

Local residents 'frustrated' by CERB says Dufferin-Caledon MP

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

Back on March 25, the Government of Canada introduced a financial aid package to help workers and businesses who are greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) was created to assist those who need it most during these trying times.

CERB provides up to \$2,000 a month for up to a total of four months for Canadians who have lost their income due to COVID-19, which comes to \$500 a week. The benefit is eligible to those who reside in Canada and are at least 15 years of age, have stopped working due to the pandemic and have not voluntarily quit their job, who had income of \$5,000 in 2019 and who are or expect to be without employment for at least 14 days in the four week period, according to the federal government's website.

Dufferin-Caledon MP Kyle Seeback encourages those who are eligible, to take advantage of the benefit and apply as soon as they can.

'I think people who haven't applied for CERB yet, for whatever reason, if they're eligible they should be applying. The money is actually flowing very quickly. I've heard stories from people who applied last week on Monday and had it in their bank account by Wednesday,' he explained. 'That's the good news for people, is when you apply, the money is going to flow very quickly.'

Due to the pandemic, many people are working remotely, or not working at all to help stop the spread of the highly contagious virus. Those who are in quarantine, or self-isolation, as well as parents who are required to stay home due to schools being closed, are all eligible for CERB.

We asked Mr. Seeback about what he has been hearing from residents, particularly regarding concerns that are hoping to be resolved, and he said CERB was one of the main matters.

'I think the challenge that I've seen right now is number one, people who are applying for EI (employment insurance). Applications are supposed to be converted into a CERB application by the government automatically. And some of those who have applied for EI as opposed to CERB, have been waiting three or four weeks for money to flow. And the government needs to fix this.'

Mr. Seeback has raised these concerns to the government quite aggressively after hearing horror stories from residents struggling to put food on the table and make ends meet. Some residents have asked the question about whether they are eligible for CERB even though they have applied and received payment for EI, and the answer is no. It is either one or the other, which creates immense frustration for many businesses.

The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) provides, for eligible Canadian employers, a 75 per cent wage subsidy up to 12 weeks beginning backdated to March 12. It helps companies financially as they seek to resume normal operations during the COVID-19 pandemic and prevents job losses. Eligibility includes individuals, taxable corporations and partnerships of eligible employers, non-profit organizations and charities. Revenue is calculated by 'using the employers normal accounting method and exclude revenues from extraordinary items and amounts on account of capital' as stated on the federal governments' website. There are three eligible claiming periods for employers. To claim during the first period, businesses must have seen a 15 per cent reduction in revenue. To be eligible for the second and third periods, revenue must be down by 30.

He added, 'If the wage subsidy doesn't help you, which for a lot of companies it doesn't, there can be challenges getting some of the other financial assistance.'

Seeback explained the \$4,000 loan that is being offered through regional banks and credit unions, several small businesses have commented about having a low payroll, so they don't qualify, by meeting the \$50,000 payroll requirement. These small businesses

are struggling because of lease payments and other bills needing to be paid.

?We're trying to get the government to recognize some of these challenges to make sure that they start acting a little quicker. Because then there are people who have lost significant hours, and CERB only applies if you've lost all of your income,? he explained. ?That's another big issue we're trying to get the government to make some changes on.?

Mr. Seeback will be hosting a telephone Town Hall today (April 16) to answer any questions residents may have and provide as much information and updates as he can.

For more information on CERB, visit kyleseeback.ca