

# COVID-19 FAQs for Canadian Employers

Insights

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Canada, like many other countries, is amending its laws and regulations in light of the world-wide coronavirus pandemic. Here are answers to some common questions affecting employers with operations or interests in Canada. Please note that the situation changes daily if not hourly, so make sure to always check the latest information published by the national and local governments.

## **Are there any restrictions for entry into Canada?**

Yes. Canada currently denies entry to people who are not Canadian citizens or permanent residents. The USA-Canada land border is also closed. The Canadian government has warned its residents against all non-essential travel outside of Canada. All incoming persons to Canada must undergo a 14-day self-isolation.

## **Is Canada discussing economic relief measures?**

The House of Commons will reconvene on 24 March 2020 to vote on measures to ease the financial burden the pandemic is posing on Canadians and their businesses.

## **Does federal unemployment insurance cover employees who are required to self-isolate or quarantine?**

Yes. Employees can apply for up to 15 weeks of assistance if they are unable to work due to self-isolation or quarantine. The one-week waiting period for these benefits has been waived by the federal government. Some provinces have enacted additional measures to support employees whose income has been reduced or eliminated due to COVID-19.

## **British Columbia**

### **Has British Columbia ordered businesses to close?**

British Columbia has banned non-essential workers who returned to Canada after March 12 from going to work. Those that returned after this date and are working in essential services must follow their employers' instructions and take specific safety measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### **May I continue to operate my restaurant?**

Restaurant and bars may remain open for take-out and delivery only. There may not be more than 50 people in any establishment at any time and there must be a distance of at least two meters between customers.

## **Alberta**

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### **Are employees entitled to unpaid leave if they are placed under self-isolation or self-quarantine?**

Yes. The Employment Standards (COVID-19) Leave Regulation, AR 29/2020 varies Alberta's Employment Standards Code to allow full and part-time employees to take 14 days of unpaid leave if the employee is under quarantine as a result of COVID-19. An employee may also use this leave to care for a child or dependent that is required to self-isolate.

### **Can I require an employee to take vacation leave and/or vacation pay or banked overtime?**

No. An employer may not require an employee to take vacation leave and/or use their vacation pay. However, employers and employees are free to agree upon whether to use vacation leave or banked overtime.

## **Ontario**

### **Are employees entitled to unpaid leave if they are placed in self-isolation or quarantine?**

Yes. Under the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Infectious Disease Emergencies), 2020, employees are entitled to take an unpaid leave of absence if they are required to self-isolate, quarantine, or are under medical investigation, supervision, or treatment for COVID-19.

### **Does the unpaid leave entitlement apply to any other situations related to COVID-19?**

Yes. An employee is entitled to unpaid leave if they are acting in accordance with an order under the Health Protection and Promotion Act or if the employee needs to provide care to an infected family member or a child due to daycare or school closures. An employee is also entitled to unpaid leave if they are prevented from returning to Ontario due to travel restrictions.

## **Nova Scotia**

### **Which businesses and organizations in Nova Scotia have been ordered to close?**

Public schools, childcare centers, personal service establishments, and fitness establishments must close. Restaurants may remain open for take-out and delivery orders only. Establishments must enforce a two-meter distance between each patron.

### **An employee just traveled back to Nova Scotia from another province, should I allow him to work?**

People coming to Nova Scotia, even if from another province, will be required to self-isolate for two weeks. Exceptions to this rule include health care and trucking workers.

## **Quebec**

### **Which businesses and organizations in Quebec have been ordered to close?**

Starting March 23, 2020, all in-person business activity in the province will be shut down until April 13, except grocery stores, pharmacies, and other essential services. Construction sites and factories will also be required to close. Restaurants may still provide take-out or delivery service, but their dining rooms must close.

## **Northwest Territories**

### **Should employees in the Northwest Territories work remotely?**

Yes. Employees who are not providing “critical services” should work from home.

### **Are there travel restrictions in the Northwest Territories?**

Yes. The boundaries of the Northwest Territories have been closed to other parts of Canada.

## ***Related People***

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**Nan Sato, CIPP/E, CIPP/C**

Partner

610.230.2148

Email

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