Canada Activities

Federal Activities

On April 14, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced support measures for the governments, businesses, and people of the three territories. This includes making available $15 million in non-repayable support for businesses in the territories to help address the impacts of COVID-19. This support will assist businesses with operating costs not already covered by other measures.

On April 11, the House of Commons and Senate approved the legislation implementing the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. The legislation was granted Royal Assent that night.

The subsidy, which is retroactive to March 15, will cost the federal government $73 billion, a massive expenditure that is expected to cover wages, up to a maximum benefit of $847 per week or 75% of the employee’s pre-crisis weekly wages, for up to 12 weeks.

On April 9, applications for the Canada Emergency Business Account opened through the banks and credit unions. The program will provide interest-free loans of up to $40,000 to small businesses and not-for-profits. To qualify, these organizations will need to demonstrate they paid between $50,000 to $1 million in total payroll in 2019.

Following similar moves by a number of provinces, the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada released national modelling on the COVID-19 epidemic in Canada.

April 9 also saw the release of Statistics Canada’s March unemployment data, which reported that the economy lost 1,011,000 jobs in March — the worst recorded single-month change — lifting the unemployment rate to 7.8 percent.

On April 8, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced changes to the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, as negotiations continue with opposition parties as to when Parliament will be recalled. The proposed changes include:

- To measure their revenue loss, it is proposed that all employers have the flexibility to compare their revenue of March, April, and May 2020 to that of the same month of 2019, or to an average of their revenue earned in January and February 2020.
- For March, the Government proposes to make the CEWS more accessible than originally announced by reducing the 30-percent benchmark to 15 percent.
- The Government is proposing that employers be allowed to measure revenues either on the basis of accrual accounting (as they are earned) or cash accounting (as they are received). Special rules would also be provided to address issues for corporate groups, non-arm’s length entities and joint ventures.
- In addition, to recognize that different types of organizations are experiencing different types of funding pressures, it is proposed that charities and non-profit organizations be allowed to
choose to include or exclude government funding in their revenues for the purpose of applying the revenue reduction test.

The Prime Minister also announced temporary changes to the Canada Summer Jobs program. The temporary changes to the program for this year include:

- An increase to the wage subsidy, so that private and public sector employers can also receive up to 100 percent of the provincial or territorial minimum hourly wage for each employee
- An extension to the end date for employment to Feb. 28, 2021
- Allowing employers to adapt their projects and job activities to support essential services
- Allowing employers to hire staff on a part-time basis

On April 6, applications for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit opened through the Canada Revenue Agency. The Prime Minister has committed to expanding the program to ensure that individuals who are still earning a salary, at a reduced level, can qualify.

Alberta
On April 12, the province announced that beginning April 15, the Alberta government will match, dollar-for-dollar, donations up to $2 million to Alberta-based charities and non-profit organizations with COVID-19 fundraising campaigns. Organizations will be waiving any administration fees associated with campaign donations. The province is also providing $5 million to support food banks and community organizations in their food supply efforts.

On April 11, the province announced that it is sending supplies to British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec to help address unprecedented demand in those provinces for personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators.

On April 9, Premier Kenney announced the province is fast-tracking infrastructure projects in an effort to get Albertans back to work. Alberta is allocating $1.9 billion from the Capital Plan to repair roads, bridges, restore schools, and fill potholes. The $1.9 billion will be distributed among 114 projects, including 27 schools and nine major bridge and road projects.

The province also announced that it is temporarily modifying some regulations for truck drivers and railway operators to protect the supply chain. These measures include allowing commercial truck drivers 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 province, in collaboration with the federal government, announced Business Link, which will serve as a one-stop shop to help small businesses learn about and connect to available COVID-19 supports based on their unique business needs. To access Business Link services, contact 1-800-272-9675 or visit www.businesslink.ca.
On April 7, Government House Leader Jason Nixon announced that the government was calling back the legislature to debate legislation related to COVID-19. This includes amendments to the Emergency Management Act, including:

- Allowing states of local emergency to last for 90 days.
- Providing clear language that it is an offence to be non-compliant with orders made under states of local or provincial emergency.
- Clarifying that the minister has the power to modify a state of emergency without terminating it.
- Clarifying that a provincially declared state of emergency can be for a pandemic in general, and not just for pandemic influenza.

