Alberta

News release

Protecting Alberta's families and economy

March 18, 2020

Government is providing immediate financial assistance to Albertans affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

New funding and supportive measures will provide immediate financial relief to Alberta's families, vulnerable populations, local businesses and employers.

"Albertans are doing their part to keep each other safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19. We are doing ours by assisting Albertans and their families, protecting jobs and supporting workers and employers. We will help shelter Albertans from the economic disruption of COVID-19 now, and position Alberta's industry and businesses to bounce back when the situation stabilizes. This is an initial set of measures, and more will follow in the days to come."
Jason Kenney, Premier

Financial supports for Albertans
Albertans should be focused on their health and not worry about whether they can pay their bills, so the government has put a number of options in place for those struggling financially:

- Emergency Isolation Support: $50 million
  - This will be a temporary program for working adult Albertans who must self-isolate because they meet the Government of Alberta's published criteria for self-isolation, including persons who are the sole caregiver for a dependent who must self-isolate because they meet the public health criteria, and who will not have another source of pay or compensation while they are self-isolated.
  - It will be distributed in one payment instalment and will bridge the gap until the federal emergency payments begin in April.
  - We expect the program to be accessible by a simple online application through alberta.ca next week and that funds will be deposited in the accounts of eligible recipients beginning at that time.
- Utility payment holiday

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Media inquiries

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- Residential, farm, and small commercial customers can defer bill payments for the next 90 days to ensure no one will be cut off from these services during this time of crisis.
- This will cover electricity and natural gas, regardless of the service provider.

- Student loans repayment holiday
  - The government will implement a six-month, interest-free moratorium on Alberta student loan payments for all individuals who are in the process of repaying these loans.

Banks and credit unions

- ATB Financial customers impacted by COVID-19
  - Personal banking customers can apply for a deferral on their ATB loans, lines of credit, and mortgages for up to six months.
  - Small business customers, in addition to payment deferrals on loans and lines of credit, will be provided access to additional working capital.
  - For other business and agriculture customers, ATB will work with customers on a one-on-one basis and further solutions are being considered at this time.
  - For more information on ATB's relief program, please visit their website.
- Alberta credit unions
  - Credit union members will have access to a variety of programs and solutions designed to ease difficulties with loan payments and short-term cash flow.
  - Both individual and business members are encouraged to proactively contact their credit union directly to work out a plan for their personal situation.

Employers

Alberta employers are facing significant challenges and uncertainty. To give them increased access to cash in order to pay employees, address debts and continue operations, the government will:

- defer the collection of corporate income tax balances and instalment payments, due after today, until Aug. 31, 2020. This gives Alberta businesses access to about $1.5 billion in funds to help them cope with the COVID-19 crisis.

"In these exceptional circumstances, having cash on hand is vital to families and employers and it's critical we give Albertans this certainty and support. This tax measure will provide timely relief and additional runway for businesses to continue operating and compensating their employees during this difficult time."
Travis Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance

Alberta is pleased the federal government has responded to concerns and has taken the recommendation to increase supports to people receiving Employment Insurance. Alberta has contributed far more to the federal government in employment insurance (EI) premiums than it receives in EI support, so it is good to see the federal government providing the support Albertans need in these difficult times.

Relief measures already in place

Albertans, seniors and vulnerable groups

- Charitable and non-profit groups will immediately receive an additional $60 million to support seniors and other vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by COVID-19. This is in addition to the $3.9 billion for community and social services allocated in Budget 2020.

Health care for Albertans

- The Government of Alberta has committed $500 million extra this year to respond to the public health crisis and to support front-line health professionals working to keep Albertans safe and healthy. This is in addition to the record-high $20.6 billion allocated for health care in Budget 2020. A further $58 million has been allocated to Alberta health care for COVID-19 response by the federal government.