

COVID-19 BULLETIN – APRIL 27, 2020

By Maggie Campbell and Brandon Hillis

In his daily address, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau provided an update on the Federal Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (“CEWS”) program.

Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy Program

As discussed in our previous bulletins of [April 1, 2020](#), [April 8, 2020](#) and [April 21, 2020](#) the CEWS is a wage assistance program through which the Federal Government covers up to 75% of an employee’s wages, up to a maximum benefit of \$847 per week, for eligible businesses. The subsidy is retroactive to March 15, 2020, and covers a period of up to twelve (12) weeks, until June 6, 2020.

Today (April 27, 2020) is the first day that applications can be submitted and, as stated by the Prime Minister during his press conference, approximately 10,000 businesses applied in the opening hours of the new program. An [online calculator](#) launched last week to guide businesses in preparing applications has been viewed over 300,000 times.

In his press conference, the Prime Minister also advised that the Federal Government had partnered with financial institutions to enable CEWS payments to be made quickly. For those who are already signed up for direct deposit (or those who sign up quickly), the first payments to eligible employers are expected to be made on May 7, 2020.

Further information concerning the CEWS application process, as well as the online calculator, can be found [here](#).

Interaction with Canada Emergency Response Benefit

In his press conference, the Prime Minister advised that Canadians who have received Canada Emergency Response Benefit (“CERB”) payments and who are now eligible to receive retroactive wage-subsidy payments will not be entitled to keep both. As stated by the Prime Minister: “I want to remind everyone you won’t be able to keep both the wage subsidy and the CERB. It’s one or the other, not both.”

As outlined in previous bulletins, the CERB provides \$500 per week for up to sixteen weeks for workers who have lost their job or cannot work because of COVID-19. For further information on the CERB, please see our bulletins of [April 7, 2020](#) and [April 15, 2020](#).



Wages for Essential Workers

In her press conference today, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland briefly touched on the topic of wage top-ups for essential workers, stating:

“We are working with the provinces and territories to ensure that if you’re an essential worker, your salary will reflect the incredible work that you’re accomplishing every day.”

This appears to be a reference to the Federal Government’s April 17, 2020 announcement to work with the provinces and territories through a new transfer to cost-share a temporary top up to the salaries of low-income essential workers (described as those who earn less than \$2,500 per month) deemed essential in the fight against COVID-19. It is unclear which workers will be deemed “essential workers”, and such determination may ultimately end up being worked out on a province-by-province (or territory-by-territory) basis.

For now, and as per the Federal Government’s April 17 announcement, it is expected that “essential workers” will ultimately include those on the front-line in hospitals and nursing homes, those ensuring the integrity of the food supply, or those providing essential retail services to Canadians.

Further details concerning this new program can be found [here](#).

We will continue to monitor the development of this program and will provide further details as they become available.

B.C. Emergency Benefit for Workers

Specific to British Columbia, the Provincial Government announced late last week that the B.C. Emergency Response Benefit for Workers, a one-time tax-free \$1,000 payment, can be applied for starting on May 1, 2020.

Further details concerning eligibility requirements and the application process can be found [here](#).

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 27, 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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