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Member of Parliament • St. Catharines



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/ChrisBittleMP



@Chris_Bittle



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DEAR RESIDENTS OF ST. CATHARINES,

It's been a challenging year, and it's difficult to express my feelings. As a community and country we have experienced so much loss and yet seen so much heroism, hard work, sacrifice and determination during this pandemic.

For everyone who has made sacrifices and followed public health guideline, I want to say "thank you". You may have saved a life.

Please keep following the advice of our public health professionals. It's one of the best ways we can honour our essential workers. Every Canadian who wants a vaccine will be vaccinated by the end of the summer.

I hope that you and your family stay safe and that we'll see each other soon.

Yours very truly,

Chris



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COVID-19 SUPPORTS FOR INDIVIDUALS

CERB was critical at the start of the pandemic which helped more than 8.5 million Canadians pay their bills and put food on the table. For those who still require support, flexible and more generous EI programs have been established for those who qualify.

Here are some ways we're making EI better and more accessible:

- Freezing EI premiums for 2 years.
- One-time credit of 300 insurable hours, so you only need 120 hours to qualify for regular benefits.
- Minimum \$400 weekly benefit for 26 weeks, meaning residents of St. Catharines receive up to a maximum of XX weeks of benefits.
- offers you the possibility of working while on claim, and keeping a bigger part of your earnings.

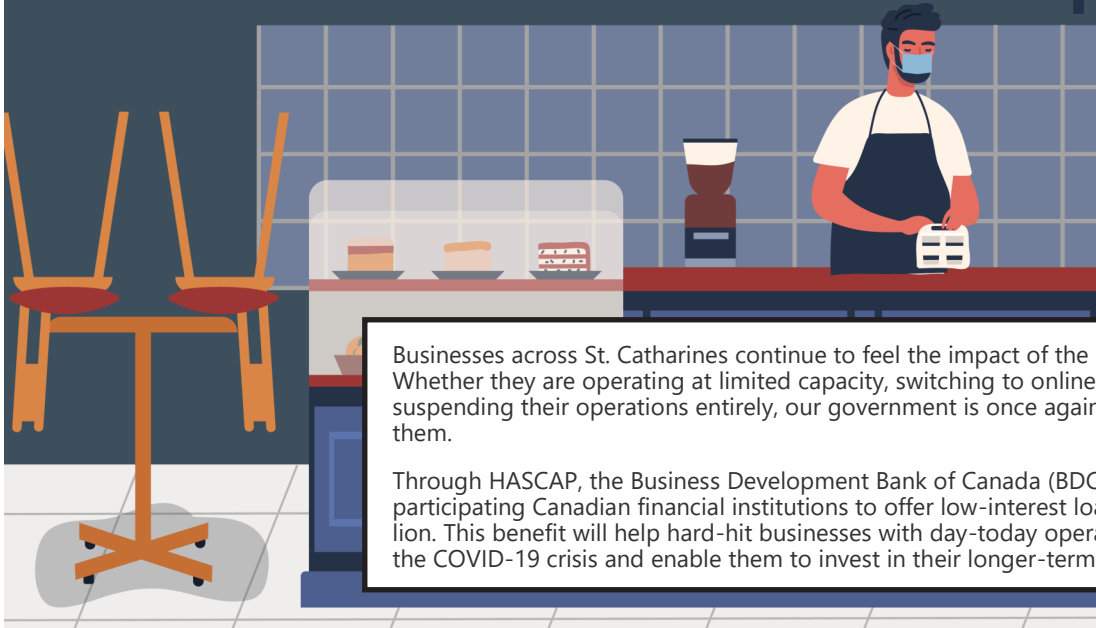
We've also created three new benefits to help:

- ◆ **Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB)**
\$400 per week for up to 26 weeks to those who are not eligible for EI,
- ◆ **Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB)**
\$500 per week for up to two weeks, for workers who are sick or must self-isolate for reasons related to COVID-19.
- ◆ **Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB)**
\$500 per week for up to 26 weeks, per household, for eligible Canadians unable to work because they must care for:
 - a child under age 12 due to the closures of schools or daycares because of COVID-19.
 - a family member with a disability or a dependent because their day program or care facility is closed due to COVID-19.
 - a child, a family member with a disability, or a dependent who is not attending school, daycare, or other care facilities under the advice of a medical professional due to being at high-risk if they contract COVID-19.

NEW: HIGHLY AFFECTED SECTORS CREDIT AVAILABILITY PROGRAM

Helping the hardest hit businesses with their day to day costs by providing guaranteed low-interest loans.

Applications open February 1.



Businesses across St. Catharines continue to feel the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Whether they are operating at limited capacity, switching to online-only services or suspending their operations entirely, our government is once again stepping up for them.

Through HASCAP, the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) will work with participating Canadian financial institutions to offer low-interest loans of up to \$1 million. This benefit will help hard-hit businesses with day-to-day operating costs during the COVID-19 crisis and enable them to invest in their longer-term prosperity.

