

Joleen Kaminski

From: CLRInfo
Sent: July 24, 2020 7:12 AM
To: Ken McCormack
Cc: Paul Strangway; Joleen Kaminski
Subject: COVID 19 Update: July 24

Importance: High

CLR Members,

I am sure you are all staying up on the news, at least on how it pertains to COVID-19. If you have, you will already know that too many people are treating the pandemic as if it is already over or at least on the way out (especially younger people who frequent beaches, parks and other social gathering places). The BC Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Dr. Bonnie Henry, and governments across the country both provincial and federal, have been warning us all for months that a second wave of the virus is very likely. The degree to which that wave impacts our lives and the economy is largely in our hands.

I urge you all to *please* pass the message along to your families, your employees and your job sites, that we have a responsibility to continue to demonstrate the highest diligence possible in adhering to PHO guidelines for personal and public health and safety. There are precautions that still need to be met if we are to venture out in public.

I don't mean to be an alarmist, but the thought of losing the progress we have made through our sacrifices to date would be more than disappointing. It will cost some their lives, and it will cost others their businesses and livelihoods. These are the messages from our health authorities and governments and too many people are not listening.

Whatever comes, I hope the construction sector continues to show their leadership and preserve our status as essential service providers. I don't think it is a stretch to say that the rest of the economy is counting on us.

Provincial Update

On July 22, 2020, the WSBC Board of Directors approved amendments to Schedule 1 of the Workers Compensation Act (Act) to add a presumption for infections caused by communicable viral pathogens, which are the subject of a B.C.-specific emergency declaration or notice. Consequential amendments were also made to Item C4-28.00, Contagious Diseases, and Appendix 2 of the Rehabilitation Services & Claims Manual, Volume II to reflect the Schedule 1 amendment. These amendments will come into effect on October 26, 2020. On July 14, 2020, the Minister of Labour tabled Bill 23, which proposes to eliminate the mandated 90-day waiting period in the Act before a WorkSafeBC regulatory amendment comes into effect, in relation to an occupational disease that is an infection caused by a communicable viral pathogen. If Bill 23 is passed before October 26, 2020, the effective date of the Schedule 1 amendment and consequential amendments will be adjusted accordingly. Through our partnerships with other associations within and outside the construction sector, the CLR had joined many other business leaders by sending letters to government expressing our concerns with the proposed changes. Unfortunately, WSBC has made the decision to proceed with amendments that will have significant impacts on BC employers. We will continue to monitor the situation and advocate for the interests of our members. The resolution can be found here:

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/law-policy/board-of-directors-decisions/bod-2020-07-22-01-adding-infections-caused-commucable-viral-pathogens-schedule-1-wca?lang=en>

The Province is earmarking up to \$1 billion of *additional spending targeted to address COVID-19 impacts* and restart plans of local governments and public transit services, conditional on matching federal contributions under a 50/50 cost-sharing criteria. The province says that this funding will help address some of the revenue shortfalls created by

COVID-19 and help ensure that important local government and transit services remain available throughout BC's Restart Plan. More on this announcement can be found here: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PREM0038-001352>

The B.C. government has formally *extended the provincial state of emergency*, allowing the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General to continue to use extraordinary powers under the Emergency Program Act to support the Province's COVID-19 pandemic response. The state of emergency is extended through the end of the day on Tuesday, Aug. 4, 2020, to allow government to continue to take the necessary actions to keep British Columbians safe. The government's announcement can be found here: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PSSG0038-001339>

The province has announced that employers and workers who need to *extend temporary layoffs* due to COVID-19 can more easily apply for a variance using the Employment Standards Branch's new online application. In June, government extended the time period for temporary layoffs related to COVID-19 to a maximum of 24 weeks, expiring on Aug. 30, 2020. This is expanded from 16 weeks, to give employers and workers more flexibility. The new online application simplifies and streamlines the process for employers and workers to jointly apply for an extension beyond Aug. 30 by eliminating the need for hardcopy documents and signatures, while ensuring the integrity of the branch's decision-making process. For more on this announcement, click here: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020LBRO021-001326>
To access the temporary layoff variance applications, look here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/hours/variances>

Please enjoy the weekend, but stay safe.

Sincerely,

Ken McCormack | President & CEO

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