

CERB applicants top seven million

OTTAWA — Newly released data show there have been more than seven million unique applicants for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit as spending on the emergency aid program creeps higher.

Numbers posted this morning by the federal government reveal \$22.4 billion has been paid out through the \$2,000-a-month benefit.

Since it opened for applications at the start of the month through to Thursday, there have been 7.12 million unique applicants for the program, which has a budget of \$24 billion.

The CERB is one of several programs the Liberals have unveiled in recent weeks to combat the economic fallout from COVID-19, four of which are under scrutiny this morning in reports from Parliament's budget watchdog

Parliamentary budget officer Yves Giroux says a \$25-billion loan program for businesses will likely cost federal coffers just over \$9.1 billion through a combination of interest costs, defaults and loan forgiveness.

The Liberals created the Canada Emergency Business Account to provide interest-free loans of up to \$40,000 to help cover operating costs, with up to \$10,000 of the loan to be forgiven if it is repaid by the end of 2022.

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