

Joleen Kaminski

From: CLRInfo
Sent: June 5, 2020 9:33 AM
To: Ken McCormack
Cc: Paul Strangway; Joleen Kaminski
Subject: COVID 19 Update - June 05
Attachments: Letter_PMJT_Temporary_Sick_Pay_June_2_2020_Final_2.pdf

Importance: High

CLR Members,

Provincial Update

WorkSafeBC recently released a *Discussion Paper* entitled “*Adding Diseases by Communicable Viral Pathogens, including COVID-19, to Schedule 1 of the Workers Compensation Act*” (the "Act"). The purpose of the Discussion Paper is to provide stakeholders with the opportunity for consultation with respect to WorkSafeBC’s intent to amend Schedule 1 of the Act (formerly Schedule B) to add a new presumption for COVID-19 (and, more broadly, other coronaviruses or respiratory communicable diseases).

The CLR’s legal counsel, Harris & Company, have summarized this issue well on their website so I will not go into details around what the change would mean. You can review this at <https://harrisco.com/worksafebc-proposes-covid-19-related-changes-to-workers-compensation-act/>

The bottom line is that this is a very concerning issue for businesses and the **CLR is working with other association partners on a response that we will be jointly submitting to government on this issue. I will share this response with all of you and ask that you consider making a submission of your own.** You can write your own submission of course, or you can simply forward the letter to government that I will share with you in response to their invitation for you to participate, saying that you have read the submission from the CLR and association partners and support the CLR position. We want the government to hear from as many businesses as possible. I will have more details for you early next week. I just wanted you to know that your association is on it!

Unemployment Rates and COVID Update

US President Donald Trump addressed the media this morning taking a great deal of credit for the surprising unemployment rates in the US that were released for the month of May. The US unemployment rate actually dropped to 13.3% giving him the ability to face his critics who claimed he was not doing enough. In contrast here, Statistics Canada has reported that Canada’s economy created 289,000 new jobs in May but our unemployment rate still increased to 13.7%. There are millions of people on CERB or CEWS causing some to question whether the government should be revisiting the subsidy programs if the goal is to get Canadians working if they are able.

With respect to the US President’s address, media expressed genuine surprise at the unexpected unemployment rate results but were also quick to point out that the President failed to comment on the 110,000 Americans who have died due to COVID. With 1.91 million cases reported, that’s a 5.8% death rate. Again by contrast to our own situation, with 93,726 confirmed cases of COVID in Canada and 7,637 deaths, that is an 8% death rate. Worldwide, there have been a total of 6.42 million cases reported with 383,000 deaths. This translates into a 6% death rate among those who have contracted the virus.

Here in BC, there have been 2,632 confirmed cases with 166 deaths (6% death rate).

Authorities continue to warn us that we are still far from through this terrible pandemic reminding us that we still have not reached the end of the first wave. Without continued diligence by everyone, the virus could see a resurgence and negate the progress made to date.

Federal Update

In his daily address, the Prime Minister (PM) started by raising the issue of racial injustices resulting from horrible treatment at the hands of others. He called out for the need to ensure that our own indigenous and racialized Canadians are free from such abuse and will work with the RCMP to ensure we are treating all Canadians with the respect and dignity they deserved and to reduce the vulnerability that comes with discrimination. He calls for all those who may be participating in protests to do so safely and peacefully.

The PM pointed out that some Canadians have been hit by COVID harder than others. As a result, the government is introducing a one time non-taxable payment of up to \$600 for Canadians with disabilities. The government has also established a National Workplace Accessibility Stream to help Canadians with disabilities find and keep jobs. The PM further announced that the government is funding 5 new projects across the country to help people get supportive devices to overcome barriers in the workplace. More information on all of these new initiatives will be announced later.

The PM mentioned the new Jobs Report that was released by Statistics Canada (see above) and pointed out the need for his government to do more and work harder to support Canadians. He pointed out that 300,000 applications have been received under the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) to support millions of jobs and the program has been extended over the coming months to continue to offer support. Roughly 1.2 million Canadians who were receiving the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) no longer need this help which the PM says is encouraging news.

To really move forward, the PM said we need a Canada wide plan to safely and effectively restart the economy. A plan that will carry us forward through the summer and into fall and winter. He stressed the pressures on provincial and territorial governments to restart their economies and said the federal government wants to help as much as possible. Now, the federal government is making a substantial offer to demonstrate this support. Last night, in his discussion with provincial leaders, the PM committed \$14 billion *more* in financial support. For a safe restart agreement, the PM and Premiers will be discussing how best to address the issues of:

- More PPE for healthcare workers;
- Sufficient PPE necessary to keep workers safe;
- Safe childcare;
- Assistance to protect seniors;
- Sick pay up to 10 days for workers currently without benefits; and,
- Support for cities and municipalities to ensure public transit and community programs are in place.

With respect to the issue of 10 sick days for all workers without that benefit right now, the PM said that the “federal government will provide the funds necessary to make this happen”. Businesses are still asking how this benefit will be paid for, but such a statement from the PM suggests that the costs will not be on the backs of business. ***See attached letter that the CLR partnered with other construction associations to send to the Prime Minister.*** It was sent earlier this week.

Each province and territory has different needs which will be reflected in the national restart plan, but the PM has a single standard for support for the health and safety of all Canadians.

The PM says that his government’s biggest priority is to help people through this crisis. That said, the PM says there is proof that this can be done while still ensuring protection of the environment and with attention to climate change. The PM announced that the government will be launching and supporting 60 new initiatives to conserve nature, the environment and the economy across Canada. Half of these projects will be led by indigenous people.

Please remember over the coming weekend to enjoy yourself, but to do so according to the guidelines of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO). Isolate when you can, maintain physical distancing when you venture out, and use face masks and other PPE when distancing is not possible.

Stay safe and well.

Ken McCormack | President & CEO

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