

## Joleen Kaminski

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**From:** CLRInfo  
**Sent:** June 16, 2020 9:26 AM  
**Subject:** COVID 19 Update - June 16  
**Attachments:** CIRP\_overdoses May 2020.pdf

**Importance:** High

CLR Members,

### **Update from Construction Industry Rehabilitation Plan (CIRP)**

Below is a message from Vicky Waldron, Executive Director of CIRP. Please also see the attachment that goes along with her message:

*At a time when COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter are dominating the news cycles it's easy to forget that in fact we have **two** health crises raging right now... I wanted to provide an update on the state of the opioid epidemic. The epidemic has been further fueled by COVID-19 and heartbreakingly the number of overdose deaths occurring are on the increase. Some of you may already have seen the BC Coroners report. The BC Coroner's Service has released some disturbing new numbers around drug overdose deaths. In May, the province recorded 170 fatal overdoses linked to illicit drugs. This equates to almost 6 deaths DAILY!! That is the highest number recorded in a single month to date in BC, a 93-per-cent spike over the number of deaths in May 2019, and a 44-per-cent increase over April 2020. Furthermore, we must not forget that it is construction workers that are disproportionately affected by the epidemic and are disproportionately represented in the fatal overdoses. Please see the BC coroner's report here for more details:*

*<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/news/2020/2020pssq0028-000958.pdf>*

It is a sobering reminder of the struggles that our workers and colleagues in the construction industry face on a daily basis and how much harder it is for them under the current conditions. While dealing with significantly increased demand for their services, CIRP staff are doing a fantastic job of continuing to support those in need of their services.

In recognition of the needs of British Columbian's with addiction issues, the provincial government has launched a 24/7 helpline: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020MMHA0030-001073>

### **Provincial Update**

BC announces that child care providers and parents can continue to count on funding from the Province to support the ongoing operations of child care centres throughout British Columbia: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020CFD0033-001070>

### **Federal Update**

In his daily address, the Prime Minister (PM) highlighted companies and workers who are using the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) to support their businesses and households respectively. The PM says that we are seeing signs of recovery, but stressed that we are far from out of the woods. Over the coming months, businesses will continue to suffer and some won't survive, and some workers will remain unable to find work. The reality is that many Canadians still need assistance.

To assist, the PM announced that the government is **extending the CERB by a further 8 weeks** (the original allotment was 16 weeks up until July). This will mean the program will continue through the summer. Workers who remain unable to work will continue to get their \$2,000/month subsidy. Over the next few weeks, the government will continue to look at international best practices, monitor the economy and the progression of the virus to see what changes, if any, are necessary to the program. The government has committed to ensuring the benefits in place meet the needs of those that require the assistance.

- In other media reports, it was pointed out that the NDP told the government that they would not support the government's confidence vote around finance and spending that is expected this week unless CERB was extended. So far, the NDP has supported much of what the government has done, so maintaining their support in a minority government is important to the Trudeau government.
- Media pointed out that the CEWS is a \$73 billion program that government intended as a measure to help Canadians in financial need and as a stop gap until they found employment and returned to work. So far, only \$13 billion has been tapped into but critics say the amount of subsidy dispersed indicates a significant need. By contrast, CERB has served roughly 8 million Canadians and only 1.2 million people have dropped off of that program.
- Following the PM's announcement, reporters called the extension "a lifeline to the estimated 3 million Canadians still looking for work".
- Media asked why the PM has made the announcement he did today when he previously indicated that the CERB should not be used as a financial tool for some who would rather not work by choice. Extending the CERB would seem to some to be contrary to that position. The PM responded that he wants people to work where it can be found, but too many remain unable to do so either because work isn't available or they can't work for other reasons. The government will continue to review the program to ensure people who can work do so. Changes will be made as necessary.

He reminded Canadians of the \$14 billion that the federal government has made available to provinces and territories to ensure that programs and supports (like child care, contact tracing, testing, etc) are in place at more local levels. Discussions on the use of those funds in the regions continues.

The PM confirmed that Canada and the US have agreed that our shared **border will remain closed to non-essential travel until July 21** (a 30 day extension).

Other announcements made by the PM that you may want to follow on your own included:

- government efforts to deal with systemic racism in Canada;
- support for businesses owned by minorities;
- safety for temporary workers from Mexico (Mexico has halted sending workers to Canada after two COVID related deaths have occurred); and,
- Canada's efforts to take more of a leadership role at the international levels through advocating for a seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council.

#### **Update on COVID Cases**

- Worldwide, 7.82 million cases have been reported of which approximately 432,000 have died (5.5% death rate)
- Canada now has 99,423 cases of which 61,260 have recovered and 8,213 have died (62% recovery rate; 8.3% death rate)
- In BC, there has been a total of 2,745 cases of which 2,395 have recovered and 168 have died (87.2% recovery rate; 6.1% death rate)

For the latest update on B.C.'s COVID-19 response, here is the link: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0189-001072>

Stay safe and well and have a good week.

Ken McCormack | President & CEO

Construction Labour Relations Association (CLRA) of BC  
97 – Sixth Street, New Westminster, BC V3L 5H8



**O** 604-524-4911

**C** 604-968-4911 | **F** 604-524-3925

**E** [kenm@clra-bc.com](mailto:kenm@clra-bc.com) | **W** [www.clra-bc.com](http://www.clra-bc.com)

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