

Employment Insurance (EI) Pilot Project 24 Establishing Temporary Measures to Respond to Major Changes in Economic Conditions

Updated October 2025

The unprovoked U.S. trade war threatens thousands of Canadian jobs and entire industries. To support workers, special measures will be implemented to the Employment Insurance (EI) program, while businesses will benefit from deferred tax payments and enhanced funding.

These changes are in addition to the temporary changes to EI's Work-Sharing Program which is also in effect from March 7, 2025 until March 6, 2026. All details regarding any current special measures are available through the Employment and Social Development Canada webpage '[Special measures](#)'.

To support workers, the government has implemented "[Pilot Project 24](#)" that will:

For a period of 6 months starting on March 30, 2025

- Temporarily waive the one-week employment insurance (EI) waiting period
- Suspend rules around separation, so workers don't have to exhaust severance pay before collecting EI.

For a period of 3 months starting on April 6, 2025

- Make it easier to access EI by artificially increasing regional unemployment rate percentages. This temporary measure will reduce the hours required to qualify for regular benefits to no higher than 630 hours and increase the weeks of entitlement by up to four additional weeks.

For example, claimants who are in EI regions with 6.1% or less will be assigned the benefit packages corresponding to an unemployment rate of 7.1%; those in regions with more than 6.1% unemployment rate will see their reference unemployment rate increase by 1%, but no more than 13.1%.

Variable entrance requirements explained:

The EI system is currently designed to automatically adjust both the entrance requirements and the duration of benefits based on the regional unemployment rate.

Variable entrance requirements, or the number of hours you need to have worked to qualify for EI benefits depends on the unemployment rate in your region. In regions with higher unemployment rates, the required number of hours is lower. For example, if the unemployment rate is high, you might need 420 hours of work to qualify, whereas in regions with lower unemployment rates, you might need up to 700 hours.

The duration of EI benefits can also be extended based on the regional unemployment rate. This is intended to give more support to claimants in areas with higher unemployment.

Update to Temporary Measures

Two temporary EI measures will now be extended from October 2025 until April 11, 2026 to ensure income stability for workers:

- Waiving the one-week EI waiting period (for claims established between March 30, 2025 and April 11, 2026)
- Suspending the treatment of monies paid on separation (for claims established between March 30, 2025 and April 11, 2026)

Additionally, the Government is investing \$1.6B over five years to temporarily give 20 extra weeks of income support, up to a maximum of 65 weeks, to long-tenured workers. This measure will begin on October 12, 2025 and will apply to eligible claims established between June 15, 2025 and April 11, 2026.