

## COVID-19

### SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL/TAX ISSUES

(As of February 18, 2022)

**Changes since last version (November 26, 2021) highlighted in green**

#### Canada Revenue Agency – COVID-19 Webpage

- CRA webpage which summarizes tax related information in respect of the government's COVID-19 response: <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-finance/economic-response-plan.html>

#### **CEBA**

The repayment deadline to qualify for partial loan forgiveness on the CEBA business loans has been extended from December 31, 2022 to December 31, 2023 for all eligible borrowers in good standing. Outstanding loans will convert to term loans with a 2-year amortization period with interest of 5% beginning January 1, 2024.

#### **Reporting COVID-19 Assistance**

Government assistance received in the year such as the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB), the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB) or the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB) are taxable and must be reported on your 2021 income tax return. The Government should be issuing T4A tax slips to individuals who received assistance in 2021.

#### **COVID-19 Closure Relief Grant for B.C. Businesses**

Funding will be available to B.C. businesses mandated to shut down as of December 22, 2021, in response to the surge of COVID-19 cases. This one-time relief grant ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000 is available to businesses ordered to fully close, including:

- Gyms and fitness centres, pilates and yoga studios, barre and spin studios
- Bars, lounges, and nightclubs that do not serve full meals
- Event venues that can no longer hold events

Funding amounts will be distributed based on a business' number of employees. This provincial grant will supplement the recently announced extension of federal support programs.

**Two recent versions of the rent and wage subsidies set to expire May 7, 2022:**

- **The Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program**, provides wage and rent subsidies, to hotels, tour operators, travel agencies, and restaurants, with a subsidy rate of up to 75%. Subsidy rates match revenue decline percentages, but only start at 40%.
- **Hardest-Hit Business Recovery Program**, provides wage and rent subsidies to those who have experienced at least a 50% revenue decline, with a subsidy rate of up to 50%.
- Applicants under these programs will need to demonstrate significant revenue losses over the course of 12 months of the pandemic, as well as revenue losses in the current month.
- Subsidy rates will be cut in half on March 13, 2022.

**Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (“CEWS”) – 75% Wage Subsidy**

- CRA updated their CEWS FAQ to provide additional commentary on amending applications after the applicable deadline has passed. Previously, CRA had stated that upward adjustments (increases to claims) subsequent to the deadline would not be permitted.
- CEWS is to be included in income on an accrual basis
- The deadlines for filing CEWS applications are as follows:

<b>4 week period End</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
28-Aug-21	24-Feb-22
25-Sep-21	24-Mar-22
23-Oct-21	21-Apr-22

**Highly Affected Sectors Credit Availability Program (HASCAP):**

- Application deadline has been extended to March 31, 2022 (from Dec 2021)
- Offers eligible businesses loans from \$25,000 up to \$1,000,000
- To be eligible for HASCAP a business must:
  - Prove they were financially stable and viable prior to the impact of COVID-19.
  - Show at least a 50% reduction in gross revenues in at least three months within the eight-month period prior to the date of application, (these months do not have to be consecutive).
  - Have received CEWS or CERS prior to applying for HASCAP. Or if the business does not qualify for the CEWS or the CERS, it will need to provide other financial information demonstrating the revenue decline described above

### **The Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit (CWLB)**

Provides income support to workers whose employment is interrupted by specific government-imposed public health lockdown scenarios and who are unable to work due to such restrictions.

The benefit includes:

- \$300 a week.
- Strictly available to workers whose work interruption is a direct result of a government-imposed public health lockdown.
- Available until May 7, 2022, with retroactive application to October 24, 2021 should the situation warrant it.
- Accessible for the entire duration of a government-imposed public health lockdown (up until May 7, 2022).
- Available to workers who are ineligible for Employment Insurance (EI) and those who are eligible for EI, as long as they are not paid benefits through EI for the same period.

Individuals whose loss of income or employment is due to their refusal to adhere to a vaccine mandate would not be able to access the benefit.

### **Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB)**

Provides \$500 per week (taxable, tax deducted at source) for up to 42 weeks per household for workers unable to work for at least 50% of the week because they must care for a child under the age of 12 or family member because schools, day-cares or care facilities are closed due to COVID-19, or because the child or family member is sick and/or required to quarantine or is at high risk of serious health implications because of COVID-19. This benefit will be paid in one-week periods.

The CRCB is extending until May 7, 2022 with an increase to the maximum number of weeks.

### **Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB)**

Provides \$500 per week (taxable, tax deducted at source) for up to a maximum of 4 weeks, for workers who are unable to work for at least 50% of the week because they contracted COVID-19, self-isolated for reasons related to COVID-19, or have underlying conditions, are undergoing treatments or have contracted other sicknesses that, in the opinion of a medical practitioner, nurse practitioner, person in authority, government or public health authority, would make them more susceptible to COVID-19. This benefit will be paid in one-week periods.

The CRSB is extending until May 7, 2022 with an increase to the maximum number of weeks.

Note that the above benefits and CERB and CESB, are not classified as employment income, so are not eligible for the exemption when calculating GIS benefit amounts.

Steps were also taken to simplify the Employment Insurance (EI) program: reducing required insurable hours, increasing minimum weekly benefits, and increasing minimum weeks eligible for EI.

For claims starting between September 26, 2021 and November 20, 2021, the minimum benefit rate for EI clients is \$300 per week before taxes in most cases

### **Employment Insurance (EI) Premium Rates**

- The EI premium rate will be frozen for two years, to the end of 2022.

