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From: CLRInfo
Sent: February 26, 2021 9:24 AM
To: Ken McCormack
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Subject: COVID Update: February 26

Importance: High

[CLR Members,](#)

We would like to open this week's communiqué with a reminder of WorkSafeBC's requirement for your company's COVID-19 safety plans to be continuously reviewed and updated according to the latest development of the pandemic situation:

[WorkSafeBC's COVID-19 Safety Plans](#)

Please be reminded that every employer is required to have a COVID-19 safety plan that assesses the risk of exposure at their workplace and implements measures to keep the workers safe. In accordance with the order of the provincial health officer (PHO), this plan **must be posted** at the worksite and website if applicable.

As WorkSafeBC is actively monitoring and updating the PHO orders and guidelines, providing health and safety protocols and information to industries, referring to WSBC resources is an easier way for the companies to stay current.

In light of anticipated better availability of the vaccines, and vaccination programs to expand on larger population groups, the employers will inevitably face a growing number of related questions that remain unanswered so far. The potential impacts of vaccination roll-out on employers and workers will be addressed and communicated by WorkSafeBC. CLR will continue to monitor and inform our members on all the important COVID-19+workplace related questions as they get answered. However, we encourage you to monitor [WSBC website](#) on a regular basis, as well as other official resources to stay current and informed.

Please check the following links that might be helpful for your company to update your current COVID-19 safety protocol:

[COVID-19 and returning to safe operation](#)

[COVID-19 Safety Plan](#)

[COVID-19 Safety Plan OHS Guideline](#)

[The Province stimulates local economies for faster recovery from COVID-19](#)

Building on other recovery funding, the Province is boosting local economies by investing \$30 million in small-scale infrastructure projects throughout B.C. to create jobs and support recovery for people and communities affected by COVID-19.

Local governments, First Nations and not-for-profit organizations were eligible to apply in October 2020, and 63 infrastructure projects have been approved. These projects will address short-term community needs, such as revitalizing local parks, washrooms and downtown cores, creating additional space for physical distancing and upgrading public buildings like recreation centres. Successful applicants can hire the company of their choice to work on projects with the goal of stimulating local economies by creating new construction jobs and restoring jobs in other areas impacted by COVID-19, such as retail and hospitality services.

The \$30 million comes from the Community Economic Resilience stream of the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program (CERIP).

CERIP is providing \$100 million in one-time infrastructure grants for projects that are ready to go throughout the province. These projects will improve community economic resilience, develop tourism infrastructure, support unique heritage infrastructure and support economic recovery for rural communities.

All CERIP projects must begin construction in 2021 and be completed by March 31, 2023. CERIP is part of StrongerBC: BC's Economic Recovery Plan, aimed at helping people, businesses and communities recover from COVID-19. B.C.'s total provincial response to the COVID-19 pandemic exceeds \$8 billion. To learn more about B.C.'s Economic Recovery Plan, [visit](#).

The Province has also launched the third intake of Work Experience Opportunities Grant – with broader eligibility requirements. The \$10-million Work Experience Opportunities Grant is also part of StrongerBC. It was established in 2020 for non-profit organizations, allowing them to apply for \$5,000 per participant for 12-week work experience placements.

In the third intake, eligibility criteria have been expanded in three areas:

- Organizations can increase the number of participants they provide work experience to from five to 10.
- Private-sector businesses, social enterprises and non-profit organizations can apply.
- Any person qualified to receive income assistance or disability assistance, as well as Indigenous people on reserve qualified to receive federal assistance, can now be considered as a participant. For the first two intakes, only people with disabilities or persistent multiple barriers to employment were considered eligible participants.

Under the new eligibility criteria, applications will be accepted until midnight, March 8, 2021. To learn more – visit [Work Experience Opportunities Grant](#).

[Department of Finance Releases Draft Legislation to Increase Accessibility of Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy](#)

Feb 24, the Department of Finance released draft legislative proposals that would implement technical amendments to The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Lockdown Support programs.

The draft legislative proposals would:

- Provide applicants with more flexibility in determining the revenue decline for the wage and rent subsidies for the qualifying period from December 20, 2020 to January 16, 2021.
- Ensure that Lockdown Support is available to an eligible property owner whose tenant is not arm's length but has a qualifying business at the property that is subject to a lockdown and must shut their doors or significantly restrict their activities under a public health order.

The Canada Revenue Agency will administer the subsidies on the basis of these draft legislative proposals. Details on the proposed measures are available in the [backgrounder](#).