On April 6, the province announced a range of temporary changes to allow employers to appropriately respond to public health measures, and at the same time allow employees to remain attached to jobs and have the ability to access federal assistance programs. These include extending access to unpaid job-protected leave for employees, and removing the 24-hour written notice requirement for shift changes and requirement to provide the group termination notice to employees and unions, among other measures.

The province has released its list of “essential services.” This includes a number of categories that suggest that AEM members are to be considered essential businesses.

The province has launched a survey for businesses who wish to assist in the province’s outbreak response efforts, or bid on provincial government contracts for services needed in relation to the outbreak.

**British Colombia**

On April 9, applications opened for the province’s temporary rental supplement. The program will provide $300 per month for eligible households with no dependents and $500 per month for eligible households with dependents.

On April 8, Premier John Horgan announced that international travelers (including from the United States) coming to the province are required to provide a self-isolation plan before or upon arrival to B.C., regardless of their point of entry to Canada.

The province announced the establishment of an Emergency Relief Support Fund for children and youth with special needs and their families. The fund will provide a direct payment of $225 per month to eligible families over the next three months (to June 30, 2020).

The province has also released guidance for industrial and work camps, where employees reside on site, for the agriculture, forestry, mining, canneries, and oil and gas sectors.

On April 2, the Premier announced an Economic Recovery Task Force to help ensure the province’s economic response to COVID-19 is effective and responsive to the needs of British Columbians. Its tasks include exploring issues around the designation of essential and critical services; child care and other supports for essential workers, and safe workplace operations for businesses operating now, as well as those restarting after the crisis.
The province has listed what it considers to be essential businesses. The list suggests that AEM members are to be considered essential businesses.

The province has also published guidance regarding COVID-19 specific to manufacturing industries through WorkSafeBC. The public health officer has also provided clarifications for manufacturing businesses.

**Manitoba**

On April 14, the province announced it will now compensate health care workers who are required to self-isolate for 14 days due to possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace. They also announced new provisions to the Employment Standards Code that would allow employees protected leave for eligible purposes.

On April 13, the province announced that Winnipeg-based 24-7 Intouch has been awarded the contract to operate a secure call centre to help inform and guide stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic. The centre will offer a two-stream process to identify and reach out to identified and prioritized businesses and stakeholders that have been impacted by COVID-19 to offer help, and answer incoming calls and questions.

On April 9, Premier Brian Pallister and Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman announced that their governments are working in collaboration on a pandemic public health enforcement strategy, including new pre-set fines for individuals or business owners who disregard public health orders. Fine amounts for breaching emergency orders will be set at $486 for individuals and $2,542 for businesses.

On April 9, the province put out a procurement request to source non-medical cotton gloves, suits, gowns and other products requiring sewing to be used by social service workers. The Manitoba government is seeking the following items to support the province’s response to COVID-19:

- medical swabs;
- non-medical cotton gloves;
- non-medical cotton gowns; and
- previously requested supplies (i.e., medical gowns, suits, gloves and masks).

On April 8, the province announced the creation of a $5-million COVID-19 research fund through Research Manitoba. More than $3.5 million of the fund will be used to support clinical and applied research including $700,000 for Manitoba’s first COVID-19 clinical trial for a drug to fight the virus.

On April 7, Premier Pallister announced that the province is suspending repayment of Manitoba Student Aid loans for six months to reduce the financial burden on post-secondary students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On April 6, the Premier has reiterated his request that the federal government borrow money for the provinces, to take advantage of the federal government’s greater fiscal capacity and more favorable lending rate.

The province has responded to AEM’s correspondence, and confirmed that the current Public Health Order outlines that businesses in the manufacturing and production sector can continue to operate...
The province has also announced a number of measures to provide support and relief to homeowners and businesses:

- Manitoba manufacturers or businesses that are prepared to rapidly scale up production or re-tool manufacturing lines to develop products made in Manitoba to help in the fight against COVID-19 can go to the portal at www.manitoba.ca/covid19, and then visit the business and workplace page.
- Manitoba businesses can donate unused personal protective equipment supplies in original packaging, clean and in useable condition. For more info, visit: https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/supply-donations/.
- Instructing Manitoba Hydro, Centra Gas and Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) to not charge interest or penalties in the event that Manitobans are unable to pay at this time;
- Instructing MPI to relax ordinary practices on policy renewals and collections;
- Instructing Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries not to charge interest on receivables from restaurants, bars and specialty wine stores;
- Supporting Workers Compensation Board (WCB) to do the same and asking WCB to extend relief from penalties for late payments;
- Directing Manitoba Hydro and Centra Gas to not disconnect customers during these times; and
- Working with municipal partners to ensure municipalities do not charge interest on provincial education taxes and school division fees and the province is encouraging municipalities to do the same with respect to their own taxes and will start discussions to support implementation.

