

COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM ISC BC REGION

UPDATE #70 / December 11, 2020

Good afternoon,

We hope you and your communities are managing to stay healthy and positive through this second wave.

We know a number of you have been newly impacted by COVID-19 and are keeping you all in our thoughts. We trust all communities experiencing outbreaks are getting the supports you need through the First Nations Health Authority, and remain available to provide surge capacity as needed. We would also like to acknowledge Nak'azdli Whut'en who have shut down for at least two weeks in an effort to help themselves and the surrounding community of Fort St. James lower its rate of transmission as the local health-care system is at full capacity caring for the ill.

And let us be comforted that there is more than Christmas lights to provide a glimmer of hope this season. Relief from the pandemic is coming. Health Canada has approved the Pfizer vaccine and the Province of British Columbia has announced 4,000 people in BC will be getting the COVID-19 vaccine by the end of next week.

The First Nations Health Authority advises us they are working with their health system partners and First Nations leadership to ensure your communities get priority access to COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they become available.

The first doses will go to residents of long-term care and their caregivers, front-line health workers, people over the age of 80 and adults in Indigenous communities where an outbreak would be harder to manage.

As BC Premier John Horgan said "Although the end is not in front of us, the beginning of the end may well be." He encourages us all to dig down deep to find that extra resolve to get to the finish line. As ever, it's a race we are committed to running by your side with whatever assistance we can provide.

DR. BONNIE HENRY ON VACCINE ROLLOUT

"We're not out of the woods, out of the storm yet. We all need to keep doing our precautions to prevent transmission of the virus because we have the end in sight... we have to do everything to make sure we're not putting people at risk right now."

Early Edition, Dec 12, 2020

WEBINAR: COVID-19 VACCINATION PLANNING TO COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Information Town Hall
(with special guest,
Dr. Bonnie Henry) on
Tuesday, December 15 from
9:00 - 10:30 AM via Zoom.

“ It's important that we continue to stay strong and stay the course against COVID-19. That means continue physical distancing, stick to our household bubbles, avoid social gatherings, and be calm and kind to one another. ”

— Dr. Shannon McDonald, Acting Chief Medical Officer of the FNHA

UPDATES

A safe and effective vaccine(s) for COVID-19 will protect us against Covid-19 and will be an important step to safely resume normal life in Canada and around the world. The Government of Canada is working on all possible fronts to secure access to safe and effective vaccines and related supplies for Canadians. **Here is what Canadians need to know** about a future COVID-19 vaccine.

We would like to highlight the Public Health Agency of Canada's Fact Sheet – What you need to know about the **COVID-19 vaccine for Canada**. We encourage you to share it with your community members.

Government of Canada invests in Canadian families

The Government of Canada has announced **additional supports for children and families** through the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) and investments in child care.

Since May 2020, families who were eligible for the CCB have benefitted from a one-time payment of \$300 per child, representing approximately \$550 on average per family. The Government of Canada is proposing new temporary support of up to \$1,200 per child under the age of six to further assist families with young children. This support will help families cover the costs of tools for at-home learning, help families provide the necessary care for their children, and for many, help with the higher costs associated with temporary child care arrangements.

Canada is also laying the groundwork for a Canada-wide child care system in partnership with provinces, territories and Indigenous Peoples. Last week's, **Fall Economic Statement** highlights proposed investments for a new Federal Secretariat on Early Learning and Child Care, as well as funding for Indigenous early learning and child care and \$420 million in new support for the recruitment and retention of early childhood educators.

These investments are in addition to the federal government's \$625 million investment for child care through the **Safe Restart Agreement** and existing federal funding for provinces, territories and Indigenous partners to support early learning and child care programming.

Other Supports During COVID-19

As a reminder, the Government of Canada has transitioned from the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) to a simplified and more accessible **Employment Insurance (EI)** program.

In most cases, those who were previously receiving the CERB through Service Canada, do not need to apply for EI benefits. Those who are eligible for EI, will receive a minimum benefit rate of \$500 per week before taxes, or \$300 per week before taxes for extended parental benefits but could receive more. In addition:

- The **Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB)** provides \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks, to workers who have stopped working or had their employment/self-employment income reduced by at least 50% due to COVID-19 and who are not eligible for EI. These workers must be available and looking for work, and must accept work where it is reasonable to do so.
- The **Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB)** provides \$500 per week for up to two weeks (can be split into two one-week portions), for workers who are unable to work because they contracted COVID-19; self-isolated for reasons related to COVID-19; or have underlying conditions that would make them more susceptible to COVID-19.
- The **Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB)** provides \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks per household, for eligible workers unable to work because they must care for a child under the age of 12 or family member because schools, day-cares or care facilities are closed due to COVID-19 or because the child or family member is sick and/or required to quarantine.

For information about these benefits including eligibility requirements, how to apply, and eligibility period dates, we encourage you to visit the **CRA's webpages**.

There are additional measures to support individuals and businesses. Visit the Government of Canada's **COVID-19 Economic Response Plan** for details.

You may be eligible for support through other programs as well. **Answer some questions to find financial help during COVID-19.** While we cannot guarantee your eligibility, we can point you to the program details.

INFORMATION FOR THE SENIORS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

In response to the pandemic, low-income seniors receiving a **Senior's Supplement from the Province of BC** are eligible for a \$300 supplement for each month from April to December. No action is required on their part as the increase is automatic.

