Canada Activities

Federal Activities

On August 24, Trade Minister Mary Ng welcomed the unanimous WTO panel ruling that U.S. countervailing duties against Canadian softwood lumber are inconsistent with the WTO obligations of the United States. She noted that the federal government will continue to work closely with the provinces and the softwood lumber industry to defend the forestry sector and its workers.

On August 24, the federal government announced a new temporary public policy that will allow visitors to apply for a work permit without having to leave Canada. To be eligible, an applicant looking to benefit from this temporary public policy must:

- have valid status in Canada as a visitor on the day they apply,
- have been in Canada on August 24, 2020 and remained in Canada,
- have a job offer,
- submit an application for an employer-specific work permit that is supported by a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) or an LMIA-exempt offer of employment, no later than March 31, 2021, and
- meet all other standard admissibility criteria.

On August 22, the government released Canada’s Statement on Implementation of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), (also known as the New NAFTA).

On August 21, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland announced that the government is extending the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) program by four weeks – from August 30 to September 26. This means that employers who qualify for the CEWS would be able to continue to claim up to a maximum benefit of $847 per week to support remuneration for each of their furloughed workers.

On August 21, Labour Minister Filomena Tassi announced that a truce agreement had been made in labor negotiations regarding the Port of Montreal. This truce agreement aims to provide continuity in a critical link of Canada’s supply chain, while providing the space needed for an agreement to be reached at the table.

On August 20, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland and Employment Minister Carla Qualtrough announced the following:

- The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) will be extended by an additional four weeks to a maximum of 28 weeks. This means that for the many Canadians expecting to
exhaust their CERB benefits at the end of August, they will now be able to access an additional month of support.

- There are changes to the EI program, expanding eligibility to add more than 400,000 people to the program. EI insurance premiums are also being frozen for two years.

They also proposed three new benefits, which will require new legislation to support their implementation:

- The Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB) will provide $400 per week for up to 26 weeks, to workers who are self-employed or are not eligible for EI and who still require income support and who are available and looking for work.
- The Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB) will provide $500 per week for up to two weeks, for workers who are sick or must self-isolate for reasons related to COVID-19.
- The Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB) will provide $500 per week for up to 26 weeks per household, for eligible Canadians unable to work because they must care for:
  - a child under age 12 due to the closures of schools or daycares because of COVID-19.
  - a family member with a disability or a dependent because their day program or care facility is closed due to COVID-19.
  - a child, a family member with a disability, or a dependent who is not attending school, daycare, or other care facilities under the advice of a medical professional due to being at high-risk if they contract COVID-19.

Additional technical details on these programs are available here.

On August 20, the Competition Bureau released a toolkit to help policymakers across the country promote competition in Canadian industries. The toolkit provides a step-by-step guide to help policymakers at all levels of government assess the competition impact of new and existing policies, and tailor those policies to maximize the benefits of competition to the economy.

On August 18, Chrystia Freeland was named Canada’s first female Finance Minister after the resignation of Bill Morneau. The same day, Prime Minister Trudeau asked the Governor General to prorogue Parliament until September 23, when a new Speech from the Throne will attempt to reset the government’s agenda, while also giving an opportunity for a confidence vote that the Opposition members could use to topple the government, if they wanted.

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) has released the e-course Pandemic Planning: Reopening for Business, to help organizations across Canada safely return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Canada’s border restrictions with the United States are being extended until at least September 21.

August 17 marked the opening for applications of period 5 for the now-enhanced Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS). Eligible employers can apply for period 5 of the CEWS through My Business Account or through the CRA’s web form application.

The federal government has connected their electric vehicle expansion initiatives in Parks Canada to how the COVID-19 pandemic reminded Canadians of the importance of connecting with our natural environment and spending time in nature beneficial for human health and well-being.

Ottawa has declined Ontario and Quebec’s request to intervene in the Port of Montreal strike, now in its second week. CBC reports that Labour Minister Filomena Tassi says there has been progress in negotiations.

Alberta

On August 25, Premier Kenney shuffled his cabinet, with Doug Schweitzer moving from Justice and Solicitor General to serve as the new Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation. Kaycee Madu has moved from Municipal Affairs to serve as the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

The province is expanding COVID-19 testing for asymptomatic Albertans at pharmacies, in addition to the province-wide testing at AHS assessment centres.

The province saw employment gains in July, with more than 67,000 jobs added. This is the third straight month with an increase, with 187,000 Albertans returning to work over this period.

The province has signalled the intent for Alberta to enter into a memorandum of understanding with Ontario, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick to support the development of versatile and scalable small modular reactors (SMRs).

