



April 17, 2020

Members,

I understand all of the information being sent out lately can be overwhelming and confusing. Please find some information below regarding some of the subsidy programs provided by both the Federal and Provincial Governments.

Fraternally Yours,

Jim Noon

UA 324 Business Manager/Financial Secretary

Federal Support for Canadians- as of April 17, 2020

Temporary Income Support for Workers and Parents

For Canadians without paid sick leave (or similar workplace accommodation) who are sick, quarantined or forced to stay home to care for children, the Government is:

- Waiving the one-week waiting period for those individuals in imposed quarantine that claim Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefits. This temporary measure is in effect as of March 15, 2020.
- Waiving the requirement to provide a medical certificate to access EI sickness benefits.
- Introducing the Emergency Care Benefit providing up to \$900 bi-weekly, for up to 15 weeks. This flat-payment Benefit would be administered through the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and provide income support to:
 - Workers, including the self-employed, who are quarantined or sick with COVID-19 but do not qualify for EI sickness benefits.
 - Workers, including the self-employed, who are taking care of a family member who is sick with COVID-19, such as an elderly parent, but do not qualify for EI sickness benefits.
 - Parents with children who require care or supervision due to school or daycare closures, and are unable to earn employment income, irrespective of whether they qualify for EI or not.

Application for the Benefit will be available in April 2020, and require Canadians to attest that they meet the eligibility requirements. They will need to re-attest every two weeks to reconfirm their eligibility. Canadians will select one of three channels to apply for the Benefit:

1. by accessing it on their CRA MyAccount secure portal;
2. by accessing it from their secure My Service Canada Account; or
3. by calling a toll-free number equipped with an automated application process.

Longer-Term Income Support for Workers

For Canadians who lose their jobs or face reduced hours as a result of COVID's impact, the Government is:

- Introducing an Emergency Support Benefit delivered through the CRA to provide up to \$5.0 billion in support to workers who are not eligible for EI and who are facing unemployment.
- Implementing the EI Work Sharing Program, which provides EI benefits to workers who agree to reduce their normal working hour as a result of developments beyond the control of their employers, by extending the eligibility of such agreements to 76 weeks, easing

eligibility requirements, and streamlining the application process. This was announced by the Prime Minister on March 11, 2020.

Income Support for Individuals Who Need It Most

For over 12 million low- and modest-income families, who may require additional help with their finances, the Government is proposing to provide a one-time special payment by early May 2020 through the Goods and Services Tax credit (GSTC). This will double the maximum annual GSTC payment amounts for the 2019-20 benefit year. The average boost to income for those benefitting from this measure will be close to \$400 for single individuals and close to \$600 for couples. This measure will inject \$5.5 billion into the economy.

For over 3.5 million families with children, who may also require additional support, the Government is proposing to increase the maximum annual Canada Child Benefit (CCB) payment amounts, only for the 2019-20 benefit year, by \$300 per child. The overall increase for families receiving CCB will be approximately \$550 on average; these families will receive an extra \$300 per child as part of their May payment. In total, this measure will deliver almost \$2 billion in extra support.

Together, the proposed enhancements of the GSTC and CCB will give a single parent with two children and low to modest income nearly \$1,500 in additional short-term support.

To ensure that certain groups who may be vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19 have the support they need, the Government is proposing targeted help by:

- Providing \$305 million for a new distinctions-based Indigenous Community Support Fund to address immediate needs in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation communities.
- Placing a six-month interest-free moratorium on the repayment of Canada Student Loans for all individuals currently in the process of repaying these loans.
- Reducing required minimum withdrawals from Registered Retirement Income Funds (RRIFs) by 25% for 2020, in recognition of volatile market conditions and their impact on many seniors' retirement savings. This will provide flexibility to seniors that are concerned that

they may be required to liquidate their RRIF assets to meet minimum withdrawal requirements. Similar rules would apply to individuals receiving variable benefit payments under a defined contribution Registered Pension Plan.

- Providing the Reaching Home initiative with \$157.5 million to continue to support people experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak. The funding could be used for a range of needs such as purchasing beds and physical barriers for social distancing and securing accommodation to reduce overcrowding in shelters.
- Supporting women and children fleeing violence, by providing up to \$50 million to women's shelters and sexual assault centres to help with their capacity to manage or prevent an outbreak in their facilities. This includes funding for facilities in Indigenous communities.

Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)

We will provide a taxable benefit of \$2,000 every 4 weeks for up to 16 weeks to eligible workers who have lost their income due to COVID-19.

The CERB is available to workers who meet all of the following conditions:

- live in Canada and are at least 15 years old
- stopped working because of COVID-19 or are eligible for EI regular or sickness benefits
- have not voluntarily quit their job
- had income of at least \$5,000 in 2019 or in the 12 months prior to the date of their application.

On April 15, we announced changes to the eligibility rules to:

- Allow people to earn up to \$1,000 per month while collecting the CERB.

- Extend the CERB to seasonal workers who have exhausted their EI regular benefits and are unable to undertake their regular seasonal work because of COVID-19.
- Extend the CERB to workers who have recently exhausted their EI regular benefits and are unable to find a job because of COVID-19.

An online questionnaire will help us direct you to the service option that best fits your situation (i.e. eligibility for Employment Insurance benefits or not).

Do not apply for the CERB if you have already applied for EI.

You can also apply over the phone: 1-800-959-2019 or 1-800-959-2041

Flexibility for Taxpayers

In order to provide greater flexibility to Canadians who may be experiencing hardships during the COVID-19 outbreak, the Canada Revenue Agency will defer the filing due date for the 2019 tax returns of individuals, including certain trusts.