TELL YOUR MEMBERS!

For support in filing their income tax, members can call the Canada Revenue Agency at 1-800-959-8281, email S87ECOVIG@cra-arc.gc.ca or get support online at the Canada Revenue Agency.

In addition, 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. To support access to critical programs and services for clients, including First Nations members, without access to technology, Service Canada Community Outreach and Liaison Service are available to offer alternate service delivery methods that will continue to support accessing critical programs, services and benefits.

You can call them at: 1-877-631-2657

PARTNER INFORMATION

Recovery Benefit

On December 8, 2020, BC announced its **Recovery Benefit** – a one-time tax-free payment up to \$1,000 for eligible families and single parents and up to \$500 for eligible individuals. British Columbians will be able to apply for the benefit beginning on Dec. 18

Benefit eligibility is based on net income from the 2019 tax return. The eligible amount will be automatically calculated based on an individual's income when they apply.

FAMILIES AND SINGLE PARENTS

- \$1,000 for eligible families and single parents with a net income of up to \$125,000
- Reduced benefit amount for eligible families and single parents with a net income of up to \$175,000

INDIVIDUALS

- \$500 for eligible individuals with a net income of up to \$62,500
- Reduced benefit amount for eligible individuals with a net income of up to \$87,500

For people who have not filed their income taxes for 2019 or those who do not have banking services, a modified application process will be available in the new year.

SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER

If your members are looking to apply for a Social Insurance Number (SIN) they can **do so online** or by calling 1-866-274-6627.

Agents are available Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Canadian Local Time, except on statutory holidays.

More Support for Urban Indigenous Peoples During Pandemic

New provincial funding for BC friendship centres aims to offer increased support to your members living in urban areas.

The Province of BC is providing one-time **COVID-19 relief funding of \$7.8 million** to help friendship centres continue to assist individuals, young families, single parents, youth and Elders through a mix of in-person and online services.

The grant recognizes that friendship centres provide many essential services for Indigenous peoples living in urban areas, including child care, counselling, food and shelter. It will help provide supports like meals and hampers, care packages for seniors and education kits for children. Additionally, it will help keep staff and clients safe with new handwashing stations, sanitization and personal protective equipment.

New grants to help rural, remote and Indigenous communities combat overdose crisis

People living in rural, remote and Indigenous communities will have access to more supports to prevent and respond to overdoses with the announcement of **\$1.3 million in funding to support overdose response and awareness** in communities across BC.

People in rural and remote areas face unique challenges when it comes to accessing supports and services that allow them to address the overdose crisis. Geographic remoteness may mean people need to travel longer distances to access health care and treatment, and access to Naloxone and harm-reduction services can be limited in areas with low populations. COVID-19 has amplified the overdose crisis, with an increasingly toxic drug supply leading to an increase in the risk of overdose and death.

Anti-racism work boosted by economic recovery plan

One of the most devastating side effects of COVID-19 has been the increase of racism and hate crimes across BC. In some instances Indigenous peoples have been the target of these unacceptable incidents. The Province is further increasing resources to address racism throughout BC as part of the economic recovery from COVID-19.

To deliver **four anti-racism initiatives, \$1.9 million is being provided** from BC's economic recovery plan, Stronger BC. This includes:

- a one-time expansion and enhancement of the **Resilience BC** anti-racism network created last year;
- an anti-racism public education campaign;
- a one-time lift to the Multiculturalism Grants Program; and
- a new institutional change program to address systemic discrimination.

Specifically, the areas around Chilliwack and the Sea to Sky corridor are being funded as new community spokes in the **Resilience BC** network.

CANADA EMERGENCY BUSINESS ACCOUNT NOW OPEN TO BUSINESSES USING PERSONAL BANKING ACCOUNTS

The **Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA)** is available to businesses that have been operating out of a non-business banking account. To be eligible, businesses must have been operating as a business as of March 1, 2020, must successfully open a business account at a Canadian financial institution that is participating in CEBA, and meet the other existing CEBA eligibility criteria. The deadline to apply for CEBA is December 31, 2020.

USEFUL LINKS

- **Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Indigenous communities** – developed by ISC, this page provides health and financial support information for Indigenous communities.
- Find information on how to apply for financial or economic support from the Government of Canada at: Canada.ca/coronavirus.
- With the help of BCFC, the First Nations Public Service Secretariat has developed **a series of one-pagers on COVID-19 support and resources**.
- **Taking care of your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Prevention and risks**
- First Nations Health Authority – **Information for community leaders**
- **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.
- **Transport Canada – COVID-19 measures, updates, and guidance issued by Transport Canada**

REGIONAL CONTACTS

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

- **Regional Director General**
Catherine Lappe / 604-340-7703
- **Associate Regional Director General**
Bill Guerin / 604-803-9476
- **Director, Community Infrastructure**
Paula Santos / 604-790-8451
- **Director, Programs and Partnerships**
Wendy Rogers / 604-363-8117
- **Director, Lands and Economic Development**
David Russell / 604-817-2644
- **Director, Funding Services**
Jody Kaden / 236-334-4742
- **Director, Child and Family Services**
Chiara Taylor / 778-668-9067
- **Director, Community Development**
James Moxon / 604-367-8241
- **Director, Corporate Services**
Harold Powell / 604-219-1737

