



MEMORANDUM

Programs and Services

September 22, 2020

NLTA Update for Substitute Teachers: CERB Transition to New EI Benefit Plan September 27, 2020

On March 18, 2020, NLTA President Dean Ingram first wrote federal government officials to express concerns regarding our substitute teachers' ability to access EI benefits. When in-school classes were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency, many substitutes had not accrued the required number of insurable hours for an EI claim and/or were worried about future entitlement to benefits due to uncertainty about access to future substitute or replacement contracts at that time. Over the past six months, the Association has been forcefully and consistently advocating for changes to EI regulations during meetings with federal ministers and government officials and in correspondence that has been shared with through NLTA updates. To recap, NLTA put forward the following recommendations for relief during these unprecedented circumstances:

1. Decrease the number of insurable hours required for regular EI eligibility;
2. Expand the maximum number of weeks of eligibility for regular EI benefits;
3. Increasing allowable earnings thresholds (CERB and EI) for those who still have part-time employment income during the suspension of regular K-12 school instruction; and,
4. Decreasing the number of insurable hours required for EI special benefits (maternity and parental).

There have been some gradual changes over the past six months. The purpose of this message is to inform substitute teachers, including part-time teachers who substitute, of a recent announcement of further changes to EI, including new programs, which respond to each of the recommendations above. These changes may provide additional financial support to members, particularly those who may not otherwise have been eligible for EI benefits under the previous rules.

On August 20, 2020 the Government of Canada extended the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) by an additional four weeks (one month), up to a new maximum of 28 weeks (seven months) of benefits. As of September 27 2020 (pending legislative approval), CERB will then transition to a simplified Employment Insurance (EI) program. Three new income support benefits are also planned to support those who do not qualify for EI.

Employment Insurance

The rules for eligibility have been simplified and a uniform set of guidelines has been put in place.

Summary of eligibility and benefits changes for Regular EI Benefits and Special EI Benefits

- Minimum of 120 insurable hours of work required in the past 52 weeks, or since your last claim;
- Minimum benefit rate of \$400 per week (or \$240 for extended parental benefits); and,
- Minimum of at least 26 weeks of regular benefits.

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Under these new changes, members can work while in receipt of EI benefits, but would need to repay \$0.50 of the benefit for each dollar earned (one half), up to 90 percent of prior earnings. Members who did not qualify for EI previously, due to insufficient hours of employment, will now be able to switch to EI from CERB retroactively from March 15, 2020. This is expected to benefit members who were ineligible for EI maternity and parental benefits, for example, whose CERB benefits were soon set to run out.

Members receiving CERB through Service Canada and who are EI eligible, will automatically transition to EI benefits once CERB ends on September 27, 2020. Members currently receiving the CERB from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), who believe they are entitled to EI, will need to apply through Service Canada after September 26, 2020 to make those changes.

Members can benefit from these simplified rules only once during the next calendar year.

New Recovery Programs

Beginning on September 27, 2020, members who are not eligible for EI but are in need of temporary income support may be able to avail of the following three programs which will be available for the next year, starting September 27, 2020:

- Canada Recovery Benefit – mainly for workers who are self-employed or in the gig economy who cannot resume or return to work, or who have had hours of work reduced due to COVID-19. Benefits are \$400 per week for up to 26 weeks over the next year, starting September 27, 2020. Workers can still earn income from self-employment while receiving the benefit, but would need to repay \$0.50 of the benefit for each dollar of annual net income above \$38,000.
- Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit – will provide \$500 per week, for up to two weeks, for workers who are sick or must self-isolate due to COVID-19 and who do not otherwise have access to paid leave for the same benefit period. A medical certificate is not required to qualify for this benefit.
- Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit - will provide \$500 per week, for up to 26 weeks per household, for those who are unable to work because they must care for a child under 12 or another dependent whose school, daycare, or day program facility is closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The recovery programs still require parliamentary approval and all earnings from these programs are taxable.

Full details for the programs described above can be found at: [Government of Canada - Increased access to EI and recovery benefits.](#)

The NLTA continues to lobby and advocate at both the federal and provincial levels for greater stability and financial supports for teachers who substitute. Further updates will be provided as more information becomes available.

Members with specific questions regarding their individual circumstances should contact an NLTA Administrative Officer in Programs and Services via mail@nlta.nl.ca.