

Joleen Kaminski

From: CLRInfo
Sent: May 21, 2020 9:08 AM
To: Ken McCormack
Cc: Paul Strangway; Joleen Kaminski
Subject: COVID 19 Update - May 21

Importance: High

CLR Members,

The construction industry in BC needs to be congratulated on how our member businesses have handled worksite health and safety under very sudden and complex circumstances these past 2+ months. If no one has said it to you yet, then I will. *Well done and thank you for all that you have done!* You have proven yourselves worthy of the essential services designation and because you have the economy is stronger, more businesses are managing through the pandemic, and more employees are able stay employed and meet their responsibilities than would have been the case without your extraordinary efforts.

To add some context to this just so you can see how amazing it is, as of May 13th the construction has had only 9 COVID-19 claims. This is how they have been broken down:

- 1 allowed claim,
- 2 disallowed claims,
- 3 no adjudication required, and
- 3 pending

I am sure you will agree that considering the size of our industry with 52,431 employers registered with WorkSafeBC, the results are quite remarkable. So please keep up the great work you are doing and again... thank you!

I heard a reporter highlight something today on the news that I think puts things in context in terms of where we are going. He said that according to the scientific and medical community, *"there has never been a pandemic without a second wave"*. So it is a reminder that no matter how hopeful we may be, this is far from over and all of us need to remain diligent and do what we can to try to minimize the impacts of the virus and the oncoming second wave.

BC Update

The Premier of BC is advocating for the federal government to recognize COVID-19 as a national health issue and as such is calling for a national sick-day program. Such a program would take the added financial stress associated with workers who contract the virus off of businesses who are already dealing with economic fallout impacting their businesses. As a national pandemic, the Premier is agreeing with BC businesses and making the argument that there is a compelling rationale for EI (and/or CERB) to provide temporary sick pay during the COVID-19 recovery period. A national program through EI (or CERB) has the added benefit of ensuring that sick-pay coverage is less variable from province to province as efforts continue to flatten the pandemic curve. On your behalf, the CLR supports this position.

The Premier has said that if necessary, BC could create its own sick-pay program if necessary. This would not be ideal and the Premier will raise this issue with other Premiers today to determine if there is a unified approach to raising this issue with the federal government. When asked today for a response to the letter from BC, the Prime Minister said only that the federal government is discussing a number of issues with the provinces and this is one such issue.

Federal Update

In his daily address, the Prime Minister (PM) focused on protection for indigenous people. He highlighted government's previous investment in shelters, interest free loans, student employment and more. In March, the government

announced \$15 million to support services to indigenous people. The PM announced an additional \$75 million in new funding for organizations that support indigenous people living in urban centres and off-reserve. As is the case for most programs announced by the federal government to date, critics say that the support measures are barely “a drop in the bucket” and will help very little. They point out that indigenous people make up 5% of the Canadian population but are getting less than 1% of the pandemic funding.

The PM warned businesses that are re-opening across the country to do so safely and gradually and to take advantage of the announced subsidy programs (www.canada.ca) if they need them and to re-employ people as much as they are able. He says that following public health instructions has never been more necessary. The federal government is now agreeing with the WHO and the CDC and saying that when people venture outside they should be wearing non-medical masks as much as possible to protect each other. Masks will not protect the wearer themselves from contracting the virus but will assist in terms of potential transmission to others. Scientific evidence is saying there are some benefits in terms of preventing the spread of the virus and no detrimental impacts.

Media reports have stressed that over these past 12 weeks, aside from personal health protection, one of the main reasons Canadians self-isolated was to avoid overwhelming the health care system. With provinces now re-opening their economies, the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) is warning us that the healthcare system is not prepared to handle what they expect to be a resurgence of the virus in the second wave. They claim there remains an insufficient quantity of personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing capabilities. The PM reiterated today that the federal government is committed to ensuring they are available to assist provinces and territories with testing, contact testing, and ensuring availability of PPE.

Please stay safe and well.

Sincerely,

Ken McCormack | President & CEO

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