

COVID-19 BULLETIN – APRIL 15, 2020

By Paige Ainslie and Mike Hamata

During his daily address from Rideau Cottage this morning, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced an expansion to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) as well as a planned “wage boost” for essential workers.

Wage Boost

The federal government announced that it will be working with the provinces and territories to implement a new transfer, which would enable the provinces and territories to temporarily top up the pay of essential workers earning less than \$2,500 per month.

The wage boost responds to the reality that a large number of essential workers are earning less than they would if they received the CERB. Essential workers will include those in hospitals and long term care facilities, as well as those ensuring the integrity of the food supply or providing essential retail services. The Prime Minister stated that he would be speaking with premiers and territorial leaders about implementation tomorrow evening.

Expansion of CERB

Eligibility rules for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) will be expanded to include:

- Individuals making \$1,000 or less/month;
- Individuals who have exhausted their EI benefits; and
- Seasonal workers who have exhausted their EI benefits and will be unable to undertake their usual seasonal work.

This expansion addresses previous concerns around the disincentive the CERB provided for low income individuals, including those who have experienced a drastic reduction to their income, to keep working despite earning less than they would if receiving the CERB. The federal government had previously indicated the government’s intention to address this group of individuals next.

The CERB is currently scheduled to be available for a maximum of 16 weeks, until October 3, 2020, and recipients are required to apply every four weeks, attesting that they continue to meet the eligibility criteria. The government has stated the CERB and wage boost form part of its overall COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, to which it has committed \$107 billion.



Still to Come

The Prime Minister advised today that more news regarding post secondary students and small businesses looking for commercial rent relief would be forthcoming this week.

In response to questions about the reopening of the economy, the Prime Minister stated that these discussions were still “weeks” away, and that the Country is still in the “first wave” of this crisis. When asked whether, when the time comes, workers will have to be tested before returning to work, Trudeau advised that massive rapid testing on a wide scale would have to be an essential part of any loosening of restrictions, along with aggressive contact tracing. He also stated that reopening the economy would vary region to region and industry to industry.

Navigating COVID-19 in the Workplace

For further information relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and how it may impact your workplace, please look to our previous bulletins, which can be found on [Roper Greyell's COVID-19 resource page](#).

This memorandum is current to the morning of April 15, 2020 but the pandemic and the responses of federal and provincial governments continue to evolve, and this may impact the accuracy of the information in this bulletin. If in doubt about whether anything in this document is still current, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#).

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