

As we first reported yesterday, there have been some significant changes announced by both the Alberta and Federal Governments regarding employees, the self-employed and contractors to help offset some of the adverse financial effects of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. We have received a large volume of inquiries surrounding what the changes actually look like. Below is a high-level summary for quick referencing:

- Employment Insurance (“EI”): for employees who have lost their job through no fault of their own, whether temporarily or otherwise, or are ill, EI Regular Benefits and EI Sickness Benefits will apply if certain eligibility criteria are met – principally, whether the qualifying number of 700 hours worked has been met for Regular EI Benefits and 600 hours worked for EI Sickness Benefits in the preceding 52 week period (see: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-regular-benefit/eligibility.html>)
- If the eligibility criteria have been met, employees can receive 55% of their regular wages to a maximum of \$573 per week.
- In light of the 14-day quarantine / self-isolation period, the Federal Government has waived the traditional one-week waiting period for employees required to self-isolate, such that employees will be eligible to receive EI Sickness Benefits for the full 14-day period. This is significant for employees who do not have paid employer-sponsored sick leave. The Federal Government has also waived the traditionally required medical certificate for the 14-day self-isolation period as well as the 90-day employment threshold.  
Apply online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei.html>
- Yesterday, the Federal Government announced the Emergency Care Benefit, which will apply to the all employees AND self-employed workers or contractors who would not otherwise qualify for EI Sickness benefits. This will be administered by the Canada Revenue Agency (“CRA”) and provide up to \$900 biweekly for a maximum of 15 weeks. Crucially, the Emergency Care Benefit will also apply to employees and self-employed workers required to care for a loved one who is required to self-isolate AND parents and families who are required to stay home to care for children due to school and daycare closures. This Benefit will be available for online application via the CRA and Service Canada within the next 1-2 weeks and funds should start to be received by April 2020.
- The Federal Government also announced the Emergency Support Benefit yesterday, which will be administered by the Canada Revenue Agency. The Emergency Support Benefit will provide up to 14 weeks of benefits at rates comparable to Regular EI Benefits for those who have lost their jobs or realized a substantial reduction in hours due to the COVID-19 crisis. This will apply to

employees, particularly part-time and casual, AND self-employed workers all of whom would not otherwise qualify for Regular EI Benefits. More details will be announced in the coming days.

- The Alberta Government also announced amendments to the Employment Standards Code (Alberta) which will provide 14 days of UNPAID job-protected leave for those employees who do not have paid sick leave and required to self-isolate or self-quarantine (the “Amendment”) in accordance with Alberta Government’s published criteria. The Amendment has waived the requirement for a medical certificate and the 90-day employment threshold has likewise been waived. (see: [http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Orders/Orders\\_in\\_Council/2020/2020\\_064.html](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Orders/Orders_in_Council/2020/2020_064.html))
- The Amendment is a reversal from what the Alberta Government announced on March 13, 2020, which would have given employees in self-isolation 14 days of PAID leave, as well as to those employees required to care for loved ones required to self-isolate. The Amendment effectively relieved employers of the burden to pay wages while employees self-isolate.
- Although not the PAID 14 day leave initially promised, the Alberta Government announced Emergency Isolation Support which will provide employees who are required to self-isolate or care for a dependant who is required to self-isolate in accordance with public health criteria (i.e. <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Journey/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx>) with \$573 per week for two-weeks, for a total one-time payment of \$1,146. The intention is to “bridge the gap” until the Federal Emergency Care Benefit kicks in on April 1. An online application for the Alberta Emergency Isolation Support benefit will be available during the week of March 23 via <https://alberta.ca>

What remains unclear is whether individuals who had been laid off or otherwise out of work prior to the COVID-19 crisis will benefit from any of the above initiatives, especially those otherwise ineligible for Regular EI Benefits. Stay tuned for further updates and we continue to closely monitor the evolving events.