

COVID-19 BULLETIN – APRIL 9, 2020

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Federal Response to COVID-19

The Public Health Agency of Canada [released a technical briefing today](#) on its current data and scenario modelling for the COVID-19 pandemic. The Public Health Agency's ambition is that with early epidemic control, such as physical distancing, increased testing, self-isolation of cases and rapidly tracing contacts, the initial peak may be in late spring with the first wave ending near the end of summer, followed by smaller outbreaks in the fall and beyond until a vaccine is created.

[Statistics Canada released Labour Force Survey data](#) this morning from March 2020. This data indicates that in March, the number of employed people fell by more than one million (-1,011,000 or -5.3%). The employment rate, or the proportion of people aged 15 and older who were employed, fell 3.3 percentage points to 58.5%.

Provincially, employment fell in all provinces, with Ontario (-403,000 or -5.3%), Quebec (-264,000 or -6.0%), British Columbia (-132,000 or -5.2%), and Alberta (-117,000 or -5.0%) reporting the largest declines.

Prime Minister Trudeau announced this morning in his daily update that four and a half million claims for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit have been processed since it opened on Monday.

Yesterday, the Government announced changes to the eligibility criteria for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and indicated that the Government hopes that the subsidy program will be in place in the next 3-6 weeks (more information can be found [here](#)).

Legislation for this subsidy program still needs to be passed. Prime Minister Trudeau indicated today that getting this legislation passed is a priority. Parliament is sitting on Saturday, April 11, 2020, to debate the wage subsidy.

Provincial and Territorial Responses to COVID-19

British Columbia

The BC unemployment rate in March 2020 was 7.2% (vs. national rate of 7.8%) with 132,000 jobs lost.

[Applications are now open for the temporary rental supplement.](#) Renters who are experiencing a loss of income during the COVID-19 pandemic can now apply for the Province's new temporary rental supplement on the BC Housing website.

Premier Horgan announced today that the Province [will invest \\$5 million to expand existing mental health programs and services](#) and launch new services to support British Columbians.



This will provide more options for people living with mental health challenges who are currently unable to access in-person supports, and will focus on adults, youth, front-line health care workers, and will increase access for Indigenous communities and those living in rural and remote parts of the province. Several services are available and online, while others will come online April 20, 2020.

The Province is working in partnership with Foundry Youth Centres, the Canadian Mental Health Association – BC Division (CMHA-BC), the BC Psychological Association and other community partners to deliver new and expanded mental health services. These include:

- providing more access to online programs for mental health by expanding the BounceBack program. BounceBack provides online coaching and the Living Life to the Full program, which helps people deal with life challenges and learn self-management skills (CMHA-BC);
- expanding access to no- and low-cost community counselling programs, including those that serve immigrant and refugee populations, and enabling them to be delivered virtually;
- increasing access to online peer support and system navigation (CMHA-BC);
- providing virtual supports for youth aged 12 to 24 by making Foundry services available around the province through voice, video and chat (FoundryBC);
- providing more online tools and resources to help people assess and manage their own mental health;
- supporting front-line health-care workers through a new online hub and providing virtual peer support (CMHA-BC); and
- a new online psychological support service for health-care workers (BC Psychological Association).

Alberta

The Province is doubling the capital maintenance and renewal funding in 2020-21 from \$937 million to \$1.9 billion by accelerating the capital plan. By accelerating the capital plan, significant additional work will be undertaken, including \$410 million for transportation projects. This includes an additional \$60 million for operating, which covers work repairing potholes across the province.

The Province is changing regulations to temporarily allow commercial truck drivers transporting essential supplies in direct support of the COVID-19 relief efforts to:

- Work for longer periods of time, provided all safety conditions are met.



- Apply for fewer municipal and provincial overweight permits by increasing the limits on weight of loads some vehicles can carry.
- Be exempt from road bans.
- Be exempt from municipal bylaws that restrict the hours they operate and park.

The regulation changes also allow provincially regulated railways to temporarily delay audits and retesting of existing operators' skills and medical fitness, to ensure physical distancing requirements can be met.

Certain other regulations are also being temporarily modified to allow Albertans to practice physical distancing, such as Albertans and businesses will have until 30 days after the public health emergency ends to file appeals to the Alberta Transportation Safety Board and 30 days after the ministerial order ends to file judicial reviews of the board's decisions.

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan small businesses will receive additional provincial support to help deal with current COVID-19 challenges through the new Saskatchewan Small Business Emergency Payment (SSBEP), which is a \$50 million program.

The SSBEP provides a one-time grant for small and medium-sized enterprises directly affected by government public health orders related to COVID-19. Grants will be paid based on 15 per cent of a business' monthly sales revenue, to a maximum of \$5,000. Further details and applications will be available on April 13.

Ontario

The Government has launched a new Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee which will focus on getting businesses up and running and people back to work after the COVID-19 pandemic is over. This new committee will be developing a plan to stimulate economic growth and job-creation in the weeks and months ahead.

The Government of Ontario is partnering with SPARK Ontario to help seniors and the most vulnerable stay connected and healthy as they self isolate during the COVID-19 outbreak. SPARK Ontario is the province's first bilingual volunteer hub designed to direct volunteers to where they are needed most.

Nova Scotia

Some new measures announced today include:

- Applications for the \$40 million Worker Emergency Bridge Fund and Small Business Impact Grant will be available and accepted starting Friday, April 10.



- Payment for more than 480 small-business fees will be deferred until June 30 to keep cash in small business hands.
- The order under the Health Protection Act has been amended to require workers in the fishing and offshore industries to self-isolate when they enter the province.

Yukon

Yukon businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic will receive funding from the Government of Yukon to cover fixed business costs, including rent, utilities and business insurance. The Yukon Business Relief Program will help Yukon businesses that have experienced a 30 per cent reduction in revenue and require immediate relief. Eligible businesses can apply for a grant of up to \$30,000 per month to cover fixed costs from March 23 to May 22, 2020.

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 afternoon of April 9, 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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