### **Extension of the EI work sharing program**

- Provides top-up EI benefits to employees who agree to reduce their normal working hours to share available work with other employees
- Program was extended from 38 weeks to 76 weeks

### **Employer-provided benefits and allowances**

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) recognizes that for many employers and employees, there have been changes in the way that work is being conducted so employees are not unduly exposed to the COVID-19 virus while performing their duties. Under these extraordinary circumstances, the CRA has adopted the certain positions for employer-provided benefits pertaining to commuting and parking costs, as well as computer and home office equipment. These positions are effective from **March 15, 2020 to December 31, 2022.**

For details, go to: [Employer-provided Benefits and Allowances: CRA and COVID-19 - Canada.ca](https://www.cra.ca/employer-provided-benefits-and-allowances)

### **Working From Home**

#### **Home office equipment:**

- The CRA indicated that a general allowance paid to an employee would be considered a taxable benefit but that, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CRA would be “willing to accept that the reimbursement of an amount not exceeding \$500 for the purchase of personal computer equipment will not be taxable if it is mainly for the benefit of the employer.”

#### **Travel Expenses:**

- If an employee normally works in their home office, does not have an office at the employer's place of business but occasionally must travel there, the travel to and from the employer's place of business may qualify for a vehicle expense deduction, or may receive a tax-free reasonable travel allowance from their employer for this travel.

#### **Other expenses:**

- If you worked from home or are still working from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to get in writing from your employer that you are/were required to work from home, and what expenses you are/were required to pay for without reimbursement. This is especially important to do now in case your employer is one of the unfortunate ones that will go out of business. At a minimum, get emails from your employer about this. An

amended employment contract would be ideal. A T2200, Declaration of Conditions of Employment, should be completed by the employee and employer in order to claim these expenses.

- The CRA will allow employees working from home in 2021 and 2022 due to COVID-19 with modest expenses to claim up to \$500, based on the amount of time working from home, without the need to track detailed expenses, and will generally not request that people provide a signed form from their employers.
- Optional Detailed Method – You can also obtain a simplified T2200S from your employer to claim specific eligible expenses.

#### **Canada Emergency Rent Support (CERS):**

Amending a CERS Claim After the Deadline - must be done within 30 days after the applicable filing deadline.

- The deadlines for filing applications are as follows:

<b>4 week period</b>	<b>End</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
28-Aug-21	24-Feb-22
25-Sep-21	24-Mar-22
23-Oct-21	21-Apr-22

- Up to \$75,000 per period in rent, mortgage interest, insurance and property taxes paid by commercial property owners can be partially subsidized.
- For businesses, charities, and non-profits that have suffered a revenue drop.
- Top-up CERS of 25% for organizations temporarily shut down by a mandatory public health order issued by a qualifying public health authority, in addition to the 65% subsidy. Hard-hit businesses could receive up to 90% rent support.

#### **The Canada Recovery Hiring Program (CRHP):**

The government has extended the program until May 7, 2022 (period 28). With this extension, the government proposes to establish the legislative authority to further extend the program through regulations until July 2, 2022, if necessary.

- Provide a 50% subsidy for eligible remuneration paid in excess of that paid in a baseline reference period. The base period for the CRHP is March 14 to April 10, 2021
- A revenue decline of over 0% is needed for the first period, over 10% for the remainder.

<b>4 week period End</b>	<b>Subsidy</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
28-Aug-21	50%	24-Feb-22
25-Sep-21	40%	24-Mar-22
23-Oct-21	30%	21-Apr-22
20-Nov-21	20%	19-May-22

Each claim period, eligible employers can claim either the higher of the CRHP, or the wage portion of:

- the Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program (THRP), or
- the Hardest-Hit Business Recovery Program (HHBRP)

Before October 24, 2021, eligible employers could claim either the CRHP or the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS).

### **BC Government Offerings:**

#### Paid Leave

You can take up to 3 hours paid leave to be vaccinated against COVID-19. If necessary, you can take additional paid leave for a second dose. Employees are entitled to this leave no matter how long they have been employed. Paid leave is retroactive to April 19, 2021.

If your workplace does not have an existing sick leave program, the province will reimburse you up to \$200 a day

#### BC PharmaCare Income Review Application:

- If your income has been reduced due to COVID-19, you can apply for an income review in order to reduce your PharmaCare deductible and family maximum.

#### Income assistance or disability assistance:

- EI, CERB, the three Canada recovery benefits are exempt as income and assets for individuals who were eligible for assistance (except repayable hardship assistance due to having applied for EI or CERB) or were designated as a Person with Disabilities (PWD) on April 2, 2020.

### **Agriculture Specific Offerings**

#### BC Assessment – Farm Status – Extended for second year

BC Government waived minimum income requirements for farmers to maintain their farm status on properties. This means that regardless of income earned in 2020 or 2021, farms with existing farm status will maintain that status until 2022 regardless of income earned.

Any property subject to a legal change, including a change in ownership or subdivision, and any property with a change in use or where a lease is expiring

will be required to complete a self-reporting questionnaire and will not automatically be granted farm status.

BC Agri-Business Planning Program

Funding programs intended to support producers and food processors.

For more information, go to:  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/programs/agri-business-planning-program#Business-Recovery-Planning>

Farm Credit Corporation (“FCC”)

- FCC may allow deferral of principal and interest payments for six months, or in some cases, deferral of principal payments for up to 12 months.
- FCC may provide access to an additional credit line of up to \$500,000, secured by general security agreements.