

Yesterday the Government of Alberta announced financial support measures to provide immediate relief to Alberta families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. They include the following:

## Emergency Isolation Support

- Available to working adult Albertans who must self-isolate pursuant to the Provincial Government's published criteria for self-isolation. This support is extended to persons who are the sole caregiver for a dependent who must self-isolate because they meet the public health criteria and who will not have another source of pay or compensation while they are self-isolated.
- The payment will be distributed in one instalment and will bridge the gap until recently announced Federal payments begin in April (see our March 18, 2020 blog).
- The one-time payment is anticipated to be in the form of an online application through Alberta.ca, with funds deposited into eligible recipient accounts shortly thereafter. More information will be available next week on how to apply.

## Utility Payment Deferral

- Residential customers will be able to defer electricity and natural gas bill payments for the next 90 days. This ensures that no utility customers will have services disconnected, regardless of who the service provider is.

## Deferral of Student Loan Payments

- A six-month moratorium on Alberta student loan payments will be implemented for those in the process of repaying these loans. All repayments will be paused for six months, beginning March 30, 2020 and interest will not accrue during this period.
- Students do not need to apply for the repayment pause and may continue making payments if they choose (this will not affect their eligibility to receive the benefit).

MARCH 19, 2020

Yesterday the Government of Alberta announced financial support measures to provide immediate funding for local businesses, employers and employees. They include the following:

## Corporate Income Tax Changes

- Corporate income tax balances and instalment payments will be deferred from March 19 until August 31, 2020. This is similar to the federal measures.

## Utility Payment Deferral

- Farm and commercial customers can defer electricity and natural gas bill payments for the next 90 days. This ensures that no utility customers will have services disconnected, regardless of who the service provider is.

## Business Banking

- Alberta Credit Union members should contact their respective banking branch directly to discuss their business situations.
- ATB Financial (Alberta Treasury Branch) small business customers may apply for payment deferral on loans and lines of credit for up to six months and discuss access to additional working capital.
- Other businesses and agriculture customers can access support on a one-on-one basis.

## Job Protected Leave

- Changes to the Employment Standards Code will allow full and part-time employees to take 14 days of job protected leave if they are required to self-isolate or care for a child or dependent adult that is required to self-isolate. The leave period may be extended if the advice of the chief medical officer changes.
- Eligibility does not require a medical note and the employee does not need to have worked 90 days for the employer.
- These leave provisions do not apply to self-employed individuals or contractors.

### Other Available Leaves

- Should an employee be required to self-isolate, they may request using their vacation pay or banked overtime. Note that employers are not required to grant such requests. On the other hand, employers may request employees to voluntarily take vacation leave and/or use their vacation pay or banked overtime, but cannot force them to do so under provincial employment rules.

### Employment Insurance Benefits

- Employees may consider applying for federal Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, which allow for up to 15 weeks of assistance if a person cannot work due to medical reasons such as self-isolation or self-quarantine.
- The one week waiting period for EI benefits has been waived by the federal government in these instances.