

COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM ISC BC REGION

UPDATE #21 / April 15, 2020

UPDATES

As cases of COVID-19 in First Nations may get confirmed it will not be the news any of us want to hear. While we do not discuss unique cases, be assured Indigenous Services Canada would be in touch with community leadership to share our concern and offer whatever assistance we can as they enter a new phase of their pandemic response.

As you know, in British Columbia, health care services for First Nations is a joint responsibility of the First Nations Health Authority, the province of British Columbia and Indigenous Services Canada. ISC which works to support health emergency preparedness for First Nations on reserve and ensure coordinated communications as needed.

The First Nation Health Authority has set up a dedicated email address for COVID-19 health inquiries. Members can email covid19.northern@fnha.ca with any questions or concerns. Residents should put the nature of their inquiry in the subject line so that the email can be directed to the correct person.

In the event of illness in community, ISC's role is to ensure communities are able to provide essential services to their members. If, at anytime, a community is unable to continue essential services, please contact us as soon as possible by e-mail at aadnc.isbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca. We will work with you on solutions to ensure the community does not experience an interruption in the delivery of essential services or supplies.

Canada Emergency Response Benefit Expanded

The Prime Minister announced today that the government is **expanding the Canada Emergency Response Benefit** to better support those who need help

but didn't qualify for it, and for Canadians working in essential jobs who make less than they would if they received the benefit.

To help more Canadians benefit from the CERB, the government will be changing the eligibility rules to:

- Allow people to earn up to \$1,000 per month while collecting the CERB.
- Extend the CERB to seasonal workers who have exhausted their EI regular benefits and are unable to undertake their usual seasonal work as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Extend the CERB to workers who recently exhausted their EI regular benefits and are unable to find a job or return to work because of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed particular demands on low-income workers in certain sectors, including those ensuring the integrity of the food supply.

In recognition that these essential workers' salaries are often less or similar than what they would receive from the CERB, the government will work with provinces and territories through a new transfer to cost-share a temporary top-up to the salaries of workers deemed essential in the fight against COVID-19, who make less than \$2,500 a month. Details as to the application and delivery of this measure will be released shortly following further work with provinces and territories.

To deliver payments to Canadians in a fast and easy way, the CERB is being jointly delivered by Service Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency. To begin the application process, there are a few simple questions to answer. The answers you provide will help direct you to the service option that best fits your situation. Please read these **questions and answers** for more details.



Service Canada

To support access to critical programs and services for clients without access to technology, Service Canada is taking steps to ensure everyone can connect and get the full benefit of the Government of Canada supports available in these challenging times. Through a 1-800 toll free line, Indigenous communities can receive additional support to accessing services and benefits. Citizen Services Specialists at Service Canada have already begun reaching out to First Nation communities about the New Support Centre and are trying to have calls completed to all First Nations in BC by Friday, April 17, 2020.

Keeping Drinking Water Safe

Responsibility for safe drinking water on reserve is shared between First Nation communities and the Government of Canada. Chief and Council are responsible for the day-to-day operation of water and wastewater systems on reserve, including issuing drinking water advisories (DWAs) in their communities; and for planning and developing capital facilities to meet basic community infrastructure needs. Operations for drinking water systems to provide clean, safe drinking water to the public are considered an essential service.

The Province of British Columbia has issued **temporary Measures to Ensure Continuity of Operations for Water Systems in British Columbia under the Drinking Water Protection Act** that may be of interest.

During the current Public Health Emergency and Provincial State of Emergency declarations, the Provincial Health Officer supports the following temporary measures, where reasonable, to ensure continuity of operations for drinking water system owners who may experience staffing challenges as a result of the outbreak:

- Flexibility to redeploy and employ qualified Operators as needed to address staff shortages, reschedule Operator hours, and use Operators whose certification may have expired within the past three years.

SERVICE CANADA SUPPORT

If community members do not have access to the internet or face other barriers, a Service Canada Outreach Support Centre will ensure they get access to the critical benefits they need. The outreach support center can be accessed by calling **1-877-631-2657**. Outreach workers are available to assist from 8:30am to 4:00pm Monday to Friday.

- Temporarily employ certain other qualified individuals to perform operational duties, if needed. These individuals include knowledgeable technical personnel and supervisors, managers, professional engineers, technologists, and Operators.
- For any Level I to IV water systems that require Environmental Operators Certification Program (EOCP) certified Operators, the EOCP's Operator Peer Network program may be able to provide a source of appropriately certified Operators. For further information, please contact Kalpna Solanki at ksolanki@eocp.ca; 604.874.4784 x221; or 778.688.9196.

The safety of drinking water on reserve continues to be assessed by the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA).

Additionally, we want to assure you that the Circuit Riders are still available to provide advice and guidance to your water operators. Circuit Riders are on stand-by 24/7 for on-call telephone emergency services and are available to provide on-site support to address operational emergencies related to drinking water or wastewater operations. First Nations can also access their Senior Engineer or Capital Management Officer for assistance related to any critical infrastructure required to support the health and safety of community members. Questions regarding the continued services provided by the Circuit Rider team should be directed to aadnc.bccicrtp.aandc@canada.ca.

QUESTION OF THE DAY

What help is available for members feeling overwhelmed by the COVID-19 crisis?

Community members can call the First Nations Health Authority's 24/7 culturally safe KUU-US Crisis Response Services at 1-800-588-8717 (or 250-723-2040 for child and youth / 250-723-4050 for adult and Elder).

Another option is the Hope for Wellness Help Line (1-855-242-3310). Online chat is available at [hopeforwellness.ca](https://www.hopeforwellness.ca). If you're unsure of what other services are available, calling **BC 211** is one way to find information and referrals regarding community, government and social services in BC.

UPCOMING WEBINAR

Tomorrow, Catherine Lappe, members of our Executive Leadership Team, and representatives from the First Nations Health Authority, will be available to provide a **quick update on recent funding announcements** and how they support First Nation community needs during the pandemic. This session is a follow up to our Town Hall of April 3, 2020, where unfortunately due to technical issues a large number of participants were unable to join.

The webinar will be approximately 45 minutes and will include a moderated Q & A from participants. Thanks to the First Nations Public Service Secretariat for hosting and moderating.

Once you have pre-registered, you will receive a confirmation e-mail with a link to join the webinar.

Thursday, April 16

10:00-10:45 a.m.

REGISTER HERE

NATIONAL INFORMATION

The Government of Canada has made announcements regarding financial assistance for those who will be impacted during these unprecedented times – these individuals and business are encouraged to apply for assistance. You can find further information on how to apply for financial or economic support at:

Canada.ca/coronavirus and [Questions and Answers on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit](#).

- For a great description of what flattening the curve means, consider watching [Prime Minister Trudeau's video tweet](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [Resources for Canadian Businesses](#)
- [Transport Canada – COVID-19 measures, updates, and guidance issued by Transport Canada](#)

USEFUL LINKS

- [Indigenous Community Support Fund: Urban and off-reserve Indigenous organizations and communities](#)
- [Family Violence Prevention Program](#)
- [First Nations Public Service Secretariat](#)
- [First Nations Health Authority](#)
Summary of COVID-19 information and response.
- [COVID-19 BC Support App and Self-Assessment Tool](#)
The app will let you receive the latest updates, trusted resources, and alerts. The Self-Assessment Tool is built in.

REGIONAL CONTACTS

We've set up a dedicated email for any non-health COVID-19-related questions and requests:
aadnc.iscbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca

The email address and other information are also available on the [FNPSS website](#).

