

# COVID-19 Support & Financial Relief

There are a number of new measures and initiatives being taken by all levels of government and various organizations to offset the financial impact COVID-19 is having on residents, businesses and non-profit organizations. On this page, you will find current assistance information for **businesses and non-profit organizations**. We will do our best to keep this page updated as new information becomes available.

## **Municipal Initiatives**

To stay current on updates from Region of Queens Municipality (RQM) during this time, please visit our [COVID-19 Information page](#) or call 902-354-3453.

### **What RQM is doing to help community organizations:**

- [Community Investment Fund](#) (CIF) provides financial assistance to eligible applicants to support capital projects; operational expenses associated with new programs, service delivery or enhancements to current offerings; events and tournaments; and investing in leadership training opportunities for new or existing community leaders. For more information on this program, please [email](#) or phone 902-354-5741. Note, this fund is part of our regular grant program, not specific to the current health emergency.

### **What RQM is doing to help small business:**

- The [2020 Business Façade Program](#) is now open for applications. Due to current circumstances, we have an extended application deadline this year. For more information on this program, please contact [Richard Lane](#).

For provincial and federal support for entrepreneurs and business, please see below.

## **Provincial Government Supports**

There is a list of business supports [here](#) with more comprehensive information than the summary below:

- **[Worker Emergency Bridge Fund](#)**: Government will provide a one-time payment of \$1,000 to bridge the gap between layoffs and closures and the federal government's Canada Emergency Response Benefit. This is now open for applications.

- **NS Small Business Impact Grant**: eligible small businesses and social enterprises will receive a grant of 15 per cent of their revenue from sales, either from April 2019 or February 2020, up to a maximum of \$5,000. This program opened for application on April 12, 2020 and the **deadline for application is April 25, 2020.**
  
- **Covid-19 Rent Deferral Support Program (CRDSP)**: CRDSP will indemnify qualified landlords for losses incurred as a result of granting a rent deferral to qualified businesses directly impacted by Health Protection Act Order(s) related to the COVID-19 pandemic on commercial and retail premises for the period April 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020. For more information, please read the [COVID-19 Rent Deferral Support Program Guidelines](#).  
**Rental Deferral Agreements must be in place by April 1, 2020**
  
- **NS Small Business Loan Guarantee Program**: Administered through credit unions, new loans and lines of credit will be issued through the program, allowing businesses to access credit up to \$500,000. The government will guarantee the first \$100,000 of the funds. Additionally, businesses with existing loans under the program are eligible for a 90-day deferral on principal and interest payments.
  
- **Small Business Credit and Support Program (SBCSP)**: The COVID-19 Small Business Credit and Support Program is a new temporary program under the [Small Business Loan Guarantee Program](#). The program helps small Businesses affected by COVID-19 by providing a loan, a grant, and a business continuity voucher for advice and support. There are three components to the SBCSP:
  1. **Loans/Credit**: Eligible small businesses/not for profits may apply through participating provincial credit unions to receive a maximum loan amount of \$25,000. These funds will flow through the existing Small Business Loan Guarantee Program, with an additional \$20 million being made available as part of the SBCSP. The program is 100 per cent guaranteed by the Province.
  2. **Grant**: If approved for the loan, applicants will then be eligible for a cash grant of up to \$1,500. Funding for the grant will come from the existing contribution agreement between the province and Dalhousie University.
  3. **Business Continuity Voucher Program**: If approved for the loan, applicants will also be eligible for a Covid-19 Business Continuity Voucher of up to \$1,500 to help hire a private consultant for advice and support in adapting/recovering from the impacts of COVID-19. This program is administered by Nova Scotia Business Inc., and will be **open until May 29, 2020**. All projects funded under the Program must be completed by July 3, 2020.

**This program will be available starting April 29, 2020 until June 30, 2020.**

For more information and to apply visit: <https://honestmoney.ca/nsbusinessrelief>

