

FASKEN

Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP
Barristers and Solicitors
Patent and Trade-mark Agents

333 Bay Street, Suite 2400
P.O. Box 20
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2T6
Canada

T +1 416 366 8381
+1 800 268 8424
F +1 416 364 7813
fasken.com

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Norm Keith
Direct +1 416 868 7824
nkeith@fasken.com

COVID-19 Employment Insurance Benefits Update

A high number of Canadians are applying for Employment Insurance (“EI”) benefits due to an interruption in earnings caused by layoffs, sick leave, quarantine, and terminations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic disruption.

Changes to Federal EI benefits in response to COVID-19

Pre-COVID-19 EI benefits

Employees who have been laid off by their employers as a result of business Shutdowns, slowdowns or mandatory closures are likely eligible to receive Regular EI benefits. Eligible employees may be entitled to receive a maximum of \$573 per week for up to 45 weeks. The federal government has not announced any changes to its Regular EI benefits program in response to COVID-19.

EI Sick Benefits

Employees who are quarantined or sick due to COVID-19 may be eligible to receive EI sickness benefits up to a maximum amount of \$573 per week for up to 15 weeks. The measures adopted for EI sickness benefits include:

1. the one-week waiting period to allow new claimants who are quarantined to be paid for the first week of their claim (one week waiting period is waived);
2. the obligation for people in quarantine to provide a medical certificate in support of their claim is also waived;
3. quarantined employees may apply for EI benefits at a later date and to have their claim backdated to cover the period of the delay;
4. establishing toll-free number to support enquiries related to waiving the EI sickness benefits waiting period 1-833-381-2725.

Employees: How to apply for EI benefits from the Federal Government?

Applicants should be completed online by visiting the Service Canada [website](#). Employees who present themselves to a Service Canada office in person should expect to go through screening and to be required to practice social distancing measures.

Employers: What they Must Do to Facilitate EI Benefits for Employees?

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Employers must immediately issue a Record of Employment (“ROE”) to the employee , since this is the critical document allowing employees to access EI benefits. Employers should be aware of the following codes when indicating the reason for the interruption in employee earnings:

1. If the employee is sick or quarantined, use code D (Illness or injury) as the reason for separation (section 16);
2. If the employee is no longer working due to a shortage of work because the business has closed or decreased operations due to coronavirus (COVID-19), use code A (Shortage of work).

How long will it take for employees to receive EI benefits from the Federal Government?

Eligible employees will usually receive their first payment within 28 days of submitting a completed application. In the present circumstances, the processing delay may be longer.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours very truly,

FASKEN MARTINEAU DuMOULIN LLP



Norm Keith
NK/cc

c. Cathy Chandler



FASKEN

bcc. Tony Gaglia
Luigi Ntentes

