

## **Occasional Teachers and Employment Insurance Benefits**

We have received many queries from our Occasional members about EI. One point I would like to emphasize is that the best time to apply is immediately after you are laid-off in June. If you apply before the end of the year, then the likelihood of being able to collect is remote given that occasional work is available. However, if your situation falls into the Special Benefits category listed below, this does not apply to you. Having said that, remember, if you qualify, Employment Insurance Benefits are available to you and it is your right to collect. At this point in time nothing appears to be different than last year so, in case you have forgotten, I will outline the process again.

In order to qualify for REGULAR BENEFITS an applicant must meet certain criteria:

Ø The Occasional must have worked approximately 700 insurable hours in the year. This figure is not written in stone. It varies according to the regional rate of employment at the time you apply. Last May the required number of hours, in Toronto, was 650. Each full day worked is deemed to be 7 hours. Therefore 700 hours equals 100 days. Since the threshold last spring was 650 hours, 93 occasional days was sufficient. [Summer school and night school also qualify, but the hours may be credited differently.]

Ø The applicant must have a copy of his/her Record of Employment (ROE), which is mailed by the Board some time in July.

Ø Application form. You can apply online at ( <http://www.hrhc-drhc.gc.ca/> ). Select the button under “Social Development Canada”. Then, under “How do I ...”, use the pull down arrow and select “apply for employment insurance?” and click the “find” button. From then on navigation on the site is obvious.

You may apply in advance of receiving the ROE if 14 days have passed since your last day of work. The application on-line is tedious, to say the least.

Extremely meticulous records of each supply day/week (Sunday to Saturday) must be kept.

Benefits are paid on the basis of 55% of the maximum insurable earnings level (\$39 000).

SPECIAL BENEFITS may apply to members who:

Ø Are taking maternity/parental leaves.

Ø Have exhausted sick leave provisions and cannot work due to illness.

Ø Are caring for a family member who is gravely ill with a significant risk of death within 26 weeks.

The qualifying period for SPECIAL BENEFITS is 600 hours. The applicant must also provide the record of employment, a medical certificate, and a completed application form.

**Once you qualify for EI and you have not exhausted the customary 17 weeks of benefit, you can reactivate your claim during Xmas and March breaks, BUT be sure you are available for work here at home not in Florida.**

**WARNING! Be prepared for some stress and grilling. Don't accept NO, appeal!**