

## **Briefing Note: Supports for Businesses by Government As of March 31, 2020**

### **Halifax Regional Municipality Supports**

Webpage: <https://www.halifax.ca/fire-police/fire/emergency-management/corona-virus-disease-covid-19>

#### Property Tax:

- The Municipality is currently looking at alternative payment options related to property taxes due April 30, 2020. The discussion will take place at city council on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Decisions will be communicated to taxpayers in advance of the deadline and will focus on addressing the needs of businesses and residents. Questions can be sent to [proptax@halifax.ca](mailto:proptax@halifax.ca)

#### Parking Fees

- Parking fees at meters have been waived and HotSpot fees will be set to zero until further notice.

#### Planning and Development

- An online form has been created for all permit and sub-division application intakes. This should accelerate approvals and lead to greater construction after the covid-19 health emergency.

### **Government of Nova Scotia Supports**

Nova Scotia Government webpage: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/>

#### **Supports for businesses**

- Government will defer payments until June 30 for all government loans, including those under the Farm Loan Board, Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board, Jobs Fund, Nova Scotia Business Fund, Municipal Finance Corp. and Housing Nova Scotia.
- Government will defer payments until June 30 for small business renewal fees, including business registration renewal fees and workers compensation premiums (a list of fees will be posted online early next week).
- Changes to the Small Business Loan Guarantee Program, administered through credit unions, include deferring principal and interest payments until June 30, enhancing the program to make it easier for businesses to access credit up to \$500,000, and for those who might not qualify for a loan, government will guarantee the first \$100,000.
- Small businesses which do business with the government will be paid within five days instead of the standard 30 days.

## **Covid-19 Small Business Rental Deferral Guarantee Program**

The requirement of tenant businesses to have 5 or more employees to be eligible for the program has been removed. The revised guidelines are online and there is no employee minimum to be eligible <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/#support>. Rental deferral agreements must be in place by April 1 and you must register your intent with the Department of Business by 5 p.m. on Friday, April 3, by emailing [NSRentDeferral@novascotia.ca](mailto:NSRentDeferral@novascotia.ca).

By April 30, 2020, the landlord must submit an application to the Department of Business which will include an application form and a copy of the deferral agreement. Each landlord will be contacted directly by the Department. The government continues to ask landlords and retail and commercial tenants to work together to find a solution that works for both sides. This is not a stand-alone program; the provincial government will be announcing more supports for businesses in the coming days that complement federal programming.

## **Employer Assessment Tool**

Businesses and non-profits need clarity on how they can comply with the Public Health Order. An on-line tool to quickly help employers determine if they may remain open, in compliance with current workplace safety requirements, has been posted to the provincial coronavirus website.

You can find the assessment tool here: <https://covid19-employer-assessment.novascotia.ca/en>

## **Employment Standards Requirements**

If you need to lay off employees temporarily, there is no requirement to give or pay notice since the COVID-19 is a circumstance that could not be foreseen by an employer.

## **Emergency Leave**

If an employee cannot work because their employer has been ordered, under the Nova Scotia Health Protection Act, to close part – or all – of their operations, the employee would be entitled to emergency leave job protection. This is one example of the application of the emergency leave provisions, there are other circumstances to which the provisions apply. Employees are entitled to emergency leave for as long as they are unable to perform their work duties as a result of the emergency. Employees eligible for emergency leave must be permitted to return to their job once the emergency ends.

## **Business Navigators**

[Business Navigators](#) are available to help Nova Scotia businesses with any questions they may have. They can be reached Monday to Friday, 8 am to 5 pm at 1-844-628-7347, 902-424-4475 or by email at [BusNavigation@novascotia.ca](mailto:BusNavigation@novascotia.ca)

## **Workers' Compensation**

Workers' compensation [premiums are being deferred](#) until July 2020.

Information and updates on workers' compensation issues related to COVID-19 can be found on the [WCB website](#). You can find answers there to questions like:

- Are workers eligible for WCB benefits if they have COVID-19?
- What happens if a worker files a claim?
- Are quarantined or self-isolated workers eligible for benefits?
- And much more.