Premier Brian Pallister has also announced that the province is suspending classroom learning for kindergarten to Grade 12 students indefinitely for this school year. Child care centres located in schools will continue to operate under the current conditions set out by the chief provincial public health officer.

New Brunswick

On April 7, Premier Blaine Higgs announced that employers based in New Brunswick whose businesses have been impacted by COVID-19 can now apply to the provincial government for loans for working capital. They have also launched a webpage containing guidance for businesses.

On April 6, the Premier established a pandemic task force to help combat COVID-19. The task force will be vested with decision-making authority about the pandemic response for all aspects of the health-care system.

The Premier has announced that workers or self-employed people in New Brunswick who have lost their job due to COVID-19 are eligible to receive a one-time income benefit of $900.

The province has stated that manufacturers are allowed to stay open, however, they are expected to reduce in-person sales activities and apply all social distancing and hygiene recommendations.
Newfoundland and Labrador
The province has announced that stores that are not exempt under the Regulations, but are deemed by order of the Chief Medical Officer of Health as services essential to the life, health or personal safety of individuals and animals, will be provided the option to open for business on Good Friday.

Nova Scotia
On April 6, Premier Stephen McNeil has announced that travel will no longer be a requirement to be referred for testing for COVID-19.

On April 2, the Premier announced further measures to support citizens and businesses. The measures announced are:

- $20 million Worker Emergency Bridge Fund to help the self-employed and those laid-off workers who do not qualify for Employment Insurance.
- $20 million to fund a new program -- the Small Business Impact Grant. Eligible small businesses and social enterprises will receive a grant of 15 percent of their revenue from sales -- either from April 2019 or February 2020, up to a maximum of $5,000.

The province announced that they have updated the guidelines for the COVID-19 Rent Deferral Support Program for small and medium businesses. The program aims to encourage landlords to defer rent payments from their commercial tenants for three months, spreading the deferred rent amount over the rest of the lease term.

The Premier has also announced that the current state of emergency is extended until noon, April 19.

Ontario
On April 14, the province announced that it has extended all emergency orders that have been put in place to-date until April 23. The province also announced the following new steps to help stop the spread of COVID-19:

- Making it easier to repurpose existing buildings and put up temporary structures, like tents, so communities can meet their local needs quickly.
- Temporarily enabling hospitals to increase their capacity by using the beds and services of retirement homes without certain labour relations implications during the declared provincial emergency.
- Prohibiting recreational camping on Crown land as of April 9, 2020.
- Supporting construction workers and businesses with emergency action to help improve cash flow in the construction industry during the COVID-19 outbreak. This will lift the suspension of limitation periods and procedural time periods under the Construction Act and allow the release of holdback payments to contractors and subcontractors.

On April 9, Premier Doug Ford announced that the Ontario government has launched a 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.

On April 8, the Premier announced that Ontario is extending construction hours for essential construction projects, like critical projects in the health care sector, to 24 hours a day. The province is also implementing a number of measures across essential workplaces in the province:
- Redeploying more than 30 employment standards officers to help businesses understand and comply with health and safety requirements;
- Working with health and safety associations to deploy up to 30 specialists to support employers and workers in the field;
- Issuing health and safety guidance notes to support specific sectors;
- Doubling the capacity of Ontario’s Health and Safety Call Centre from 25 to 50 phonelines;
- Providing job-protected leave under the Employment Standards Act for workers who need to self-isolate or care for a loved one because of COVID-19;
- Issuing a call to recently-retired inspectors who may be able and willing to return to their positions;
- Providing compliance assistance and enforcing the emergency orders issued under the Emergency Measures and Civil Protection Act.

