

COVID-19 BULLETIN – MAY 15, 2020

By Sandra Guarascio

Today's bulletin covers both Federal and Provincial COVID-19 updates including the extension of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, new guidance issued by WorkSafeBC for employers, news on the reopening of B.C. schools, and information on the Canada Emergency Student Benefit.

Extension of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy

In his address to Canadians this morning, Prime Minister Trudeau announced that the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (the "CEWS") will continue through the end of August. As discussed in [previous bulletins](#), 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 employee per week, for eligible businesses.

The Federal Government had previously advised on [May 8, 2020](#), the subsidy would be extended past June. [Finance Minister Bill Morneau confirmed today](#) that eligible businesses can continue to receive the subsidy until August 29, 2020.

In addition, Minister Morneau announced the approval of regulations to extend eligibility for the CEWS. These regulations extend eligibility for the CEWS to the following groups:

- Partnerships that are up to 50% owned by non-eligible members;
- Indigenous government-owned corporations that are carrying on a business, as well as partnerships where the partners are Indigenous governments and eligible employers;
- Registered Canadian Amateur Athletic Associations;
- Registered Journalism Organizations; and
- Non-public colleges and schools, including institutions that offer specialized services, such as arts schools, driving schools, language schools or flight schools.

Minister Morneau indicated the Federal Government also intends to propose legislative amendments "to ensure that the CEWS continues to meet its objectives." These proposed amendments would:

- Provide flexibility for employers of existing employees who were not regularly employed in early 2020, such as seasonal employees;
- Ensure that the CEWS applies appropriately to corporations formed on the amalgamation of two predecessor corporations; and
- Better align the treatment of trusts and corporations for the purpose of determining CEWS eligibility.



[Our team at Roper Greyell](#) can assist with many specific questions regarding the application of CEWS in your circumstances.

Introduction of WorkSafeBC guidelines

In support of BC's preparations to enter Phase 2 of its economic restart plan, WorkSafeBC has issued a number of guidelines. Employers that have experienced work interruptions due to COVID-19 are required to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan. A six step process has been introduced by WorkSafeBC with a tool that has been developed to assist employers: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/checklist/covid-19-safety-plan>

The 6 steps in the process involve:

1. Assessing the risks in your workplace;
2. Implementing protocols to reduce the risks (with reference to industry-specific protocols and guidelines and relevant orders, guidance and notices issued by the provincial health authority);
3. Developing appropriate policies to manage the workplace;
4. Developing communication plans and training plans;
5. Monitoring the workplace and updating plans as necessary; and,
6. Assessing and addressing risks from resuming operations.

Industry-specific guidelines have also been introduced by WorkSafeBC for the following sectors:

- arts and cultural facilities (museums, art galleries and libraries);
- health professionals;
- in-person counselling (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and counsellors);
- education (K-12);
- offices;
- parks and outdoor spaces;
- personal services (including salons);
- real estate services;
- restaurants, cafes and pubs; and,
- retail.



Employers providing services that have relevance across sectors are encouraged to review other applicable guidelines. Additional sector-specific guidelines will be available in the near future for the following sectors: child care, health services, and recreation and sports.

Industry-specific WorkSafeBC guidelines and resources can be found here: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation>

Businesses in all sectors are required to use these guidelines and resources to develop safety plans and post the plans for employees and customers as they resume operations. The Province has also stated that businesses in sectors under health orders limiting service (such as restaurants, pubs, salons and personal services) will not be able to open until those orders are lifted or modified.

WorkSafeBC is engaged in outreach to support the productions of sector standards with a view to establishing and sharing best practices.

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) has also issued tip sheets as guidance while operating during the pandemic. These guides cover a number of industries and sectors for which WorkSafeBC has not yet released industry-specific guidance. While not required to be followed in BC, these guides may be of assistance in preparing required safety plans. The guides include the following: daycares, transportation, construction, emergency and patient intake, work camps, first responders, retail, mining, airline and ground crews, home delivery and couriers, long term care, manufacturing, food processing, correctional facilities, restaurants and food services, and agriculture. The complete guidelines from CCOHS can be found here: <https://www.ccohs.ca/products/publications/covid19/>

[Our team at Roper Greyell](#) can assist with the drafting of policies and safety plans relevant to your workplace.

Premier Announces Part-time, Voluntary Return to School for B.C. Students

In a press conference held this morning, Premier Horgan announced that in-class learning will resume at B.C. schools for students in kindergarten through grade 12 on June 1. The number of students in class will be limited and parents will have the choice of sending their children back to class.

For kindergarten to Grade 5, this means most students will go to school half time (such as alternating days), while grades 6 to 12 will go to school about one day a week. The Premier indicated the goal was to return to full-time classes in September 2020. Children of essential service workers and students needing additional supports will have the option to attend school full time. Families that choose not to send their children back to class may continue learning from home.

More information on this announcement can be found here: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PREM0026-000890>



Applications Open for Canada Emergency Student Benefit

Today is the first day post-secondary students, and recent post-secondary and high school graduates can apply for the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (“CESB”). The CESB will provide a payment of \$1,250 for each 4 week period to unemployed students who do not qualify for the [Canada Emergency Response Benefit](#) (“CERB”). Students can receive payments from May 10 to August 29, 2020, across four eligibility periods. The benefit will also be available to employed students who make \$1,000 or less (before taxes) a month. Further, students with permanent disabilities or dependents will be eligible for an additional \$750 per period.

For more information on the CESB and Federal assistance for students, please see our [April 22, 2020, bulletin](#).

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 **May 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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While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in this update, you are urged to seek specific advice on matters of concern and not to rely solely on what is contained herein. The document is for general information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.