## **Government of Canada**

Webpage: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>

## **Wage Subsidies**

The federal government will provide a **75% wage subsidy** to small businesses for salaries paid since March 15. This will replace the previously announced 10% wage subsidy.

### Who is eligible?

Businesses (regardless of the number of employees), not for profit organizations and charities that experienced a 30% reduction of their revenue due to the Covid-19. More details to come.

### How much can I receive?

The subsidy will cover 75% of the wage of the employee up to a maximum weekly subsidy per employee of \$847 and \$58,700 a year.

## **Tax filing**

### Deadline extensions

- Individuals have until June 1, 2020, to submit their income tax return.
- For trusts (having a taxation year ending on December 31, 2019), tax filing is deferred until May 1, 2020.

## Payment Deferral

Individuals and businesses will be able to defer their income tax payment (for taxes owe between March 18, 2020 and September 2020) until after August 31, 2020.

## Payment deferral for GST/HST remittances

Businesses will have until June 30 to remit GST/HST due to the government. This applies to

- Monthly filers for amount collected in February, March and April for
- Quarterly filers for amount collected between January 1 and March 31.
- Annual filers, whose GST/HST return or instalment are due in March, April or May

## Payment deferral for customs duties remittances

Payment deadlines for customs duties and GST on imports collected in March, April, and May are being deferred to June 30.

## **Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)**

This will replace the emergency care benefit and the emergency support benefit previously announced. All Canadians who have ceased working due to COVID-19, whether they are EI-eligible or not, will be able to receive the CERB.

## How do I apply?

- The portal for accessing the CERB will be available in early April. Canadians will begin to receive their CERB payments within 10 days of application. The CERB will be paid every four weeks and be available until October 3, 2020.
- In order to receive your benefit faster, make sure that you have signed-up for direct deposit with CRA and that the information you provided is up to date. More details [here](#).

## **Canada Emergency Business Account**

- Offering \$25 billion to eligible financial institutions so they can provide interest-free loans to small businesses.
- Provide funding to eligible financial institutions so that they can provide interest-free loans in the form of lines of credit of up to \$40,000 to businesses with payrolls of less than \$1 million. A quarter of this loan (up to \$10,000) is eligible for complete forgiveness.

## Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Loan and Guarantee program

- Export Development Canada will provide guarantees to financial institutions so that they can issue new operating credit and cash flow term loans of up to \$6.25 million to small and medium-sized businesses. These loans will be 80 per cent guaranteed by Export Development Canada, to be repaid within one year.
- Small and medium-sized businesses can also get support through a new Co-Lending Program that will bring the Business Development Bank of Canada together with financial institutions to co-lend term loans to these businesses for their operational cash flow requirements. Eligible businesses may obtain incremental credit amounts of up to \$6.25 million through the program, which will be risk-shared at 80 per cent between the Business Development Bank of Canada and the financial institutions. Eligible financial institutions will conduct the underwriting and funding directly for customers.

## EI Sickness Benefits

Regarding the EI sickness benefits:

- The one-week waiting period is waived for 6 months for workers in imposed quarantine or who have been directed to self-isolate. Application may still take several weeks.
- There is no need for a medical certificate to apply.

Note: This may take up to a month for your employee to receive their first EI payment due to the backlog.

Ensure that you **do not** use the ROE code K for other as it will pull it out of automatic processing.

## Work Sharing Program

The [Work Sharing Program](#) is a three-way agreement that can be negotiated between Service Canada, the employer and the employee to provide EI benefits to workers who agree to reduce their normal working hour as a result of developments beyond the control of their employers. Changes to the program are:

- Extension of the maximum duration from 38 weeks to 76 weeks.
- The 30 day wait period will be waived for only those who have used the work-sharing program in the past.
- Businesses can now see their application being accepted within 10 days instead of 30.

## Canadian Banks Support:

Banks Resource Page: <https://www.mentorworks.ca/blog/business-consulting/canada-bank-relief-covid19/>

## Bank of Montreal (BMO)

- The [Bank of Montreal](#) is allowing up to a six-month payment deferral on mortgages, loans, credit cards, and lines of credit with no fee (payment will be deferred but interest will continue to accrue) and no changes to the terms of your BMO account.

