawyers and other caseworkers in the legal clinic system who are receiving calls from seniors who unexpectedly lost their GIS or had their benefit reduced in July.

Seniors who access GIS are low-income seniors. Some work part time to meet the costs of their basic needs and experienced loss of job or reduced hours due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many accessed CERB because it was imperative for seniors, as a high risk population, to stay safe and isolate. Because of clawbacks, seniors who regularly receive GIS and who accessed CERB did not receive its full benefit. Now, many have lost access to GIS or have seen it reduced, and without warning.

GIS is an important benefit to reduce poverty for seniors. As we enter the fourth wave, we urge you to retroactively exempt CERB income from the calculation for GIS for all seniors and to immediately return full July payments to seniors who did not receive them. This will ensure that no low-income senior is forced to live in deeper poverty during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

INCOME SECURITY ADVOCACY CENTRE

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