

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about income supports and sickness leave benefits for seasonal workers

Revised March 24, 2020

Due to the rapidly changing circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and its impact on workers, program support criteria are subject to change. Be sure to visit www.unifor.org/covid19 to download updated versions of this fact sheet.

As the effects of COVID-19 continue to ripple through the economy, many seasonal workers will be facing a shortage of work or temporary lay-offs, while others may need to undergo self-isolation or quarantine due to exposure to the virus.

If you are a seasonal worker who has been laid off or who cannot work due to COVID-19, this FAQ is for you.

Generally, you are a seasonal worker if:

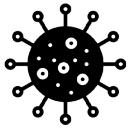
- You are hired to work only during specific times of the year. Examples include agricultural work, lifeguarding, camp counselling, tour-guiding, etc.

If I contract the Coronavirus or have to self-isolate due to exposure, what income supports are available to me?

You are eligible for Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefits if:

- You are currently self-isolating or undergoing quarantine due to COVID-19 (no doctor's note or medical certificate is required).
- You have accumulated 600 insurable hours in the 52 weeks before the start of your claim (e.g. 20 weeks of work at 30 hours a week).
- You can demonstrate that your weekly earnings have declined by more than 40% for at least a week.

If you meet these requirements, [you can apply for EI sickness benefits online](#) as soon as possible. The federal government recently waived the 7-day waiting period so recipients will be paid for the first week of their claim.



If you do not meet these requirements, you may be eligible for the recently announced **Emergency Response Benefit**, which provides up to 16 weeks of income support to those who do not qualify for regular EI benefits. You will need a [CRA My Account for Individuals](#) or a [My Service Canada Account](#) in order to apply for the benefit online.

If I am laid off from work, can I access Employment Insurance?

Yes, you are eligible for regular EI benefits if you have accumulated the required amount of insurable hours during the qualifying period.

- For most workers, the qualifying period will be the previous 52 weeks, unless you have already applied for EI within the past year.
- The required number of insurable hours ranges from 420 to 700 hours depending on your region. You can look up the number of hours needed by postal code [here](#).

Seasonal workers in [specific regions](#) may be eligible for five additional weeks of benefits.

Make sure that your Record of Employment (ROE) has been forwarded to Service Canada or has been submitted electronically by your employer. You will need a [My Service Canada Account](#) to view your ROE electronically. You do not, however, need your ROE before applying for EI.

[You can apply for regular EI benefits online](#) as soon as possible. Be sure not to wait too long as some of your benefits may be lost if you delay your application.

If you do not meet the above requirements, you may be eligible for the recently announced **Emergency Response Benefit**, which will provide up to 16 weeks of income support to those who do not qualify for regular EI benefits. You will need a [CRA My Account for Individuals](#) or [My Service Canada Account](#) to apply online.

When should I apply for EI?

If you qualify, you can apply for [EI sickness benefits](#) or [regular EI benefits](#) online as soon as possible. Be sure not to wait too long as some of your benefits may be lost if you delay your application.

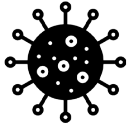
If I have questions about applying for Employment Insurance, who can I contact?

Call the EI telephone information service at 1-800-206-7218 from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday and press "0" to talk to a representative. Please note that call volumes are high at the present time and you may be placed on hold.

Are there other special income support measures available to me?

Residents of Alberta who must self-isolate or undergo quarantine and who do not qualify for EI sickness benefits can access the [Emergency Isolation Support](#) program, which provides a one-time payment of \$1,146. The benefit will be available at the end of March.

Residents of Saskatchewan who must self-isolate may get financial assistance from a [Self-Isolation Support Program](#) which will provide \$450 per week, for a maximum of two weeks or \$900. The Self-Isolation Support



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Program is targeted at Saskatchewan residents forced to self-isolate that are not covered by other programs and supports.

Residents of Quebec who must self-isolate or undergo quarantine and who do not qualify for EI sickness benefits (or another government support program), who are receiving no employer compensation, or private insurance support, may access the province's [Temporary Aid for Workers](#) program. Eligible workers can receive up to \$573 per week for a 14-day period of self-isolation. The coverage period for eligible workers may extend to a maximum of 28 days, depending on the individual's health.

Note: the provincial support programs are generally intended as a bridge to the upcoming federal Emergency Response benefit. You will likely be ineligible to receive both provincial and federal supports at the same time.

For more COVID-19 related worker support information, visit www.unifor.org/covid19

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