

Joleen Kaminski

From: CLRInfo
Sent: April 23, 2020 9:16 AM
To: Ken McCormack
Cc: Paul Strangway; Joleen Kaminski
Subject: COVID 19 UPDATE: April 23

Importance: High

CLR Members,

If any of us need any evidence of how a company considered to be offering an essential service can quickly lose that status, we need only look at what is happening to meat processing plants in Alberta and other parts of the country. I know the circumstances are not the same, but without focus on following the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Guidelines, construction projects and your business could face similar drastic consequences. There has not been a single case of COVID-19 caught on a BC construction site, and that success to date is a direct result of the commitments all of our member businesses have made to job site health and safety. With messages from government indicating we are starting to flatten the curve, it is easy to think that we can relax our efforts to control the spread of the virus. In fact, the opposite is true. *This is the time to “double down” and make sure that we have every possible preventative measure in place to protect construction workers.*

Thank you to all of you for the extraordinary measures you are taking to protect construction workers, your businesses and our industry.

Federal Update

In his daily address this morning, the Prime Minister (PM) says that what we are doing with COVID-19 is working, but that doesn't mean we will be easing up yet.

The PM announced support of \$1.1 billion to be used for a national medical and research strategy. Specifics include:

- Research on vaccines
 - \$115 million for development of vaccines. These funds are in addition to funding previously announced
- Support of clinical trials
 - \$662 million for work being done in Canada to test possible vaccines that are developed. He cautioned that this work will take months to roll out
- Testing and modelling
 - \$350 million to expand national testing and modelling of COVID-19. This will be done through a COVID-19 Immunity Task Force
 - Bringing top health experts and scientists to work on blood testing to trace the virus and learn what they can towards developing a vaccine to make us immune
 - Will test more than 1 million people and collect data to help understand the impacts on vulnerable populations
 - Will use labs through out the country

Government will also be looking at what controls can be done right now to contain the virus and he says that testing is key. There are currently 20,000 tests being conducted per day throughout the country, but we need to do more before we can get back to “normal”. At the same time we can't “waste” the progress of social distancing that we have gained to date.

The PM also commented on the need to do better to protect the elderly in our long term care facilities. Requests from provinces will be answered, especially in Quebec and Ontario who requested the assistance of our armed forces. The PM says though that he recognizes this is not a long term solution and we can not have soldiers taking care of Canada's seniors. This is a short term measure while the government investigates better longer term solutions.

The PM continues to be asked why the government created a separate Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) to help post-secondary students by paying them \$1,250 a month from May to August (or \$1,750 if they take care of someone else or have a disability) rather than just make them eligible for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) that offers \$2,000 per person. This is a recurring theme where reporters, calling the various support programs a "patchwork", seem to be suggesting that a single relief program should be sufficient for all who meet eligibility requirements. The PM continues to defend the government's approach stating that targeted support is the best way to do it and that the government will continue to look for gaps that need to be filled for those that are falling through the cracks of the current programs. Government never expected perfection from day 1 and they didn't want "perfect could not be enemy of good". It was seen as more important to get support programs out quickly and updates are made almost daily. There was some concern expressed that students could take advantage of the program and decide not to work at all. The PM responded that he will make no apologies for the support program developed and felt young people will want to do their part to help

With respect to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), small businesses continue to claim that due to their unique circumstances, they can't apply for loans under the measures banks have put in place and are not eligible for the CERB. The PM was asked what the government is doing for them to which he replied that the government will continue to work with experts across the country to identify how they can do better.

Concerns were expressed regarding the potential for US states near the Canada/US wanting to open their borders sooner than we may be ready to accept them. The PM stated that Canada will do what it must to restrict access and protect Canadians. The federal government will make its own decisions regarding border access with input from the provinces.

BC Business Council - COVID-19 CABINET Survey Outcomes

I represent CLR on a committee formed by the BC Business Council (BCBC) that the association representatives are calling the COVID-19 Cabinet. We sent out a survey to businesses across the whole economy (not limited to construction). You will have received an invitation from me last week to respond to the survey and I committed to share the results with you. This was the second survey (previous survey was sent to you several weeks ago). Here are the aggregated results:

- 53% of B.C. businesses who closed their doors when pandemic restrictions were implemented are confident they will reopen once restrictions are eased;
- 8% of closed businesses surveyed say they won't reopen;
- 38% are unsure.
- 43% of businesses who remained open during the pandemic are confident they can continue for 3 months under current restrictions;
- 33% of all businesses surveyed say financial supports from Ottawa aren't helpful, and a similar percentage said the same thing about BC's supports.

Stay safe and well!

Sincerely,

Ken McCormack | President & CEO

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