- **COVID-19 Employer Assessment Tool:** Some businesses must close under the Health Protection Act Order. Others can remain open if they meet certain requirements. Use the [COVID-19 employer assessment tool](#) to see what your business needs to do.
- **Business Navigators:** Business Navigators are available to help Nova Scotia businesses with navigation government regulations and requirements. They can be reached by phone at 1-844-628-7347, 902-242-4475 or by email at [BusNavigation@novascotia.ca](mailto:BusNavigation@novascotia.ca)
- **NS Virtual Business Support Hub:** This project is a partnership between the province and post-secondary institutions and will see the establishment of an online hub offering education, training, professional guidance and other resources for small businesses. The hub will be hosted by NSCC and will be available in early May.
- **Additional supports:**
  - Government will defer payments for all government loans and payments for small business renewal fees until June 30
  - Workers' compensation premiums are being deferred until July 2020
  - Small businesses which do business with the government will be paid within five days instead of the standard 30 days
  - \$15 million has been provided as an to providers to speed up projects under the Internet for Nova Scotia Initiative and complete them as soon as possible
  - Landlords are not permitted to change locks or seize property of businesses who cannot pay rent, if the business closed due to COVID-19 public health orders
  - As of March 30<sup>th</sup>, restaurants can include alcohol purchases with take-out and delivery orders, as long as the alcohol cost is no more than 3 times the value of food ordered

## Federal Government Initiatives

Canada's Economic Response to COVID-19 is [here](#). We have provided a summary below:

- The [Canada Economic Response Benefit \(CERB\)](#) provides financial support to employed and **self-employed** Canadians who are directly affected by COVID-19. It provides a payment of \$2,000 for a 4-week period (the same as \$500 a week) for up to 16 weeks. After you apply, you should get your payment in 3 business days if you signed up for direct deposit. If you haven't, you should get it in about 10 business days.

**CERB is now open for applications.** Applications will be staggered by birthday month, so as to not overwhelm the system. If your birthday is in:

- January, February or March, apply on Mondays;
- April, May and June, apply on Tuesdays;
- July, August or September, apply on Wednesdays;

- October, November and December should apply on Thursdays.

All affected Canadians are encouraged to apply on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

People can apply online [here](#) or phone toll-free at 1-800-959-2019.

- **Enhancements to the [Work-Sharing Program](#)**

The Work-Sharing (WS) Program is an adjustment program designed to help employers and employees avoid layoffs when there is a temporary reduction in the normal level of business activity that is beyond the control of the employer. The measure provides income support to employees eligible for Employment Insurance benefits who work a temporarily reduced work week while their employer recovers.

Work-Sharing is a three-party agreement involving employers, employees and Service Canada. Employees on a Work-Sharing agreement must agree to a reduced schedule of work and to share the available work over a specified period of time. Please note, this program is also available to not-for-profits.

The enhancements introduced in response to COVID-19 are as follows:

- The maximum duration of Work-Sharing agreements have been extended from 38 weeks to 76 weeks across Canada for those businesses affected by the downturn in business due to COVID-19
- **Establishment of a [Business Credit Availability Program](#)** which will provide \$40 billion of additional support, largely targeted to small- and medium-sized businesses, through the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) and Export Development Canada (EDC). This program will include:
  - Loan Guarantee for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
  - Co-Lending Program for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
- **The new [Canada Emergency Business Account](#)** is open for application now. This will provide interest-free loans of up to \$40,000 to small businesses and not-for-profits, to help cover their operating costs during a period where their revenues have been temporarily reduced. Check with your financial institution to see if your small business is eligible.
- **[Increased credit](#)** is available to support farmers and the agri-food sector.
- **[Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy \(CEWS\)](#)** has been introduced that will cover 75 per cent of salaries for qualifying businesses, for up to 3 months, retroactive to March 15, 2020, for a period of three months.

- **10% Temporary Wage Subsidy (TWS)** is a 3-month measure aimed at helping small and medium-sized businesses with their payrolls by reducing the amount of payroll deductions required to be remitted to the CRA.
- **Insured Mortgage Program** to support financial stability has been launched, in which the federal government will purchase up to \$50 billion of insured mortgage pools through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
- **Supplemental Unemployment Benefit (SUB)**: With this program, employers can increase their employees' weekly earnings when they are unemployed due to a temporary stoppage of work, training, illness, injury or quarantine. SUB plans must be registered with Service Canada. Payments under SUB plans are not considered as earnings and are not deducted from EI benefits.
- **Temporary Changes to the Canada Summer Jobs Program** have been announced. Through increased wage subsidies, expanded eligibility and new flexibilities for employers, the program will help create up to 70,000 jobs for youth between 15 and 30 years of age in 2020-21.

