



INFO-FLASH News - Special COVID-19 Updates 2020-04-24

Key information sources are at the bottom of this message



Money is a taboo topic for many people. Yet, we need to think and talk about it now. COVID-19 is forcing us to change the way we spend, access, and manage our money. Governments, retail stores, banks, and other financial institutions are doing their part to ensure older adults' financial security and needs are addressed in these challenging times. The following lists of resources for older adults include government benefits, taxes, banking, managing your money, and information on frauds and scams.

## **Municipal, Provincial, and Federal Benefits for Seniors during COVID-19**

Governments at all levels quickly made sweeping changes to support Canadians during this pandemic. CBC News has created a list of [financial help for Canadians affected by COVID-19](#). Below are the direct financial benefits for older adults from all three levels of government.

**City of Ottawa:** The City has existing [property tax and water bill deferral programs for low-income seniors and people with disabilities](#). Under these programs, eligible homeowners (over the age of 65, and eligible for benefits under Old Age Security (OAS) pension), can apply for partial or full

deferral of their annual property taxes and water utility bills. Applying for these programs can be done [online](#) or by email at [taxdeferralprogram@ottawa.ca](mailto:taxdeferralprogram@ottawa.ca).

**Province of Ontario: Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS)** will be topped up for low-income seniors for six months, starting in April 2020. It will increase the maximum payment to \$166 per month for individuals and \$332 per month for couples. You do not have to apply if you currently receive the OAS pension and GIS. GAINS benefits are based on details from your personal income tax. This benefit will be available until September 30, 2020.

**Government of Canada:** Seniors with low and modest income will receive a **one-time special payment of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) credit** by early May. This will double the maximum annual credit payment for 2019-20. Eligible seniors will receive close to \$400 for individuals and \$600 for couples.

The required minimum withdrawals from **Registered Retirement Income Funds (RRIFs)** have been reduced by 25 per cent for 2020. This will provide flexibility to seniors and help retain RRIF assets during the economic crisis. Not sure if you should consider this option, read this Globe and Mail article, [seniors who don't need all of their RRIF money this year should consider this](#).

Some older workers (over the age of 65 and receiving OAS, GIS, and/or GAINS), may be eligible for the **Canada Emergency Response Benefit**. This is a taxable benefit of \$2,000 a month, for up to four months, between March 15 and October 3. Seasonal workers and those who have recently run out of employment insurance (EI), and people who make less than \$1,000 a month due to reduced work hours, also qualify. Just remember, [you will be taxed on this income next year](#). In addition, before you apply as an older worker, **make sure you consider the negative effect** on other financial benefits you receive in the future. Affected benefits include:

- Subsidized housing rent geared to income
- Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)
- Ontario Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS)
- Overall personal tax rate

While the benefit of cash may look attractive now, these claw backs and removal of your benefits may have a [lasting negative effect on your other benefits later](#). The deadline for applications is December 2.

The **deadline to file your income taxes has been extended to June 1**. Any new balances due, or installments, are deferred until after August 31, 2020 without interest or penalties. **At this time, we are unsure if this delayed filing deadline will affect your other benefits, such as GST credit, GIS and GAINS.** If you are turning 65 this year and have not filed your 2018 tax return, you are best to file your 2018 and 2019 returns before the extended deadline.

If you are turning 65 this year (happy birthday!) and **applying for public pensions**, you can apply online through your [My Service Canada Account](#). You are strongly encouraged to apply for these benefits online:

- Canada Pension Plan Retirement Pension
- Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefit, or
- Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement

You will not be required to submit supporting documentation at this time. Service Canada may be requesting these documents at a later date. For more information on how to apply and eligibility requirements, go to [Public Pensions](#) or call 1-800-277-9914.

## Accessing your Money by Telephone or Online Banking

Using telephone or online banking may have been considered a nice to have in the past. Now it is becoming a matter of survival. Physical distancing is changing the way we access and spend our money. And, it may drive a long-term shift in our buying patterns that will likely outlast the COVID-19 crisis.

Banks are doing their part to ensure older adults have access to the supports and services they need. In fact, many Canadian banks set aside first opening hour to serve seniors, and/or giving them priority service when calling customer service. Some banks are offering temporary relief to clients facing financial hardship, including those asking for more time to make payments on mortgages, loans, lines of credit and credit cards. Most banks have noted high call volumes and ask for your patience. Most suggest using the online or mobile platforms to complete your transactions, if you are able.

