

# Canada: COVID 19: Financial Resources Available For Businesses And Individuals In British Columbia

This list is intended to supplement the list of federal programs,

## Response by British Columbia Provincial Government

On March 23, 2020, the British Columbia government unveiled its \$5 billion aid package for individuals and businesses affected by the COVID-19 economic shutdown. Details on the package can be found [here](#).

On April 15, 2020, the British Columbia government formally extended the provincial state of emergency to support the province-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic, through the end of the day on April 28, 2020. Using the powers under the Emergency Program Act, the government has issued a series of orders to co-ordinate the supply chain for essential goods and services. The government also introduced a number of changes aimed at supporting the economy, which are detailed below.

On April 16, 2020 the British Columbia government announced a new B.C. Business COVID- 19 Support Service which will be operated by Small Business B.C. The support service will serve as a single point of contact for businesses in the province looking for more information on resources available during the COVID-19 pandemic. Starting on April 16, 2020, advisers will be available for inquiries by telephone at 1 -833-254-4357, or alternatively inquiries can be emailed to [covid@smallbusinessbc.ca](mailto:covid@smallbusinessbc.ca). Details on the support service can be found [here](#).

## List of resources available to businesses in British Columbia

- Employer Health Tax Payments: Effective immediately, businesses with a payroll over \$500,000 can defer their employer health tax payments until September 30, 2020. Businesses with a payroll under this threshold are already exempt from the tax.
- Extension of Tax Filing Deadlines: the province is extending tax filing and payment deadlines for the provincial sales tax (PST), municipal and regional district tax on short-term accommodation, tobacco tax, motor fuel tax and carbon tax until September 30, 2020.
- Delayed PST Budget 2020 Tax Changes: the scheduled April 1 increase to the provincial carbon tax, as well as the new PST registration requirements on e- commerce and the implementation of PST on sweetened carbonated drinks, will be delayed.
- Reduced School Tax: On April 16, 2020 further reductions to the school property tax rate for commercial properties were announced, resulting in an average 25% reduction in property tax bills. This is further to the 50% reduction to the provincial school property tax rate that was originally announced for property classes 4, 5 and 6.
- Carbon Tax Relief Grant: B.C. greenhouse operations which are commercial, had sales exceeding \$20,000 in 2018, are using natural gas or propane to heat the greenhouse or produce CO<sub>2</sub>, has production area greater than 455 m<sup>2</sup>, and are producing eligible crops in the 2019 production

year are eligible to apply for carbon tax relief grants for the 2020 production year, until May 1, 2020. Information will be posted [here](#) as it becomes available.

- Supply Products and Services to Support B.C.'s COVID-19 Response: the B.C. government is looking for both medical and non-medical products and services to help with the response. If you can donate or supply priority products you are invited to submit an offer [here](#).
- [The Province of British Columbia has compiled a list of COVID-19 Economic Development Resources.](#)
- [The Province of British Columbia offers a number of free business planning and continuity resources.](#)
- The Squamish Chamber of Commerce has provided a [joint provincial update](#) with the B.C. Chamber of Commerce.
- The Vancouver Economic Commission is monitoring economic impacts of COVID-19 [on Vancouver's economy and local businesses. Report the impact of COVID-19 on your business and find more resources on mitigating the impacts of COVID-19.](#)
- The following companies in B.C. are offering financial relief from payments:
  - B.C. Hydro: The [COVID-19 Customer Assistance Program](#) provides customers the option to defer bill payments or arrange for flexible payment plans with no penalty. Customers are encouraged to call BC Hydro's customer team at 1-800-BCHYDRO (1-800-224-9376) to discuss bill payment options. In addition, small businesses that have been forced to close due to COVID-19 will have their power bills forgiven for three months for the period of April 2020 to June 2020 provided that their account is on the Small General Service rate. [Applications are open](#) and can be submitted until June 30, 2020.
- [City of Port Coquitlam utility bills: The City of Port Coquitlam is waiving the March 31 penalty and extending the deadline for payment of 2020 utility bills](#) which includes water, sewer and solid waste. The next due date is May 31 but the city will consider extending it further closer to the time.
- The City of Vancouver announced that it would be bringing forward a plan to delay July property tax payments for up to 60 days as an immediate relief measure. More details will be brought to Council on April 14, 2020.
- ICBC: Customers on a monthly payment plan who are facing financial challenges due to COVID-19 may defer their payment for up to 90 days with no penalty.
- FortisBC: The COVID-19 Customer Recovery Fund is supporting residential customers and small businesses impacted by COVID-19 with bill deferrals, interest free repayment schedules and bill credits. Small business owners have the option to receive support in the form of bill credits to offset charges on their account while they are unable to operate their business, or defer bill payment from April 1 to June 30, 2020. To be eligible, a small business must acknowledge that they have had income loss or were forced to close due to the COVID-19 outbreak, including the date of the business closure. [Applications are being accepted](#) anytime between April 1 to June 30, 2020.
- WorkSafeBC: employers reporting and paying on a quarterly basis may defer payments for Q1 2020 without penalty until June 30, 2020. Employers who report payroll and pay premiums on an

annual basis need not report their 2020 payroll or pay their 2020 premiums until March 2021.

The following resources are available to individuals in British Columbia:

- B.C. Emergency Benefit for Workers: Starting May 1, 2020, eligible individuals can apply to receive a one-time \$1,000 payment. To be eligible, an individual must be at least 15 years of age, be a resident of British Columbia as of March 15, 2020, been approved for the Canada Emergency response Benefit, has filed or agrees to file a 2019 B.C. income tax return, and will not be receiving provincial income assistance or disability assistance. For more information on how to apply see [this resource](#).
- Climate Action Tax Credit: A one-time enhancement to the climate action tax credit will be paid in July 2020 for moderate to low-income families. An adult will receive up to \$218.00 (increased from \$174.00), and a child will receive \$64.00 (increased from \$51.00).
- COVID-19 Support for Renters and Landlords: a new temporary rental supplement of up to \$500 per month will be available to low to moderate income renters who are facing financial hardship but do not qualify for existing rental assistance programs. In addition the government of British Columbia announced halting of evictions, except in extreme cases where there are safety concerns, and freezing rent increases while the state of emergency is ongoing. Applications for the rental supplement have opened on the [B.C. Housing website](#).
- Student Loan Repayment Holiday: British Columbia Student Loans are automatically frozen for six months effective March 30, 2020.
- B.C. Hydro: The [COVID-19 Relief Fund](#) is a program that offers support for residential customers who have lost their employment or have become unable to work due to COVID-19. Eligible residential customers can apply online to receive a bill credit of up to three months of their average electricity consumption. To be eligible for the COVID- 19 Relief Fund, the residential customer must have had an account as of March 31, 2020, and is eligible for EI, the Canada Emergency Response Benefit or B.C.'s Emergency Response Benefit for Workers. [Applications are open](#) and customers can apply anytime until June 30, 2020.
- A comprehensive list of the resources available to individuals in British Columbia can be found at <http://www.bc211.ca/> under Financial Assistance.