

## **FOLLOW UP TO OGGO – COVID-19 (JUNE 9)**

### **Reasons Service Canada centres remain closed**

#### **Response :**

Planning is underway to gradually re-open Service Canada Centres across Canada in a phased approach. The reopening will complement our new online services that have ensured ongoing access to services by responding to over 542,000 requests. My priority is to protect the health and safety of our employees as well as the clients we serve.

### **Canadians' access to Service Canada services**

#### **Response :**

After the Service Canada Centres closed to the public in March, a new approach to service delivery was launched. Through the creation of the e-Service Canada channel, launched on March 12th, clients who require assistance in applying for benefits are able to reach in-person staff and receive a call back from Service Canada staff within two business days. Citizen Service Officers are providing personalized service support virtually for EI, pensions and SIN applications, as well as critical passport services, mirroring the service provided to clients who would physically come into Service Canada Centres for application support. Since the launch of the new e-service channel, approximately 542,000 requests have been received from Canadians.

Recognizing that not all Canadians have internet access, or are able to use the new e-Service Canada channel due to a number of barriers they may face, Service Canada launched the Service Canada Outreach Support Centre, giving Canadians facing barriers, including those without internet, a way to connect directly with outreach agents and access the services and benefits they need.

By supplementing the existing e-Service Canada portal with a toll free number for each region, this new Support Centre provides additional help to Indigenous communities and other vulnerable Canadians, including seniors and persons with disabilities. Over 9,000 requests have been made since its launch.

Service Canada Outreach staff have contacted over 8,000 communities and trusted partners across the country to make them aware of eServiceCanada, and to encourage them to share the contact information with their members and clients.

## **Ability of the Government to deliver CERB to millions of Canadians across Canada –**

### **Response:**

The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) is available to individuals residing in Canada who are age 15 and over and who are employees or self-employed. The Government of Canada was able to deliver the new CERB to millions of Canadians across the country in a timely manner thanks to a flat rate and a streamlined process.

From March 16, 2020 to June 16, 2020, Service Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency received and processed over 18M Canada Emergency Response Benefits (CERB) applications. Over \$50.99B in CERB and Employment Insurance (EI) benefits were paid during this time period.

To make sure Canadians receive timely information about the CERB, we established a new Virtual Call Centre in approximately one week including design, operations, procurement, and the recruitment and training of 1,500 staff redeployed from across Service Canada. This new CERB Virtual call centre, launched on April 6, 2020, has shortened wait times for client and also includes a CERB automated service, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is 100% accessible to support clients. In collaboration with the Canada Revenue Agency, we launched an integrated online landing page on April 6, 2020, to assist Canadians in determining their eligibility and the process for applying to the CERB, and to highlight updates made to the CERB.

The Department rapidly put in place strategies to ensure the continuing timely delivery of benefits. For example:

- To respond to the unprecedented demand from Canadians, Service Canada has redeployed almost 3,000 additional staff from other less critical activities to focus on supporting the delivery of EI and the CERB, including approximately 1,500 staff who have been deployed into the new CERB Virtual Call Centre.
- We are focused on processing new claims and leaving adjustments aside, while also providing adequate assurance of quality and appropriate stewardship of public funds.
- We are deploying strategies to increase automation and increase self-service opportunities for clients. Clients can resolve their enquiry through our CERB informational automated service, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is 100% accessible to clients.

The Department has been working with Shared Services Canada to increase its IT network and system capacity to address the significant increase in CERB and EI applications. Measures taken to-date include enhancing the IT infrastructure to enable more staff to telework, ensuring stakeholders are able to access online services and improving processing capacity.

On June 16, the CERB was extended by eight weeks, to ensure Canadians have the help they need as they transition back to work. This extension will make the benefit available to eligible workers for up to a total of 24 weeks. The government also announced changes to the CERB attestation to encourage Canadians receiving the CERB to find employment and consult Job Bank, Canada's national employment service that offers tools to help with job searches.