Canada Activities

Today, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that the federal government will provide $100 million in funding to national, regional, and local organizations across Canada that are able to reach people and communities experiencing food insecurity. These organizations – including but not limited to Food Banks Canada, Salvation Army, Second Harvest, Community Food Centres Canada, and Breakfast Club of Canada.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Chrystia Freeland, announced that Canada has notified the United States and Mexico that Canada has completed the domestic ratification process of the new NAFTA. The Canadian government will continue to work with the United States and Mexican governments to determine an ‘entry into force’ date.

On April 2, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Bill Blair, released the federal government's guidance on what it considers to be essential services and functions. Manufacturing is listed as one of Canada’s 10 critical infrastructure sectors. The guidance is non-binding and advisory in nature, and should not be considered to be a federal directive or standard.

On April 1, Finance Minister Bill Morneau announced details of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. Eligible employers include those of all sizes and across all sectors who suffer a drop in gross revenues of at least 30 percent in March, April or May, when compared to the same month in 2019. The subsidy would apply at a rate of 75 percent of the first $58,700 normally earned by employees – representing a benefit of up to $847 per week. The program would be in place for a 12-week period, from March 15 to June 6, 2020. Parliament will be recalled to pass legislation to implement this program, and further administrative details will be announced in the coming weeks.

On March 31, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau provided an update on the federal government’s progress in partnering with manufacturers and private sector businesses to secure necessary medical equipment and personal protective equipment. The government is investing $2 billion to support diagnostic testing and to purchase ventilators and protective personal equipment, including for bulk purchases with provinces and territories. Further, $50 million has been made available in funding for members of the Next Generation Manufacturing Supercluster to develop and scale-up new, in-demand technologies, equipment, and medical products.

Of particular note, the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy is:

- Available to employers of all sizes and sectors, except for the public sector.
- Applicable to the self-employed, partnerships and private corporations.
- Available to employers that have suffered a drop in gross revenues of at least 30 percent in March, April or May, when compared to the same month in 2019.
- The subsidy is applied at a rate of 75% of the first $58,700 earned by employees.
- In place from March 15, 2020 to June 6, 2020.
- Accessible via a web portal administered by the Canada Revenue Agency (expected to be up and running in three to six weeks).
Alberta
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
Premier Horgan has 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. The task force will take the form of a weekly conference call between Premier Horgan; Carole James, Minister of Finance; Michelle Mungall, Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness; other members of cabinet and leaders from business organizations, including the Business Council of B.C., BC Chamber of Commerce, Vancouver Board of Trade, Surrey Board of Trade, the BC Federation of Labour, First Nations organizations and the not-for-profit sector. 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.

Manitoba
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 under section 19. Further information for employers and employees can be found at http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19/infomanitobans/workplaces.html.

The province has also announced a number of new 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
Premier Blaine Higgs 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.

Nova Scotia
Premier Stephen McNeil has announced further measures to support citizens and businesses. The new measures announced today are:

• a $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 per cent 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.