In fact, most everyday banking can be completed online or by using our mobile device app and telephone banking services. You can use these services to:

- Check balances
- Pay bills
- Transfer funds between accounts
- Send money
- Deposit cheques
- Locate bank branches and ATMs

## Banks and Credit Unions COVID-19 Information

Below are links to the major Canadian banks and credit unions. The links include how the institutions are responding to COVID-19 and information on ways to bank online, on mobile devices, and by phone as well as customer service, financial relief programs and fraud protection information.

### Alterna Saving

[alterna.ca/COVID-19](https://alterna.ca/COVID-19)

[Ways to Bank](#)

### BMO

[bmo.com/covid19](https://bmo.com/covid19)

[BMO Online Support Tool](#)

613-560-0100 / 1-877-560-0100

Relief: Call your branch

[Security and Privacy](#)

## **CIBC**

[cibc.com/covid-19](https://cibc.com/covid-19)

[Ways to Bank](#)

English: 1-800-465-2422

French: 1-888-337-2422

Cantonese: 1-888-898-2828

Mandarin: 1-888-298-8822

TTY: 1-877-331-3338

[Financial relief programs](#)

[Privacy and Security](#)

## **Meridian Credit Union**

[meridiancu.ca/COVID-19](https://meridiancu.ca/COVID-19)

[Ways to Bank](#)

1-866-592-2226

[Frequently Asked Questions:](#)

[Financial Relief](#)

[Protect yourself from frauds and  
scams related to COVID-19](#)

## **Scotiabank**

[scotiabank.com/covid19](https://scotiabank.com/covid19)

[New to Digital Banking?](#)

[Digital Banking Guide](#)

[Accessible Digital Banking](#)

1-844-837-9228

[Requesting financial relief](#)

[Online Security Centre](#)

## **Desjardins**

[desjardins.com/covid-19](https://desjardins.com/covid-19)

[Services you can access anytime,  
anywhere](#)

1-800-CAISSES

(1-800-224-7737)

[Caregiver Support](#) Hotline:

1-855-852-7784

[Relief measures](#)

[Security: Fraud Prevention Service](#)

## **RBC**

[rbc.com/covid-19](https://rbc.com/covid-19)

[Ways to Bank / Digital How To](#)

1-800-769-2511

TTY: 1-800-661-1275

[COVID-19 Financial Relief Programs](#)

[Privacy and Security](#)

[Be Cyber Aware](#)

## **TD Bank**

[td.com/ca/covid-19](https://td.com/ca/covid-19)

[Digital Banking Tutorials](#)

English 1-866-222-3456

French 1-800-895-4463

[Scotiabank Digital Banking Demos](#)

1-800-4-SCOTIA

TTY: 1-800-645-0288

Telephone Banking:

English: 1-800-267-1234

Cantonese: 1-800-830-8800

Mandarin: 1-800-830-8080

[Financial Relief Measures](#)

[Security Centre](#)

[Financial relief in uncertain times](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Privacy and Security](#)

## Managing your Money in a Crisis

Managing your money and expenses during a crisis is never easy. There are several resources to help you including:

- [COVID-19: Managing financial health in challenging times](#) (Financial Consumer Agency of Canada)
- [COVID-19 Financial Resource Centre](#) (Credit Canada)
- [Financial Resources to Help Empower Seniors](#) (Ottawa Public Library)
- [What every older Canadian should know about: Powers of attorney \(for financial matters and property\) and joint bank accounts](#) (Employment and Social Development Canada)

## Other Customer Relief and Protection Programs by Companies

Other sectors are offering consumer relief measures, such as:

- Utilities, such as [Hydro Ottawa](#), are offering support to manage costs, reduced time-of-use (TOU) electricity pricing, electricity service disconnection ban, and flexible payment options.
- Telecommunications companies such as [Bell](#), [Telus](#), [Shaw](#), [Rogers](#), [Videotron](#), [Virgin](#), and [Cogeco](#) are offering temporary unlimited internet services, more free services, flexible payment options, and/or suspending planned fee increases. Check with your provider to see what offerings are available.
- [Insurance Bureau of Canada](#) (IBC) member companies, are offering deferred payments or substantial consumer relief measures for consumers whose driving habits have changed significantly.

If you're aware of anyone charging higher-than-usual prices for in-demand products, [report it online](#) or call Consumer Protection Ontario at 1-800-889-9768 between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday.