The temporary changes to the program include:

- an increase to the wage subsidy, so that private and public sector employers can also receive up to 100 per cent of the provincial or territorial minimum hourly wage for each employee;
  - an extension to the end date for employment to February 28, 2021;
  - allowing employers to adapt their projects and job activities to support essential services; and
  - allowing employers to hire staff on a part-time basis
- **Temporary Wage Boost for Low-Income Essential Workers:** The government has announced that it will work with provinces and territories through a new transfer to cost-share a temporary top up to the salaries of low-income essential workers that the provinces and territories have deemed essential in the fight against COVID-19. Through this transfer, the Federal Government will cover a portion of the cost of providing temporary financial support to these low-income essential workers (those who earn less than \$2,500 per month). Additional details to come.
  - **Temporary Foreign Workers Funding and Exemptions:** Government of Canada is announcing \$50 million to help farmers, fish harvesters, and all food production and processing employers, put in place the measures necessary to follow the mandatory 14-day isolation period required of all workers arriving from abroad. Employers can receive \$1,500 to assist with the 14-day isolation for each temporary foreign worker.

- **Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program (CECRA)**: The Government of Canada has reached an agreement in principle with all provinces and territories to implement the CECRA for small businesses. Nova Scotia will be contributing \$9 million to the program. It is expected that CECRA will be operational by mid-May. Further details on the CECRA will be made available once terms and conditions with provincial partners are finalized.
  
- **Deferral of Payments:**
  - All Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), including ACOA, will apply a deferral of 3 months on all payments, as of April 1, 2020. This moratorium will defer payments and related interest charges to relieve some of the pressure businesses may be facing. Businesses should contact ACOA to formalize deferrals into an amended repayment schedule.
  - For trusts (having a taxation year ending on December 31, 2019), tax filing is deferred until May 1, 2020
  - For individuals, tax filing is deferred until June 1, 2020
  - All businesses are being allowed to defer, until after August 31, the payment of any income tax amounts that become owing on or after March 18 and before September 2020. No interest or penalties will accumulate on these amounts during this period.
  - Deferral of Sales Tax Remittance and Customs Duty Payments, allowing businesses, including self-employed individuals, to defer until June 30, 2020 payments of the GST/HST, as well as customs duties owing on their imports
  
- **Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF)**: This fund of nearly \$1 billion will be used to which will do two things: mitigate the financial pressure experienced by businesses and organizations to allow them to continue their operations, including paying employees; and support projects by businesses, organizations and communities so they can prepare now for a successful recovery.

The RRRF will be implemented through Canada's six Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), including ACOA. The fund includes two components:

- \$675 million to support the work of the RDAs and the businesses and community organizations they serve. This will enable the RDAs to provide equivalent bridge financing support to businesses and community organizations unable to access the government's broader support measures.
- \$287 million to support the national network of Community Futures Development Corporations, funded through the RDAs, to provide targeted assistance to rural businesses and communities who do not qualify for the government's broader support measures. This will allow these rural organizations to access capital and operational assistance during these challenging times. More information on the Community Futures Network [here](#).

Further information about how to apply for the RRRF will be available soon. If you are already working with an ACOA Program Officer, please reach out to discuss your specific needs.

- **Emergency Support Fund for Cultural, Heritage and Sport Organizations:** This new fund will provide \$500 million to help address the financial needs of affected organizations within these sectors so they can continue to support artists and athletes. The fund will be administered by Canadian Heritage with the support of its partners. Support will be provided in a manner consistent with other COVID-19 supports such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA). Further details to be announced.
- **New Funding for Futurpreneur Canada:** \$20.1 million in additional support is being provided to Futurpreneur Canada to continue supporting young entrepreneurs across Canada who are facing challenges due to COVID-19. The funding will allow Futurpreneur Canada to provide payment relief for its clients for up to 12 months. Information on this funding and on Futurpreneur Canada is available [here](#).
- **National Research Council (NRC) Innovation Assistance Program:** The new Innovation Assistance Program (IAP) will assist innovative, early-stage small and medium-sized Canadian businesses that are unable to access other COVID-19 business supports under the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and the Business Credit Availability Program by providing a wage subsidy to eligible employers for up to 12 weeks.

**NRC will be accepting applications beginning on April 22, 2020.** Further information on the IAP available [here](#).

- **[Support for Small and Medium-sized Indigenous Businesses:](#)** The government has announced \$306.8 million in funding to help small and medium-sized Indigenous businesses, and to support Aboriginal Financial Institutions that offer financing to these businesses. The funding will allow for short-term, interest-free loans and non-repayable contributions to help Indigenous businesses unable to access the Government's existing COVID-19 support measures.  
Funding will be made available through Aboriginal Financial Institutions and will be administered by the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association and the Métis capital corporations in partnership with Indigenous Services Canada.
- **[Emergency Community Support Fund \(ECSF\)](#) :** This new \$350 million fund will provide additional assistance to charities and non-profit organizations that serve vulnerable populations. The investment will flow through national intermediaries with networks across the country that have the ability to get funds quickly to local organizations, including United Way Canada, Canadian Red Cross, and Community Foundations of Canada. Funding will be utilized to support a variety of Covid-19 response activities, including:

