

The New Canada Emergency Response Benefit

The Government of Canada has established a new Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). The CERB is a streamlined benefit and replaces the previously announced Emergency Care Benefit and the Emergency Support Benefit. The CERB is a taxable benefit of \$2,000 a month for up to 4 months to:

- Workers who must stop working due to COVID-19 and do not have access to paid leave or other income support.
- Workers who are sick, quarantined, or taking care of someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- Working parents who must stay home without pay to care for children that are sick or need additional care because of school and daycare closures.
- Workers who still have their employment but are not being paid because there is currently not sufficient work and their employer has asked them not to come to work.
- Wage earners and self-employed individuals, including contract workers, who would not otherwise be eligible for Employment Insurance.

The CERB benefit:

- Is retroactive to March 15, Canadian workers will have access to the CERB for a maximum of 16 weeks, if their income loss is related to COVID-19.
- Will be accessible through a secure web portal starting in early April. Applicants will also be able to apply via an automated telephone line or via a toll-free number.
- Until then, EI eligible Canadians who have lost their jobs can continue to apply for EI online and will be automatically enrolled in the CERB. This automatic enrollment also includes all Canadians who have already applied for EI or EI Sickness Benefits since March 15th.

We will continue to send updates as more information regarding the Canadian Emergency Benefit (CERB) becomes available.

The Quarantine Act

The Government of Canada will use its authority under the *Quarantine Act* to ensure compliance with the order. Failure to comply with this Order is an offense under the *Quarantine Act*.

- Maximum penalties include a fine of up to \$750,000 and/or imprisonment for six months.
- A person who causes a risk of imminent death or serious bodily harm to another person while willfully or recklessly contravening this Act or the regulations could be liable for a fine of up to \$1,000,000 or to imprisonment of up to three years, or to both.
- Spot checks will be conducted by the Government of Canada to verify compliance.

Work-Sharing (WS) Program update

The Government of Canada posted updates today, March 26th, 2020, relating to the Work-Sharing (WS) program. WS is a program that helps employers and employees avoid layoffs when there is a temporary decrease in business activity beyond the control of the employer. The program provides EI benefits to eligible employees who agree to reduce their normal working hours and share the available work while their employer recovers. Please see below for further information.

Employers

To be eligible for a WS agreement, your business must:

- be a year-round business in Canada in operation for at least one year;
- be a private business, a publicly held company or a not-for-profit organization; and
- have at least two employees in the WS unit

How to Apply

Employers can use the simplified Work-Sharing application forms to apply:

- [Applications for a Work-Sharing Agreement \(EMP5100\)](#)
- [Attachment A: Work-Sharing Unit \(EMP5101\)](#)

Temporary special measures for Work-Sharing to support employers and workers affected by COVID-19

The temporary special measures to support workers and employers affected by COVID-19 includes the following:

- the maximum duration of Work-Sharing (WS) agreements was extended from 38 weeks to a maximum of 76 weeks
- the mandatory cooling-off period has been waived for employers who have already used the WS program so that eligible employers can apply immediately for the remaining time up to the maximum established duration of 76 weeks
- reduce the previous requirements for a recovery plan by removing the Annex B and replacing it to a single line of text within the application
- reduce the requirement and expand eligibility to employers affected by accepting business who have been in year-round business for only 1 year rather than 2, and to eliminate the burden of having to provide the sales/production figures for the last 2 years at the same time

Work reduction of employees

The employee's work reduction cannot exceed 60%. Under the Work-Sharing Program, the employer must agree to a reduction in the employees' regular work schedule ranging between a minimum of 10% and a maximum of 60% on average, over the life of the agreement. For example, in a regular 40-hour work week, the projected reduction in hours must be a minimum of 4 hours per week (10%), or a half day, and the projected maximum weekly reduction cannot exceed 3 days per week or 24 hours (60%).

Source: www.canada.ca

Resource Corner

COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-self-assessment>

Public Health Ontario
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/>

Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) - Pandemics
<https://www.ccohs.ca/topics/hazards/health/pandemics/>

We recommend that employers provide the following resources to their employees:

- Telehealth 1-866-797-0000
- Phone number for your local Public Health Department
- Phone number for your local hospitals