

# Disabled Nortel workers seek \$80M relief fund

**Ex-employees appeal to government for financial aid**

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*Nearly 400 former Nortel employees who had their long-term disability, health and pension benefits cut off on Dec. 31, 2010, are asking the government to support them with a relief fund. (Nathan Denette/Canadian Press)*

Hundreds of former Nortel workers on disability are asking federal and provincial governments to set up a relief package to help them.

Diane Urquhart, an independent financial analyst fighting for the group of nearly 400 former Nortel workers on long-term disability leave, met with government House leader John Baird to pitch the idea for the fund.

She calculated the amount the workers need as roughly \$80 million.

That money, Urquhart said, would support incomes "and a modest amount of medicines that are not picked up in the provincial drug subsidy programs."

Urquhart has also brought the proposal to politicians from the other major parties.

Close to 400 former Nortel workers were on long-term disability leave when the company went into bankruptcy protection in 2009.

**'People are desperate, and we need the government to go to bat for us.'**—*Jackie Bodie, former Nortel employee*

Nortel officials had removed tens of millions of dollars from the company's health and welfare trust, but the trust account for the disabled was under-funded.

When the workers took their complaints to bankruptcy court last year, they lost.

Among the hundreds of people on disability benefits from Nortel when the company filed for bankruptcy protection are those with cancer, mental illness and multiple sclerosis.

"There's people in this group of 400 who have already committed suicide," said Jackie Bodie, who found out she had Parkinson's disease when she worked for Nortel in Calgary. "There's people that have talked about it. People are desperate, and we need the government to go to bat for us."

On average, the group's disability benefits will drop from about \$40,000 a year to \$16,000 a year.

Read more: <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2011/02/17/nortel-disabled-workers305.html#ixzz1EDjyL4mk>