Alberta’s government has provided businesses with more than $25.7 million since the Small and Medium Enterprise Relaunch Grant was launched one month ago. In the first month of the program, almost 7,700 applications have been processed, with more than 6,700 grants issued.

British Colombia

On August 24, the province announced that more sports are moving into Phase 3. Under Phase 3 of the Return to Sport Guidelines, amateur sport activities may be able to engage in: additional training opportunities; modified games and matches; and league play and competitions within sport cohorts.
On August 21, the province announced that police and other provincial enforcement officers are being given the ability to issue $2,000 violation tickets for owners or organizers contravening the provincial health officer’s (PHO) order on gatherings and events.

The province has extended the state of emergency until the end of the day on September 1.

A new chair has been appointed to the WorkSafeBC board of directors, effective August 14. The new chair, Jeff Parr, is a former deputy minister in multiple provincial governments.

On August 13, the province warned that with only two weeks until the application deadline, employees and employers who need to extend temporary layoffs beyond the August 30 expiry date are entering a critical phase to meet deadlines.

As of August 12, BC opened the second intake for funding applications for projects that manage renewable energy, improve access to clean-energy transportation, improve energy efficiency of buildings or help generate clean energy to reduce community reliance on fossil fuels. The funding will come from the Province and the Government of Canada through the CleanBC Communities Fund. Federal Infrastructure Minister Catherine McKenna pointed to examples such as electric-vehicle charging stations or clean-energy projects. More information on the CleanBC Communities Fund, including program and eligibility criteria and how to apply, is available at: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation/funding-engagement-permits/funding-grants/investing-in-canada-infrastructure-program/green-infrastructure/cleanbc-communities-fund

Manitoba
On August 26, the province announced that it was enhancing the back to work wage subsidy program, with up to $100,000 in financial support available for businesses. The application deadline is Oct. 1st. Employers will be required to provide proof of payment of wages by Jan. 4, 2021. Program details and the application form are available online at www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/restartmb/mbtwp.html

On August 24, the province announced a special $100 million Safe Schools fund is being created by the Manitoba Government to ensure safe and healthy learning environments this fall.

On August 20, the Manitoba government issued a request for proposals to provide additional COVID-19 contact tracing services for the province, according to Health, Seniors, and Active Living Minister Cameron Friesen and Central Services Minister Reg Helwe. The RFP has been posted to MERX at www.merx.com under an open tendering process. The deadline for proposals is Sept. 9.
The B2B Manitoba health and safety online marketplace is being expanded to allow businesses and not-for-profits to contract health and safety services. The B2BManitoba.ca app was developed by the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME), the Manitoba and Winnipeg chambers of commerce and North Forge Technology Exchange. B2B Manitoba was launched in May to help connect Manitoba businesses with non-medical grade personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies needed to operate safely.

The Manitoba government is calling on the federal government to finalize details of the Pan-Canadian Sick Leave Program so that workers can stay home from work when needed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 without financial hardship. The Pan-Canadian Sick Leave Program was announced about a month ago as part of the Safe Restart Agreement between Canada and all provinces and territories. The Manitoba Employment Standards Code does not require an amendment to make this federally delivered program function. However, if the province is asked to deliver the program on behalf of the federal government, the province will review the legislation to determine if provincial changes are required.

The province has extended the state of emergency for another 30 days, as of August 12.

New Brunswick
On August 20, the province announced a return to school plan, including support for vulnerable students and COVID-19 testing available for school staff.

A general election has been called in New Brunswick, to be held on September 14.

Newfoundland and Labrador
On August 19, Andrew Furey was sworn in as the new Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, and his new cabinet was sworn in as well, including new Finance Minister Siobhan Coady.

Nova Scotia
AEM continues to monitor updates in the province.

Ontario
On August 26, the province announced that the federal government would be providing an additional $381 million to Ontario for the back-to-school plan. This is on top of the $900 million provided by the province.

On August 21, the province expanded indoor capacity for facilities, which can now have up to 50 guests for each indoor meeting room or event space within the facility. The facility would have to adhere to a plan approved by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.
On August 21, the province partnered with federal government and 3M Canada on a new N95 Respirator manufacturing facility in Brockville. Both levels of government are investing $23.33 million to support 3M's capital investment of $70 million. The expanded facility will produce enough respirators to meet private sector, provincial and North American market demand throughout the pandemic and beyond.

On August 20, the province announced that it is expanding eligibility for agriculture societies to apply for funding to help offset the financial losses due to the cancellation of fall fairs, exhibitions and activities during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. For this year only, nearly $1 million will be made available to all qualifying agricultural and horticultural societies to help ensure operations.