On April 7, the provincial government announced $37 million to support outbreak planning, prevention and mitigation efforts to ensure the health and well-being of Indigenous people and communities — particularly those in remote and far-northern regions.

On April 3, Premier Doug Ford announced that the province has reduced its list of “essential businesses.” The updated list will direct additional businesses to close, and directs specified businesses to provide services by alternate methods such as curb side pick up and delivery, except in exceptional circumstances. Manufacturing remains listed as an essential business, the following direction was given in section 23 of the executive order:

- Businesses that extract, manufacture, process and distribute goods, products, equipment and materials, including businesses that manufacture inputs to other manufacturers, (e.g. primary metal/ steel, blow molding, component manufacturers, chemicals, etc. that feed the end-product manufacturer), regardless of whether those other manufacturers are inside or outside of Ontario, together with businesses that support and facilitate the movement of goods within integrated North American and global supply chains.

The province has also launched a website with the aim of connecting workers with employers looking to fill positions in the agri-food sector.

The province has a toll-free line 1-888-444-3659 to provide support to Ontario businesses who have questions about the province’s recent emergency order to close at-risk workplaces.

**Prince Edward Island**

On April 7, the province announced the extension of the deadline for Jobs for Youth to April 30 to allow employers ample time to apply for wage subsidies from this program. Approved businesses will be posted to the province’s website and young people will apply directly to the jobs that interest them.

The province has introduced an Emergency Relief – Worker Assistance Program to provide financial support to employers to assist their employed workers who have been impacted by reduced hours. They have also implemented an Emergency Working Capital Financing program to provide emergency working capital financing to assist PEI’s small business during this period.
**Quebec**

On April 10th, Premier François Legault suggested that key sectors, including construction, could open prior to May 4th. Construction alone employs hundreds of thousands of people and generates annual investments in the province of around $40 billion, according to the provincial agency that oversees the industry.

On April 8, Premier François Legault stated that recent signs are positive, and that there is potential to begin moving to reopen certain businesses in the coming days or weeks if the number of infections continue to stabilize, however social distancing measures are expected to remain in place for months. He stated that he expects to provide further details in the coming days.

On April 5, the Premier announced the extension of the closure of all non-essential businesses until May 4. Quebec’s list of “essential services” includes the following manufacturing activities:

- Food production (for example agricultural operations, food processing, drink production, slaughterhouses, market-garden vegetable and horticultural production, fisheries and commercial aquaculture)
- Production of inputs necessary for priority sectors
- Pulp and paper sector
- Manufacture of medical instruments
- Manufacture of chemicals
- Manufacture of sanitary products
- Manufacture of micro-electronic components
- Industrial facilities (in particular in the aluminum sector) and mining facilities, which must reduce their activities to a minimum
- Manufacturing and maintenance in the defence sector

**Saskatchewan**

On April 14, the province announced a series of relief measures for the provincial oil and gas sector. These include:

- Extending a series of filing and other deadlines to assist the oil and gas sector in stabilizing operations.
- Extending mineral rights, scheduled to expire in 2020, by one year. This includes rights granted under the terms of an oil and gas lease, exploration license or permit.
- Reducing the industry portion of the Oil and Gas Administrative Levy by 50 per cent this fiscal year and delaying the invoicing of the remaining balance until October 1, 2020.

The province further announced that it has reached a draft agreement with the Government of Canada on the regulation of methane reductions in the upstream oil and gas industry. The province announced that it has also recently signed, with the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors (CAODC), a Memorandum of Agreement that harmonizes regulations with Alberta to support local service rig companies and their employees.

On April 13, the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority (FCAA) informed Saskatchewan businesses that grossly excessive pricing of products or services during a period of crisis that takes advantage of consumers who are unable to protect their own interests due to the impact of the crisis is not permitted.
On April 9, Premier Scott Moe announced that small businesses will receive additional provincial support through the new Saskatchewan Small Business Emergency Payment (SSBEP). The $50 million program will provide financial support to small and medium-sized businesses that have had to temporarily close or significantly curtail operations as a result of the pandemic.

Premier Moe has replied to the correspondence from AEM, and has confirmed the designation of manufacturing as an allowable business service. He expressed the need for all businesses still operating to set out strong guidance to ensure the safety of their employees.

The province has launched a Business Response Team, which will work with businesses to identify program supports available to them both provincially and federally.