

**JAGMEET SINGH**

DÉPUTÉ | MP, BURNABY SOUTH | BURNABY-SUD

December 13, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing once again to draw your attention to a problem resulting from a decision by your government that is putting some of Canada's poorest seniors in serious distress.

As you know, Canada's lowest-income seniors can receive additional financial support through the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). Nevertheless, the current GIS rate is not enough to keep them out of a life of poverty. Seniors receiving the GIS who are both willing and able may earn some employment income to supplement this inadequate pension.

Many seniors who were working to supplement their GIS prior to the pandemic were eligible and applied for emergency benefits when the pandemic robbed them of their employment. They paid taxes on this benefit income, but it appears that the income is now being used against them in the calculation of their GIS benefit for this year.

According to information received through access to information, your government was told about this problem affecting seniors last May and failed to act. New Democrats brought this to your government's attention in August and you failed to act. In our first conversation after the election, I raised this with you – and I've raised this with you in conversations since. And yet, seniors are still facing eviction from their homes because your government has done nothing to fix the problem.

One senior in Kelowna wrote to New Democrats to say that not only was he failing to make ends meet with a drastic cut in his GIS payments, but he's also dealing with a recent cancer diagnosis – and an upcoming eviction on December 23rd if your government doesn't reverse this cruel decision hurting him and some of our country's poorest seniors. In fact, it could seriously harm up to 88,000 seniors in this country who have seen their GIS support cut after being eligible for the CERB or CRB.

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GIS recipients already struggle to make ends meet. Denying them the GIS, or severely reducing it, as a result of last year's emergency benefits is not only unfair but will make it impossible for some of them to make rent. The point of the emergency benefits was to prevent evictions and keep food on the table, not to merely delay homelessness and hunger.

Your government stood by and said their hands were tied when the richest companies took pandemic support to pay bonuses to wealthy executives or to pay dividends to rich shareholders. Instead of making the wealthiest pay back the help they took and didn't need, your government is going after our country's poorest seniors and putting them in an impossible and in some cases desperate situation.

When we wrote to you in August and again in October, we said then that swift action was required to fix this problem before our seniors started receiving eviction notices. We are now there. No action months later has resulted in seniors across the country finding themselves with eviction notices or already out of their homes.

Your government promised to have people's backs for as long as they needed help. Seniors helped build this country and they need us to have their backs now more than ever. This cut in support for seniors needs to be corrected before the end of the week when the House rises until January 31st.

If we fail to fix this, thousands of seniors might be out on the streets in the coldest time of the year. We can't let that happen.

I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jagmeet Singh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jagmeet Singh, MP
Burnaby South
Leader, New Democratic Party of Canada