On August 20, the province released Sustainable Growth: Ontario’s Forest Sector Strategy, the province's plan to create jobs and encourage economic growth in the forest industry. The fundamental pillar of the strategy is the promotion of stewardship and sustainability, recognizing the importance of keeping Crown forests healthy, diverse, and productive so Ontario's forest industry can remain viable over the long term. The strategy also focuses on the importance of putting more wood to work, improving cost competitiveness, and fostering innovation, new markets, and talent. An Advisory Committee will be tasked with developing and overseeing an implementation plan, including providing input on proposed key performance indicators in the short, medium, and long term.

On August 20, the province extended orders currently in force under the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act 2020 (ROA). All orders under the ROA have been extended to September 22, with the following exceptions:

- The Education Sector order will end on August 31.
- The Limitation Periods order will end, and suspended time periods will resume running on September 14.

On August 19, Ontario took steps to improve service delivery at provincial agencies, including:

- Agricorp, a provincial agricultural agency, is developing a new self-serve system that will allow farm owners to register their business and pay fees all through one convenient website.
- The Justices of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee is implementing online applications that will improve the user experience for candidates and help fill vacancies faster.
- The Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal now uses online filing for applications, saving Ontarians, and the agency, time.
- The Ontario Labour Relations Board now delivers video conferencing options so Ontarians can appear at hearings remotely.
The province announced that it is moving forward with the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension and the Scarborough Subway Extension.

Prince Edward Island
AEM continues to monitor updates in the province.

Quebec
On August 25, the province announced that it will not move forward with a COVID-19 mobile app immediately, but will remain ready in the event of a second wave, if necessary.

On August 24, the province announced that is launching an online consultation that will be used to draw up the next Local and Regional Economic Development Strategy for Quebec. The consultation will make it possible to define measures to:

- encourage the growth of businesses in the regions, taking into account their particularities and their specific needs;
- support organizations active in local and regional economic development; and
- help companies meet the challenges imposed by the health crisis and take advantage of new business opportunities.

More information on how to participate is available here.

On August 21, the province announced an additional $300 million for the enhancement of Student Financial Assistance. The investments will allow the implementation of both temporary and permanent measures to improve financial assistance for studies due to the unusual educational situation caused by the pandemic.

Minister of Transport François Bonnardel announced that by 2022, the province will invest $5.2 billion to maintain and improve the road, maritime, rail, and airport networks in all regions of Quebec. The enhanced Quebec Infrastructure Plan for 2020-2030 will invest $13.6 billion in public transit alone, which is a 50 percent increase compared to what had been forecast for 2019-2029. In addition, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency financial assistance of $400 million was granted to allow organizations and public transport companies to ensure the continuity of their services, despite a marked drop in clientele.

The province announced its plan to prepare for a second wave of COVID-19. The plan includes, among others: prohibiting the mobility of labor, while strictly respecting the rules of infection prevention and control; reducing the time taken for the entire screening process; ensuring the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) by entering into agreements with Quebec manufacturers for the production of strategic products; and reaching the entire population through targeted communications tailored to different audiences.
The Government of Quebec announced a 12-week extension of the employer contribution credit to the Health Services Fund for employees on paid leave introduced following the implementation of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy.

The province has opened consultations on a ten-year dredging program at Port-Cartier, which primarily handles iron ore and iron oxide pellets.

On August 10, longshore workers at the Montreal port began an unlimited strike. No agreement has been reached on the renewal of their collective agreement, which expired on December 31, 2018. A preceding series of temporary strikes has already been diverting ships to other ports in Halifax, Saint John, and New York.

Saskatchewan
On August 26, the province announced that parents and caregivers will now have access to detailed information for their child’s local school as they continue to prepare for reopening on September 8.

The province announced on August 13 that it will provide $15 million to help develop new technologies in agriculture and position the province as a global leader in the ag-tech sector. Innovation Saskatchewan will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) in the coming weeks to begin exploring fund options with the private sector.

Four sets of temporary Regulations created during COVID-19 that permit the remote witnessing of certain documents will be made permanent. These include: The Land Titles (Remote Witnessing) Amendment Regulations, 2020; The Powers of Attorney (Remote Witnessing) Amendment Regulations, 2020; The Electronic Information and Documents (Remote Witnessing) Amendment Regulations, 2020; and The Wills Regulations.

The province saw 13,300 more people working in the province in July compared to June. Unemployment fell by 2.8 per cent to 8.8 per cent (seasonally adjusted), the second-lowest among provinces.