- For individuals (other than trusts), the return filing due date will be deferred until June 1, 2020. However, the Agency encourages individuals who expect to receive benefits under the GSTC or the Canada Child Benefit not to delay the filing of their return to ensure their entitlements for the 2020-21 benefit year are properly determined.
- For trusts having a taxation year ending on December 31, 2019, the return filing due date will be deferred until May 1, 2020.

The Canada Revenue Agency will allow all taxpayers to defer, until August 31, 2020, the payment of any income tax amounts that become owing on or after today and before September 2020. This relief would apply to tax balances due, as well as instalments, under Part I of the *Income Tax Act*. No interest or penalties will accumulate on these amounts during this period.

In order to reduce the necessity for taxpayers and tax preparers to meet in person during this difficult time, and to reduce administrative burden, effective immediately the Canada Revenue Agency will recognize electronic signatures as having met the signature requirements of the *Income Tax Act*, as a temporary administrative measure. This provision applies to authorization forms T183 or T183CORP, which are forms that are signed in person by millions of Canadians every year to authorize tax preparers to file taxes.

The Canada Revenue Agency is adapting its Outreach Program to support individuals during COVID-19. Through this service, the Canada Revenue Agency offers help to individuals to better understand their tax obligations and to obtain the benefits and credits to which they are entitled. Traditionally available in-person, this service is now available over the phone, and through webinar, where possible.

The Canada Revenue Agency fully expects that many community organizations are considering whether to significantly reduce or perhaps cancel the provision of services provided under the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program. Additional efforts to encourage individuals to file their tax and benefit returns electronically, or where possible, through the File My Return service, will be put forward.

Role of Financial Institutions

The Minister of Finance is in regular contact with the heads of Canada's large banks, and continues to encourage them to show flexibility in helping their customers whose personal or business finances are affected by COVID-19. The Superintendent of Financial Institutions has also made clear his expectation that banks will use the additional lending capacity provided by recent government actions to support Canadian businesses and households.

In response, banks in Canada have affirmed their commitment to working with customers to provide flexible solutions, on a case-by-case basis, for managing through hardships caused by recent developments. This may include situations such as pay disruption, childcare disruption, or illness. Canada's large banks have confirmed that this support will include up to a 6-month payment deferral for mortgages, and the opportunity for relief on other credit products. These targeted measures respond to immediate

challenges being faced across the country and will help stabilize the Canadian economy.

Mortgage Default Management Tools

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and other mortgage insurers offer tools to lenders that can assist homeowners who may be experiencing financial difficulty. These include payment deferral, loan re-amortization, capitalization of outstanding interest arrears and other eligible expenses, and special payment arrangements.

The Government, through CMHC, is providing increased flexibility for homeowners facing financial difficulties to defer mortgage payments on homeowner CMHC-insured mortgage loans. CMHC will permit lenders to allow payment deferral beginning immediately.

For more information visit- www.canada.ca

BC Financial Supports in Response to COVID-19

Last Updated: **April 16, 2020**

Funding for critical services is increased by \$1.7 billion to support:

- Health care pressures due to the COVID-19 outbreak
- Social services and vulnerable populations
- Housing and shelter programs
- First Nations Health Authority

B.C. Emergency Benefit for Workers

The B.C. Emergency Benefit for Workers will provide a one-time \$1,000 payment to people whose ability to work has been affected due to COVID-19.

- B.C. residents who receive the new federal Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) are eligible, including people who have run

out of employment insurance (EI) benefits and now qualify for the CERB

- People will need to state that they have filed or will file a 2019 B.C. income tax return to complete the application for the B.C. Emergency Benefit for Workers
 - The CRA has up-to-date guides on how to file your taxes quickly online
- Applications for the one-time payment will open soon

Climate Action Tax Credit

A one-time enhancement to the climate action tax credit will be paid in July 2020 for moderate to low-income families:

- An adult will receive up to \$218.00 (increased from \$43.50)
- A child will receive \$64.00 (increased from \$12.75)
- People need to file their income taxes to be eligible for the B.C. Climate Action Tax Credit
 - The CRA has up-to-date guides on how to file your taxes quickly online

Renters, Homeowners and People Experiencing Homelessness

Funding for housing supports are increased to ensure people can maintain their housing in the event of job or income loss.

- B.C. has halted all new and active evictions, except under exceptional circumstances
- Annual rent increases are frozen
- A temporary rent supplement is available
 - Eligible households with dependents can receive up to \$500 per month
 - Eligible households without dependents can receive up to \$300 per month
- The supplement is paid directly to landlords
- Applications for the supplement are open on the BC Housing website

B.C. Student Loans

Starting March 30, 2020, B.C. student loan payments are automatically frozen for six months.

Monthly Bills

BC Hydro

- BC Hydro rates have been reduced by 1%, effective April 1, 2020
- BC Hydro residential customers who have lost their job or are unable to work as a result of COVID-19 will receive a bill credit of three times their average monthly bill
 - This credit does not have to be paid back
 - Eligible customers can apply for bill relief until June 30, 2020
- Customers experiencing job loss, illness or lost wages due to COVID-19 can access grants up to \$600 to pay their hydro bills through the Customer Crisis Fund

ICBC

- Customers on a monthly payment plan who are facing financial challenges due to COVID-19 may defer their payment for up to 90 days with no penalty

FortisBC

- Residential FortisBC customers can sign up for the COVID-19 Customer Recovery Fund to automatically have their bills deferred from April 1 to June 30, 2020
 - A repayment schedule, free of interest or additional fees, will be set up and payments can be spread over a full year

For more information visit- www2.gov.bc.ca