

3.26 Canada & COVID: C-13 Becomes Law

Wednesday afternoon [Bill C-13](#) became law in Canada after extensive last-minute negotiations. The bill provides funding for individuals and businesses hurt by COVID-19 and expands the government's ability to support those affected in the future.

There were multiple concerns that this package drastically expanded the power of the government and so became very contentious this week. Several problematic proposals were changed at the 11th hour to allow passage, including the removal of a provision that would have let the finance minister raise taxes without parliamentary approval.

Included are several important provisions on oversight and spending:

- Cabinet ministers can spend any amount of money they deem needed in a public health emergency through Sept. 30, 2020.
- The Finance Minister will begin biweekly reporting to Parliament starting next week to provide a status update on how the funding is being used.

Support for Individuals: Last week two different emergency benefits were announced and through this bill have put tied together and renamed The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB).

Under the program, individuals can receive up to \$1,400 a month for the next four months, with an online portal up for applications on or about April 6th, which checks received within 10 days of applying. This benefit will apply to any Canadian out of work due to reasons related to COVID-19, including for sickness, quarantine, caregiving, staying home to take care of children, furloughed workers, those who are still technically employed but not receiving income. The benefit would cover wage-earners, contract workers, self-employed and gig industry individuals. This would apply whether an individual is eligible for unemployment insurance or not. This is a taxable benefit.

Support for Small & Medium Sized Businesses

Formed earlier in March this year, the Business Credit Availability Program (BCAP) will allow the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) and Export Development Canada (EDC) to provide more than \$10 billion of additional support, largely targeted to small and medium-sized businesses. This program will allow BDC and EDC to work with private lenders and help individual businesses. Companies interested in taking part can get more information [here](#) and can contact their lending institutions to get started.

C-13 also provides eligible small employers a temporary wage subsidy for a period of three months (March 18, 2020 through June 19, 2020) based on a formula within the legislation.