- Increasing volunteer-based home deliveries of groceries and medications;
- Providing transportation services, like accompanying or driving seniors or persons with disabilities to appointments;
- Helping vulnerable Canadians access government benefits;
- Providing training, supplies, and other required supports to volunteers so they can continue to support the COVID-19 response; and
- Replacing in-person, one-on-one contact and social gatherings with virtual contact through phone calls, teleconferences, or the Internet.

[United Way Canada](#), [Canadian Red Cross](#) and [Community Foundations of Canada](#) are in the process of setting up application processes for the ECSF. Interested parties should check their webpages regularly for updates on how to apply.

- **Canadian Seafood Stabilization Fund:** On April 25, 2020, government [announced](#) \$62.5 million in new financial assistance to the fish and seafood processing sector in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. For the Atlantic Provinces, the fund will be delivered through ACOA. Further details to come.
- **Launch of Pandemic Info Share Web Resource:** The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) has launched a [new webpage](#) which provides an online space for businesses to share their pandemic-related good practices and resources. The goal is to assist other workplaces in the development and implementation of processes which will allow for safe operations during this pandemic.
- **Other supports:**
  - The Bank of Canada has responded by lowering interest rates, intervening to support key financial markets and providing liquidity support for financial institutions.
  - The Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions announced it is lowering the Domestic Stability Buffer by 1.25% of risk-weighted assets. This action will allow Canada's large banks to inject \$300 billion of additional lending in to the economy.

## Other Organizations

During this challenging time of self-isolation, social distancing and closures, it may be difficult for individuals and businesses to pay bills in a timely manner. If you are concerned about this, please contact your banks and other service providers. Most banks and service providers are publishing regular COVID-19 updates and relief measures. We have included phone numbers and links for common banks and service providers:

- [Nova Scotia Power](#) Phone: 1-800-428-6230
- [Heritage Gas](#) Phone: 902-466-2003
- [BMO](#) Phone: 1-877-788-1923
- [CIBC](#) Phone: 1-877-454-9030
- [HSBC](#) Phone: 1-888-310-4722
- [National Bank of Canada](#) Phone: 1-888-835-6281
- [PC Financial](#) Phone: 1-866-246-7262
- [RBC](#) Phone: 1-800-769-2511
- [Scotiabank](#) Phone: 1-800-472-6842
- [TD Bank](#) Phone: 1-888-720-0075
- [Bell Aliant](#) Phone: 1-888-214-7896
- [Eastlink](#) Phone: 1-888-345-1111
- [Telus](#) Phone: 1-866-558-2273

Information and support are also being provided through these organizations:

- The [Business Development Bank of Canada](#) (BDC) have special measures and initiatives in place in response to COVID-19. Please see [here](#) for their response and updates.
- The BDC has provided a free [webinar](#) on how to cope with the impacts of COVID-19 on your business.
- The [Atlantic Association of CBDCs](#) (which includes the [South Shore Opportunities](#)) has announced financial reliefs for existing loan clients. They are:
  - Eliminating interest and deferring the principal payment of existing loans for three months beginning April 1, 2020. During this time, no interest will accrue and no payment will be withdrawn on existing outstanding balances/loans between April 1, 2020 and June 30, 2020.
- [South Shore Opportunities](#) has introduced a new program, **RIGHT NOW Emergency Working Capital**, to help provide relief for the impact our community is encountering as a result of this crisis.

Small business owners (restaurants, seasonal tourism operators, service sectors, etc.) impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic can apply for working capital loans up to \$25,000 through the RIGHT NOW Emergency Working Capital Program.

For more information or to apply, please visit the [RIGHT NOW Emergency Working Capital Loan Program page](#).

- [South Shore Opportunities](#) Business Officers are available, as usual, to listen to concerns and make suggestions with regards to resources and tools to navigate this challenging time. For all clients, loan and non-loan, South Shore Opportunities staff are available by telephone at **902-354-2616**. Online video meetings are also available.
- Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS) has launched a new digital hub, [Tourism Strong](#), to provide resources, support and information to tourism businesses
- [Centre for Women in Business](#) is providing support and regular COVID-19 updates for women in business. Register for [Coffee Talk](#) to connect with other women business owners every Thursday morning from 9-10am via zoom.