
May 7, 2020

BULLETIN

BENEFITS AVAILABLE FOR LAID OFF LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

With so many employees out of work during this COVID-19 pandemic, the availability of benefits and financial programs are continuously emerging, and existing programs evolving. This bulletin will summarize the benefits available to municipal employees who are laid off or temporarily out of work.

1. BC EMERGENCY BENEFIT FOR WORKERS

Applications opened on May 1, 2020, for a \$1000 one-time, tax-free emergency benefit available to British Columbia residents having difficulties making ends meet during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eligibility

This benefit is available to those whose ability to work has been affected by COVID-19, including those who have been laid off, are sick or quarantined, are parents with sick children, or are taking care of their children because their care facility is closed due to COVID-19.

Workers must reside in British Columbia, be a recipient of either EI or the CERB, and not be receiving income assistance or disability assistance. Additionally, applicants will need to state that they have filed or will file a 2019 BC income tax return to complete the application for the BC Emergency Benefit for Workers.

2. CANADA EMERGENCY RESPONSE BENEFIT (CERB)

The CERB is an income support payment, of \$2000 a month, payable to eligible workers for up to four months within the period falling between March 15, 2020 and October 3, 2020. Workers do not have to be laid off in order to access the CERB – those who remain employed by their employer can receive the CERB provided they meet the eligibility requirements.

Eligibility

The CERB is available to those who stop working for reasons related to COVID-19, including if someone is taking care of their children while schools and child care centres are closed. The remaining criteria for eligibility are as follows:

Applicants must:

- reside in Canada and be at least 15 years old;
- have had employment income of at least \$5,000 in 2019 or in the 12 months prior to the date of their application;
- not be receiving EI benefits for the same period; and
- have not quit their job voluntarily.

When submitting the first claim, a worker cannot have earned or expect to earn more than \$1,000 for a period of at least 14 consecutive days within the initial four-week benefit period of the claim, or \$1,000 in total for subsequent claims.

3. EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (EI)

EI provides regular benefits to individuals who lose their jobs through no fault of their own, for reasons such as shortage of work or seasonal or mass lay-offs, and are available for and able to work but can't find a job. EI can provide individuals with 14 to 45 weeks of financial assistance, generally calculated at 55% of their average insurable earnings, up to a maximum of \$573 per week.

Eligibility

Applicants must:

- not be a recipient of the CERB;
- have been employed in insurable employment;
- have been without work and pay for at least seven consecutive days out of the last 52 weeks;
- have lost their job through no fault of their own;
- have worked for the required number of insurable employment hours in the last 52 weeks or since the start of their last EI claim, whichever is shorter;
- be ready, willing and capable of working each day; and
- be actively looking for work (and keep a written record of employers contacted).

EI sickness benefits are also available for employees who cannot work for medical reasons. The 7-day waiting period has been waived for EI sickness benefits and for new EI claimants who are quarantined.

4. BC TEMPORARY RENTAL SUPPLEMENT (BC-TRS) PROGRAM

This program gives tenants and landlords temporary support towards rent payments for those impacted by COVID-19. Payments are made directly to the landlords of eligible households, of \$300 per month for eligible households with no dependents, and \$500 per month for eligible households with dependents.

Eligibility

Tenants must:

- be renting a primary residence in BC that is covered under the *Residential Tenancy Act*, the *Manufactured Home Act*, or the *Cooperative Association Act*;
- have a 2019 gross household income of less than \$74,150 for singles and couples without dependents, or \$113,040 for households with dependents;
- be receiving or eligible for EI or the CERB or, as a result of COVID-19, have experienced, and be able to provide evidence of, a drop of 25% or more in monthly household employment income;
- be paying more than 30% of current household income towards rent; and
- not have their rent subsidized by any other government program.

5. BC CLIMATE ACTION TAX CREDIT

This tax credit helps offset the impact of carbon taxes, and the BC government is increasing and expanding this credit in July 2020 by providing a one-time enhanced payment up to \$218 per adult or first child in a single parent family, and up to \$64 per additional child. Approximately 86% of British Columbians will see additional support from this enhancement.

Eligibility

People will get the payment automatically if they are eligible when filing their 2019 tax return. The one-time enhanced July 2020 payment has an increased income threshold amount before the tax credit is reduced to zero, so those who previously were not eligible due to their income may still receive this credit. Income thresholds can be viewed at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/income-taxes/personal/credits/climate-action/enhanced-july-2020-payment>.

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