The rent subsidy provides direct, easy-to-access rent and mortgage support until June 2021 for qualifying organizations affected by COVID-19, and the Lockdown Support is available to eligible organizations that must significantly restrict their activities under a public health order. More than 124,000 organizations have been supported through these subsidies, with about \$1.4 billion paid out as of February 14, 2021.

[Public Health Agency of Canada 'looking into' non-compliance incidents of new travel rules](#)

The Public Health Agency of Canada said it's looking into incidents in which international travellers entering Canada are not compliant with the new rules under the federal Quarantine Act amid concerns over the spread of more contagious COVID-19 variants.

As of Monday, anyone entering Canada must take a novel coronavirus test on arrival and at the end of their mandated 14-day quarantine. Air travellers landing in Canada must also reserve a three-night stay at a government-authorized hotel at their own expense as they wait for the results of their COVID-19 test. If the test result is negative, travellers can leave the hotel and spend the rest of their 14-day quarantine period isolating at home.

Those entering Canada must also electronically submit a quarantine plan, travel and contact information to the federal government before crossing the border or boarding a flight.

“Travellers are legally obligated to follow the instructions of a screening officer or quarantine officer through the 14-day period, whether in regards to testing, transit to locations, their mandatory hotel stopover or during quarantine at home or other suitable location,” a PHAC spokesperson said in an email Wednesday. “If they do not follow the instructions, there are penalties including a maximum fine of up to \$750,000 or imprisonment for six months.” PHAC said all travellers legally obligated to follow the 14-day quarantine period will be subject to compliance.

B.C. ‘not quite there’ on easing restrictions

New COVID-19 cases in British Columbia dropped below 400 for the first time in more than a week on Thursday, but health officials suggested it will still be some time before the province eases restrictions.

At a live briefing, provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry reported 395 new cases, along with 10 additional deaths. She also said the province’s reproductive rate, which expresses how many people someone with COVID-19 infects on average, had climbed over one, which is worrisome. “What this tells us is that every person on average who’s infected is spreading to more than one other person,” Henry commented.

The development opened the door to potential for “rapid growth if we’re not careful,” she added.

Both the seven-day rolling average of new cases and the percentage of tests coming back positive have also increased in recent weeks. “We are continuing to watch these indicators and when we have confidence that they are slowing in a sustained way, that is when we will be able to ease restrictions — but we are not quite there yet,” Henry said.

Vaccine ‘ramp-up phase’: 1.3M Moderna doses in March; more than 10M Pfizer by June

After weeks of uncertainty, Moderna has confirmed to the Canadian government that it will deliver 1.3 million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine in March. Between two shipments – during the weeks of March 8 and March 22 – the company will meet its first-quarter commitment of two million doses to Canada.

Most of the vaccines administered so far in Canada have been the Pfizer-BioNTech shot, shipments of which the company delayed drastically in January and February. But officials now expect the company to make its four-million-dose commitment by the end of March, as part of the expected weekly shipments of 444,000 doses next month. In the forthcoming “ramp-up phase” the Pfizer doses are expected to increase dramatically, with 769,000 doses of the vaccine per week for the first two weeks of April. That rate will bring the Pfizer shipments to over 10.8 million between April and June.

Study questions B.C.’s age-based approach to COVID-19 vaccinations

A new report from researchers at Simon Fraser University (SFU) is questioning B.C.’s COVID-19 vaccination plan.

The report titled "Vaccine Rollout Strategies: The Case for Vaccinating Essential Workers Early," draws the conclusion that if people who have the most daily contacts are vaccinated early it will cut down on overall infections.

B.C.’s current vaccine rollout plan is based on age with the oldest in the population being vaccinated first.

"We're now seeing that the vaccines do prevent infection and do prevent transmission, so it's time to rethink," said SFU epidemiologist Caroline Colijn. Researchers say their simulations show that after people 80 years and over are inoculated, it should be frontline workers who get the shot next. They say health officials should be targeting people who see the most people each day and might not be able to physically distance. "What we've found is that could prevent hundreds of thousands of cases and maybe 600 deaths," said Colijn.

The provincial health officer, however, says the province’s plan was based on the current situation with vaccine supply and keeping B.C.’s most vulnerable alive.

"We are absolutely confident with marrying the vaccine we have now with the risk that we have, which is age-based," said Dr. Henry on Tuesday. Henry said that restaurant servers, grocery workers and police officers could be inoculated in phase three between April and June if the vaccine supply is large and consistent enough.

Stay safe.

Ken McCormack | President & CEO

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