- Those who are concerned about missing a payment are to sign into [BMO Online Banking](#) and send a request through the safe and secure Message Centre.

## National Bank of Canada

- Like the other banks, the [National Bank of Canada](#) may offer payment deferrals of up to six months on mortgages, or longer amortization periods for both personal and commercial banking clients. Special loans to cover living expenses may also be available. Customers are asked to get in touch with their personal banking representative.

## RBC Royal Bank

- For business clients:
  - Waiving of credit card minimum payments.
  - Business loan payment deferrals.
  - Increases to operating line of credit limits.
  - Waived fees for new enrollments to cash management solutions.

## CIBC

- As inquiries are at a higher volume than usual, [CIBC](#) is asking clients experiencing hardships to first complete a [financial assistance form](#). They've expanded their dedicated call centre team with small business lending experts who are ready to assist small businesses with payment deferral and other measures. Support for their customers include up to a six-month payment deferral for mortgages and the opportunity for relief on other credit products.

## TD Bank

- [TD Bank](#) customers who are directly impacted by COVID-19 and as a result are facing financial challenges such as illness, pay disruption, or childcare disruption due to school closures are to reach out to TD Bank at 1-888-720-0075. Support may include up to a six-month payment deferral for mortgages and the opportunity for relief on other credit products on a case-by-case basis.

## Scotiabank

- In order to get access to financial relief measures Business Banking customers connect with your Relationship Manager.
- Support includes but is not limited to:
  - **Personal Loans or Auto Loans:** On unsecured and secured term loans, you can defer payments for up to three months. If you choose to defer your payments, interest will continue to accrue, and three months of payments will be added at the end of your payment schedule. If you have an insured personal loan your insurance premium is not impacted. If you have an insured auto loan, your insurance premiums will be deferred as well, but your loan will continue to be insured during the deferral period.
  - **Lines of Credit:** On unsecured and secured lines of credit, you can defer up to three months of minimum payments. If you choose to defer your payments, interest will continue to accrue and will be payable once the deferral period is over. If you have creditor insurance on your Line of Credit the overall payment, including your insurance premiums, will be deferred. Your Line of Credit will continue to be insured during the deferral period.

- **Mortgages:** A mortgage deferral means that you will not be required to make regular payments on your mortgage for up to six months. During the time you defer your mortgage payments, interest will continue to accrue – so your payments will be slightly higher after the deferral period ends. You will pay more interest over the life of your mortgage, but a deferral will also help you with your short-term cash flow. If you have an insured mortgage, you will continue to be charged for your Scotia Mortgage Protection insurance premiums in order to maintain your coverage.
- **Credit Cards:** On secured and unsecured credit cards, you can defer your minimum payment for up to three months. If you choose to defer your payments, interest will continue to accrue on your outstanding balance and will be payable once the deferral period is over. If you have creditor insurance on your Credit Card the overall payment, including your insurance premiums, will be deferred. Your Credit Card will continue to be insured during the deferral period.

## Organizational Supports for Businesses:

### Halifax Water

Disconnections for non-payment of service will be suspended during the next 30 days and customers that are currently disconnected will be reconnected based on agreement to a repayment arrangement.

Link: <https://www.halifaxwater.ca/alert/halifax-water-maintaining-critical-services>

### Nova Scotia Power

We've been listening to you. We understand that many of you are concerned about the future, about employment insecurity and your ability to pay your bills. The last thing we want you to worry about is going without power during this tough time. We are here to help. For at least the next 90 days, we will not be disconnecting customers for nonpayment. We're also committed to being flexible, relaxing payment timelines, waiving penalties and fees on unpaid bills, and providing options for residential and small business customers. If you're struggling to pay your bill, our [Customer Care](#) team is ready to listen and work with you, so you can stay as current as possible with your payments. We also encourage those that can, to stay up to date with their payments. Not only will this avoid building up a balance, but it will help us support those who are most in need of financial assistance.

Link: <https://www.nspower.ca/about-us/safety/covid-19-response>

**Note:** Most phone and internet companies are also providing relief during this time. I would suggest visiting the webpage of your current provider for more information.