



An update from National and Synod Treasurers

Dear ELCIC Congregational Treasurers and Leaders,

These past few weeks have been challenging. Even since our recent letter to you on March 24, we have seen further changes in our day-to-day lives and activities to help flatten the curve of COVID-19 and protect those around us.

We know that congregations have many questions and concerns in these unprecedented times. Not only have our congregations considered how to provide ministry in times of physical distancing, but with the uncertainty of its duration many of us are worried about the short-term and long-term financial implications.

In the midst of these concerns, we want to underline the importance of treating employees fairly and compassionately. In particular, our rostered leaders are dealing with increased workloads and stress as they find different and creative ways to minister to their congregations in these challenging times. We urge you to take advantage of government assistance and double your efforts to encourage congregational members to continue supporting the church financially so that payroll can be met. Although some of our non-rostered employees may have experienced a reduction in available work we encourage you to do everything possible to continue their employment during this time.

We have been following recent government announcements carefully and want to make sure you are aware of the following benefits, resources, and options available to your congregation. This is a brief overview of support available through the Government of Canada. Information on these programs continues to evolve and details are available here:

https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan/covid19-businesses.html#extending_workshare_programs.

WAGE SUBSIDIES

The government is supporting businesses and charities who have lost at least 30% of their revenue – which includes congregations – by subsidizing up to 75% of an employee's wages for the next three months. The subsidy maxes out at \$847 per employee and is retroactive to March 15. The intent of this subsidy is to help keep and return staff to the payroll. Details on the program are yet to be communicated, so additional notifications will be sent out for congregations once that is available from the Government of Canada.

WORK-SHARING

One way to help reduce layoffs of employees is to institute work-sharing. If you are facing a reduction of workplace activities, employees may be able to access government benefits like Employment Insurance even while working a reduced work week. The federal government has extended this plan to a total of 76 weeks and has waived the waiting period (period without benefits) for employees to access benefits. Information on applying for the work sharing program can be found here:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/work-sharing/apply.html>

CANADA EMERGENCY BUSINESS ACCOUNT

The new Canada Emergency Business Account will provide interest-free loans of up to \$40,000 to small businesses and not-for-profits, to help cover their operating costs during a period where revenues have been temporarily reduced. To qualify, the organization must demonstrate they paid between \$50,000 to \$1 million in total payroll in 2019. Interested congregations should consult their financial institutions who will go through the process with you. Other financing support could be available to you through other government programs. These can also be discussed with your financial institution.

If your congregation is facing financial difficulty due to COVID-19:

In addition to researching the above options, consider the following:

- Each province has also outlined their own financial support packages. Consider what provincial support might be available to your congregation.
- Many payroll providers (such as Ceridian, Payworks, ADP, etc.) are reaching out to their clients to provide information on how they are applying the new programs into their services.
- If you have questions with regards to the subsidy that are specific to your congregation's situation, contact the Canada Revenue Agency directly.
- Other sources for information may include your auditor and the Canadian Council of Christian Charities (<https://www.cccc.org>).
- For questions about rostered staff employment status, please ensure that you are in contact with your Synod Bishop.
- Review the Giving Alternatives letter from the ELCIC National and Synod Treasurers (<http://elcic.ca/publichealth/documents/March2020Treasurers-GivingAlternatives.pdf>) for ideas about accepting donations electronically.

As the current situation is changing day-to-day, so are programs and the government's economic response. It is our commitment to you that we keep in communication with you and share further information as it becomes available.

We are all in this together. If you have any questions about the above information, contact your Synod Office or the ELCIC National Office. This is uncharted territory, but you do not have to navigate it alone.

We continue to pray for the leadership you bring to your congregations as we journey together through this times, for all leaders and members, and all those affected by COVID-19: those who have tested positive, those who are quarantined, those who are grieving the death of loved ones, those experiencing racism and prejudice, and all who care for the sick and vulnerable.

Blessings on your ministry during this time.

Gene Blishen, Treasurer

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada National Office

Jerry Nieman, Treasurer

British Columbia Synod

Paul Ellison, Treasurer

Synod of Alberta and the Territories

Monica Johnson, Finance Manager

Saskatchewan Synod

Neil Miller, Treasurer

Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod

Keith Myra, Treasurer

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