## COVID-19 Related Fraud and Scams

Seniors are more likely to be targets of scams and frauds than any other age group. During the global crisis, scammers are taking advantage of seniors in new ways. Below are several resources to help identify and protect you from being scammed:

- [Addressing Financial Vulnerabilities in the time of COVID-19: Coping NOW while preparing for the FUTURE](#) (video webinar by Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario)
- [COVID-19 Fraud and Scams: How to Recognize, Reject and Report](#) (video webinar by Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario)
- [COVID-19 Seniors' Frauds and Scams](#) (Factsheet by CanAge)
- [COVID-19 Related Fraud and Property Crime](#) (Crime Prevention Ottawa)
- [Fraud-Prevention](#) (Canadian Bankers Association)

We hope you find this information helpful. We will continue to update these resources as they become available. Please share your ideas with us and we will add them to our [Facebook page](#) or our [Special COVID-19 Update website](#).

Stay safe!



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**Disclaimer:** INFO-FLASH is published as an information and education service. We try to present the most current information available. Things continue to change rapidly with COVID-19. Some details and links to external sources may become out of date. Please check the information and resources below for additional information.

Feel free to share this newsletter with your family and friends.



## Community Information and Services for Seniors

**2-1-1**

**Community Information Centre of Ottawa** connects you with supports and services in 150+ languages.

**3-1-1**

**City of Ottawa** provides information and services for residents about municipal services.

## Resources to Stay Socially Connected

### **A Friendly Voice**

offers a telephone friendly visiting line for seniors 55+.

**613-696-9992 or 1-855-892-9992**

### **Seniors' Centre Without Walls**

organizes free telephone group activities for seniors 55+ and adults with physical disabilities.

**613-236-0428**

## Other Resources and Supports

### **Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region**

is a local connection to mental health support and resources, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Distress: **613-238-3311**

Crisis: **613-722-6914 or**

**1-866-996-0991**

### **TelAide**

offrons un service d'écoute téléphonique en français aux personnes qui ont besoin d'une oreille, qui nécessitent du soutien ou de références.

**1-800-567-9699**

### **LGBT Wellbeing Check-in Program**

provides a telephone assurance program for LGBT adults with disabilities (18+) and older adults (55+). To access the program, contact Good Companions at **613-236-0428** or [info@thegoodcompanions.ca](mailto:info@thegoodcompanions.ca)

### **Elder Abuse Response and Referral Service**

provides intake, information, consultation, referral, and support services for seniors at-risk or who are in an abusive situation.

**613-596-5626 ext. 230**

**Ontario Caregiver Helpline** provides caregivers with a one-stop resource for information and support.

**1-833-416-2273 (CARE)**

**Telehealth Ontario** is a free, confidential service you can call to get health advice or information. A

Registered Nurse will take your call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**1-866-797-0000**

# COVID-19 Support Services

The screenshot displays the 'COVID-19 RESPONSE SITE' with the logo for the Réseau de soutien communautaire de CHAMPLAIN Community Support Network. A central message states 'We are here to help' and 'Services for seniors are available right now'. Below this, five service tiles are shown, each with an image, a title, a description, and a 'Request' button:

- Pharmacy delivery and help with food**: Includes food and other essential supplies.
- Meals on Wheels**: Delivery of nutritious frozen meals.
- Telephone Safety Checks**: Regular check in phone calls to ensure you or your loved ones are safe.
- Transportation**: Transportation to essential medical appointments.
- Dementia Support**: Information, support, and care navigation for persons living with dementia, caregivers and families.

Services for seniors are available right now:

**Grocery & Pharmacy Delivery**: Includes food and other essential supplies

**Meals on Wheels**: Delivery of nutritious frozen meals

**Telephone Safety Checks**: Regular check in phone calls to ensure you or your loved ones are safe

**Transportation**: Rides to essential medical appointments

**Dementia Support**: Information, support, and care navigation for persons living with dementia, caregivers and families

## What should older adults and their caregivers know about COVID-19

### Ottawa Public Health

Follow Ottawa Public Health on **Twitter** or **Facebook** to receive updates.

### Ontario Ministry of Health

### Health Canada / Public Health Agency of Canada

### World Health Organization



## Canadian Media Sources on COVID-19

### English

[Ottawa Citizen](#)

[The Globe and Mail](#)

[CTV News](#)

[CBC News](#)

### Français

[CBC Radio-Canada](#)

[LeDroit](#)

[LeDevoir](#)

[TVA](#) et [TVA Outaouais](#)

For all other COA News check the [Updates](#)

### Contact Us

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(613) 789-3577

[www.coaottawa.ca](http://www.coaottawa.ca)



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