

Federal Government Temporarily Waives The One-Week Waiting Period For Employment Insurance Claims

By **Pamela Vanmeer** - February 1, 2021



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KAWARTHA LAKES-As the COVID-19 pandemic continues the Government of Canada is taking steps to aid those who are out of work or working less hours due to the pandemic through Recovery Benefits and a more flexible and accessible Employment Insurance (EI) program.

The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Carla Qualtrough, today announced EI regulations will be amended to temporarily waive the waiting period for EI claimants who establish a new claim between January 31, 2021 and September 25, 2021. This includes claimants of regular, fishing and special benefits.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the Canadian labour market, resulting in job losses and significantly reduced work hours for many. We recognize that workers in Canada face different challenges and as such, need different kinds of support. By temporarily waiving the waiting period, we are easing a big financial stress for workers and are providing income support to them faster. This certainty will go a long way for families and for communities who are feeling the effects of this pandemic especially hard."

said Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Carla Qualtrough.

This temporary change will allow people who are applying for benefits to be paid for their first week of unemployment. It will also help ease their heightened financial stress at a time of great uncertainty.

For Canadians who are EI eligible this temporary measure will not change the total weeks of EI benefits for which they are entitled to, nor the service standard for payment according to officials. Claims will be automatically processed with this new waiver, meaning workers are not required to take additional steps to receive the support they need.

This temporary measure means that people who open a new EI claim after January 31, 2021 and return to work before exhausting all of their weeks of entitlement will benefit from an additional week of income support, due to the removal of the waiting period.

To encourage compliance with public health measures, the Government waived the waiting period for EI sickness claims established on or after September 27, 2020 for a period of one year. The waiting period was also waived for all EI claims established between September 27, 2020 and October 25, 2020 in order to avoid creating a week for which claimants may not receive payment as many workers transitioned from the Canada Emergency Response Benefit to the simplified EI program.

Quick facts

A one-time hours credit to allow workers with 120 hours of insurable work qualify for EI benefits;

- a minimum benefit rate of \$500 per week, or \$300 per week for extended parental benefits;
- at least 26 weeks of regular benefits;
- a minimum unemployment rate of 13.1% applies to all regions across Canada; and,
- an EI premium rate frozen at the 2020 premium rate for 2021 and 2022.
- Three temporary recovery benefits were put in place to support workers who do not qualify for EI and require income support. They include the Canada Recovery Benefit, the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit and the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit.
- Payments of the recovery benefits are delivered within the CRA's usual service standard of 3 to 5 business days by direct deposit and within 10 to 12 business days by cheque.
- The current service standard of providing payment or notification of non-payment is 80% within 28 days. However, Service Canada is currently processing the vast majority of EI claims within 14 days, and eligible claimants receive their benefit payments 2-3 business days after they have completed their bi-weekly reports.

Pamela Vanmeer

<https://www.kawartha411.ca/>

Pamela VanMeer is a two time winner of the prestigious Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) Award. Her investigative reports on abuse in Long Term Care Homes garnered international attention for the issue and won the Ron Laidlaw Award. She is a former reporter and anchor at CHEX News, now Global Peterborough and helped launch the New CHEX Daily, a daily half hour talk show. While at CHCH News in Hamilton she covered some of the biggest news stories of the day.



