

COVID-19 DANGER PAY

Background

More than nine months ago, the federal government announced a \$3-billion federal fund to help repay frontline workers for their service during the pandemic. Alberta's share of the fund was \$347 million, but the Kenney government lags behind all other provinces in getting the funds into the hands of workers.

Dividing Albertans

The COVID-19 danger pay program was both nine months behind schedule yet also implemented without any consultation with workers or their unions.

The top-down and complicated regulations are not an accident. It is part of a larger UCP pattern of “divide and rule” to limit effective resistance to his agenda. The confusing rules governing danger pay were issued in the same week as regulations for the anti-worker Bill 32. UCP policies divide workers in the public and private sectors or even within the same workplace.

Public sector

The government says workers in public health-care, social services, education sectors are eligible for the payment.

However, many public servants will not meet the 300-hour threshold described above. Early criteria suggest that jail guards and social workers will not qualify.

The Ottawa-funded danger pay cheques are at odds with the Kenney government's comments about upcoming public-sector bargaining. Kenney insists that workers across the public service will be forced to take a pay cut during the pandemic.

Private sector

Unlike in the public sector, workers in the private sector must rely on their employer to apply to the government before March 19, 2021.

Workers can only qualify if employers verify employees made less than \$25/hour.

What's next?

The long delay in implementing danger pay is be a symptom of a larger problem in the Jason Kenney government. A report published this year showed that Alberta is sitting on hundreds of millions of unspent federal transfers for other COVID-19 programs, such as Early Childhood Education, housing aid, and job training.

For more information about danger pay and other changes to your rights at work, visit unifor.org/alberta

By the numbers

The “Critical Worker Benefit” (danger pay) will amount to **\$1,200** for those lucky enough to qualify.

Workers must meet the government-issued criterion below and must have worked at least **300 hours** between October 12, 2020, and January 31, 2021.

