



## **COVID-19 and the Workplace Update: Canada Emergency Response Benefit**

Today, the federal government announced a new program called the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (“CERB”) that will provide \$2,000 a month for four months to select Canadians that have seen a loss of income as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

The CERB combines and replaces the Emergency Care Benefit and Emergency Support Benefit announced by the federal government last week. The hope is that combining the two programs will streamline the application process and get money into the hands of Canadians as quickly as possible and within 10 days after they have applied for the benefit.

The CERB is aimed at providing income assistance to Canadians who **would not otherwise be eligible for Employment Insurance** such as the self-employed, independent contractors, freelancers, gig economy workers, and part-time workers. As of now, the following workers will be eligible to receive the CERB benefit:

- Workers who have lost their job as a result of COVID-19;
- Workers who are sick with COVID-19, or are taking care of someone who is sick;
- Workers who are quarantined;
- Workers that are required to stay at home without pay to care for children who are sick or at home because of school and daycare closures; and
- Workers who are still employed but are not receiving income because of disruptions to their work situation due to COVID-19.

A “worker” under the CERB program is defined as a person who is at least 15 years old, a resident of Canada, and in 2019 or the past 12 months had an income of at least \$5,000 from employment, self-employment, or other eligible income benefits. Workers will be able to apply for the benefit directly from the Service Canada website once the online application becomes available.

We expect the federal government to announce additional changes to the CERB including expanding the eligibility criteria in the coming days and we will continue to keep you updated.

In these quickly evolving times, it is more important than ever that both employers and employees obtain legal advice to understand their legal rights and obligations. We at BTM Lawyers LLP are here to help. Contact our employment lawyer Catherine Coakley at [cec@btmlawyers.com](mailto:cec@btmlawyers.com) or 604-917-0048.