



## March 20, 2020

With the fast-evolving situation around COVID-19 in Canada, and daily new public health and government authorities introducing mandated actions or recommendations, it may be hard to determine what is appropriate. In all situations, please apply prevention and precaution measures in handling requests for assistance. Listen and follow directives from public health experts and governmental authorities, and, please apply judgement. Although the focus was initially on the elderly (over 65), we are now aware from the China and Italy data that all ages are affected, and the 30 to 50 age group has had many deaths internationally. Younger volunteers and people served are also vulnerable.

For any person-to-person contact, it is preferable to err on the side of caution to ensure safety for everyone, and find alternate means to assist in all possible ways that does not involve a direct contact. Be creative in meeting the needs of your community and addressing the specific conditions in your region.

In your respective conferences/councils, are your activities a gathering point which could facilitate the transmission of the COVID-19 virus? For thrift stores, unless there is a zero risk to the volunteers, the public and people served, the recommendation is to close.

What are the urgent essentials to continue assisting persons in need, especially as we can expect the needs to increase over the coming weeks? Food banks or food distribution centers are likely key activities that we need to be innovative to find alternative ways to still provide this essential assistance:

- Organize your call center and dispatch capabilities differently to protect the volunteers;
- Set up alternative pick up stations to prevent person-to-person contact;
- Have door or mailbox drop-offs.

As well, do not force your volunteers into actions if they feel unsafe or had prior health conditions that could put them at risk.

As previously communicated, prevention and precautions are in order in this constant evolving situation. It is important to listen to the advice of Public Health experts:

- Wash your hands often and well;
- Avoid touching your face, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands;
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched;
- Stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill;
- When sick, cover your cough and sneezes and then wash your hands;
- Practice social-distancing.

Note: It has been determined that masks are not effective in stopping the spread of the disease.

Thank you for your support.

Claude Bédard

President, National Council of Canada

## **General information of Interest**

In relation to Coronavirus (COVID-19), please refer to the following suite of information from the federal government:

*For Employment Insurance (EI) information, please refer to the Federal government Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) site*

*<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices/coronavirus.html>*

***Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefits*** provide up to 15 weeks of income replacement and is available to eligible claimants who are unable to work because of illness, injury or quarantine, to allow them time to restore their health and return to work. Canadians quarantined can apply for Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefits.

*If you are eligible, visit the EI sickness benefits page to apply.*

*Service Canada is ready to support Canadians affected by COVID-19 and placed in quarantine, with the following support actions:*

- *The one-week waiting period for EI sickness benefits will be waived for new claimants who are quarantined so they can be paid for the first week of their claim*
- *Establishing a new dedicated toll-free phone number to support enquiries related to waiving the EI sickness benefits waiting period*
- *People claiming EI sickness benefits due to quarantine will not have to provide a medical certificate*
- *People who cannot complete their claim for EI sickness benefits due to quarantine may apply later and have their EI claim backdated to cover the period of delay*

*Important: If you are directly affected by the COVID-19 because you are sick or quarantined and you have not yet applied for EI benefits, please submit your application before contacting us. This will allow us to better serve you and prevent delays in establishing your claim.*

*If you have already completed the application for EI sickness benefits whether you are sick or quarantined and would like to have the one-week waiting period waived, call the new toll-free phone number below. It is important to note that no other request will be actioned on this phone line. We will take action only for sick or quarantined clients affected by the COVID-19 for which the application for sickness benefits has been filed.*

Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan: Support for Canadians and Businesses  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2020/03/canadas-covid-19-economic-response-plan-support-for-canadians-and-businesses.html>

***Temporary Income Support for Workers and Parents***

*For Canadians without paid sick leave (or similar workplace accommodation) who are sick, quarantined or forced to stay home to care for children, the Government is:*

- *Waiving the one-week waiting period for those individuals in imposed quarantine that claim Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefits. This temporary measure is in effect as of March 15, 2020.*
- *Waiving the requirement to provide a medical certificate to access EI sickness benefits.*
- *Introducing the Emergency Care Benefit providing up to \$900 biweekly, for up to 15 weeks. This flat-payment Benefit would be administered through the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and provide income support to:*
  - o *Workers, including the self-employed, who are quarantined or sick with COVID-19 but do not qualify for EI sickness benefits.*
  - o *Workers, including the self-employed, who are taking care of a family member who is sick with COVID-19, such as an elderly parent, but do not qualify for EI sickness benefits.*
  - o *Parents with children who require care or supervision due to school or daycare closures, and are unable to earn employment income, irrespective of whether they qualify for EI or not.*

The World Health Organization (WHO) is tracking the virus; WHO has a question and answer site

Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19)

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

The Government of Canada also has a question and answer site

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/frequently-asked-questions.html>