

## **HUMAN RESOURCES & COVID-19**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

#### **Looking back, what actions should already be in place?**

We have been seeking to promote the health and well-being of parishioners, visitors, building users, and staff, and, indeed of the whole wider community by:

- closing our buildings and suspending activities which require physically gathering together;
- sending our staff home and enabling as many as possible to work from home;
- undertaking essential activities with hygiene protocols and physically & socially distanced ways mandated by Public Health strictly observed; and,
- requiring any staff who are permitted to come into church buildings in order to perform essential activities, to report to their supervisor travel within the last 14 days, flu-like symptoms, exposure to someone who may have been exposed to or has tested positive for COVID-19 and responding in accordance with Public Health directions.

#### **What employment rights do we need to uphold?**

Staff have the right to:

- refuse unsafe working conditions;
- work remotely or at modified hours;
- take care of children due to school or daycare closures; and,
- take care of other family members who are sick.

#### **What are our reporting obligations?**

Please remember our legal duty to report “occupational illnesses” (those acquired at work) to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development within 4 days. And to Workers’ Compensation Board with 3 days. Please also report all such developments to the Payroll Administrator [payroll@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:payroll@niagaraanglican.ca) .

#### **Who is the “employer” for our staff?**

Clergy and licensed lay-workers (technically “office holders” rather than “employees”) serve under the license of the bishop. Their appointment, termination or variations in the hours or terms and conditions of their positions requires the bishop’s consent.

While payroll services may be centralized, other (non-licensed) lay staff are employed by parish Corporations.

#### **Where can employees and their families seek confidential help?**

Please remind all staff of the Employee and Family Assistance Plan, offered by Morneau Shepell, available (to staff paid through the diocesan payroll service) 24/7 by phone, web or mobile app. 1.800.387.4765 [TTY1.877.338.0275] or at [www.workhealthlife.com](http://www.workhealthlife.com). EFAP resources include confidential access to professional support for a range of issues, LIFT – an at home fitness programme, and, employee webinars about Managing Emotional Well-being during COVID-19; Talking to your child about the Coronavirus, and, expected soon, Introduction to Working Remotely.

#### **Where do we and our employees obtain Public Health information about COVID-19?**

Please check out the Public Health Agency of Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

#### **What do I do if I have other questions?**

Send your question to The Reverend Canon Terry DeForest, Director of Human Resources, by email at [terry.deforest@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:terry.deforest@niagaraanglican.ca). We will endeavour to respond either directly or through updates of this FAQ document.



## **What government programmes are in place or being implemented to assist employees and employers?**

### **Existing Programme**

#### **EI Sick Leave Benefits**

For those who are unable to work due to being ill or in quarantine the diocesan payroll administrator will, after receiving instructions from parish Corporations, electronically issue Records of Employment [ROE] to Canada Revenue Agency/Employment Insurance on behalf of the employee. The employee will be required to apply for EI. The Diocese of Niagara will enable, through the our Employment Insurance Supplemental Unemployment Benefit [EI SUB] Plan, parishes to top up salary or wages to 95% of the regular salary or wages upon receipt of proof of EI payments received by the employee for as long as the employee is receiving EI Sick Leave benefits up to a maximum of 119 days. Eligible employees will be recommended to apply for Long-Term Disability Plan benefits a month prior to the end of the EI Sick Leave.

### **COVID-19 Economic Response Plan**

There is a suite of new government assistance programmes for employees and employers that is continuing to evolve on a daily basis. Many details have not yet been released. As of the time writing, we know of the following Government of Canada programmes relevant to our situation:

#### **Temporary Wage Subsidy**

We are investigating whether and how the diocese and its parishes might be able to make use of this recently announced programme. At this time, the information is incomplete. More information will be shared when it becomes available.

#### **Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)**

To support workers and help businesses keep their employees, the government has proposed legislation to establish the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). This taxable benefit would provide \$2,000 a month for up to four months for workers who lose their income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CERB would cover Canadians who have lost their job, are sick, quarantined, or taking care of someone who is sick with COVID-19, as well as working parents who must stay home without pay to care for children who are sick or at home because of school and daycare closures. The CERB would apply to wage earners, as well as contract workers and self-employed individuals who would not otherwise be eligible for Employment Insurance (EI).

The government is working to get money into the pockets of Canadians as quickly as possible. The portal for accessing the CERB would be available in early April. EI eligible Canadians who have lost their job can continue to apply for EI here, as can Canadians applying for other EI benefits.

Canadians would begin to receive their CERB payments within 10 days of application. The CERB would be paid every four weeks and be available from March 15, 2020 until October 3, 2020.

#### **Province of Ontario**

Employees have the right to a range of unpaid, job protected leaves, including that provided for by the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Infectious Disease Emergencies), 2020. This applies to employees who are quarantined, in self-isolation, or directly affected by COVID-19 related travel restrictions, unable to work due to school or daycare closures or due to their need to care for “specified individuals.”