WAGE SUBSIDY EXTENSION

From the start of the pandemic, we've prioritized Canadian workers and their jobs. That's why we created the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), to help employers keep their workers on the payroll and subsidizing their salaries up to 75%, so Canadians could return to work after the pandemic.

This program has helped save millions of jobs, and to continue this support while we restart the economy, the CEWS was extended until December 19, 2020.

To help even more Canadians get back to work, we've:

- made the subsidy available to a broader range of employers,
- introduced a top-up subsidy of up to an additional 25% for employers that have been hit hardest by the crisis.



DOWNLOAD THE COVID ALERT APP TODAY

SAFE RESTART AGREEMENT

In phase one of the Safe Restart Agreement, St. Catharines received \$7,473,500.

As we gradually restart the economy and take steps to recover from the impacts of COVID-19, we've invested more than \$19 billion to help provinces and territories safely restart their economies and make sure our country is more resilient to possible future waves of the virus.

The Safe Restart Agreement will help with seven key priority areas:

- Increasing testing and contact tracing;
- Securing personal protective equipment for frontline healthcare workers and businesses;

- Supporting the most vulnerable, including seniors in long-term care facilities and nursing homes;
- Ensuring safe childcare is available so parents can return to work;
- Supporting people who do not have paid sick leave;
- Helping municipalities deliver key services, including public transit.

MADE-IN-CANADA PPE AND COVID-19 PROTECTION

Last year, we launched Canada's Plan to Mobilize Industry to fight COVID-19. This **\$350 million plan** helped industries that were affected by the pandemic retool their operations so that Canada could produce the Personal Protective Equipment we needed here at home.

We have also recently invested, along with the Ontario government, \$23.33 million in a 3M facility to secure a made-in-Canada supply of N95 respirators to protect health care workers.

Right:

In September, shipments of PPE were received by FACS Niagara through Government of Canada funding.



Vaccines are coming, but we're not out of the woods yet.

Together we can stop the spread of COVID-19.



REDUCE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19



TO HELP SENIORS DURING THE PANDEMIC:

- offered low and middle-income seniors a **GST Credit top-up**—worth an average of \$375 for single seniors and \$510 for senior couples.
- provided seniors a one-time tax-free payment of **\$300 for seniors eligible for OAS and a further \$200 for seniors eligible for the GIS**.
- helped seniors and others **get essential services and supplies**, such as the delivery of groceries by investing half a billion dollars through partners like the United Way, food banks, and charities.
- helped seniors who have lost their jobs access the **Canada Emergency Response Benefit**, regardless of their pension benefits.
- reduced the mandatory minimum withdrawals from RRIFs** by 25 per cent for 2020 to ease the strain due to market volatility.
- temporarily extended GIS and Allowances payments** for seniors who couldn't file their income information on time.
- invested an additional \$20 million through the **New Horizons for Seniors Program** to invest in community projects that reduce isolation, improve seniors' quality of life, and help them maintain a social support network.
- created a new online portal, **Wellness Together Canada** (ca.portal.gs), to connect Canadians to peer support workers, social workers, psychologists, and other professionals for confidential support, and to make it easier to find credible mental health help.

SENIORS IN LONG-TERM CARE

As part of our efforts to control spread of COVID-19 in long-term care homes, we:

- Redirected **federal infrastructure funding to upgrade long-term care homes**, through the new COVID-19 Resilience funding stream, making them more resilient to keep seniors safe.
- Provided **\$740 million for measures to control and prevent infections** in long-term care homes and other vulnerable populations through the Safe Restart Agreement.
- Released **Guidance for Long-Term Care Homes** to prevent and control COVID-19 infections.
- Invested billions to purchase **personal protective equipment (PPE)** for health workers, including long-term care workers.
- Launched the new **Essential Services Contingency Reserve**, which will ensure that personal protective equipment (PPE) and other critical supplies will always be available to those caring for Canadians.
- Provided \$3 billion to provinces and territories to **increase the wages of low-income essential workers**, such as long-term care workers.



Left:

One of the highlights of my year was meeting Chuck Page. For his 100th birthday, Chuck invited me to walk alongside him as he took 100 laps of his housing complex. He raised over \$20k for Hotel Dieu Shaver.

Right:

In August, I joined neighbours, family, and friends to celebrate Chuck's 100th Birthday.



PRESERVING LOCAL HISTORY

I'm very happy to announce that the Federal Government will be providing \$100,000 to the Salem Chapel BME Church in St Catharines. The Church was home to abolitionist Harriet Tubman who became known as Moses for her missions freeing slaves in the United States in the 19th century.

The Church is an important part of our local history and this money will help ensure that Tubman's story can be told for generations to come in a place she called home.

Big thank you to Rochelle Bush who is a trustee and resident historian of the Church for all of your advocacy and passion to help make this happen.

Please note that photos were taken prior to March 2020.

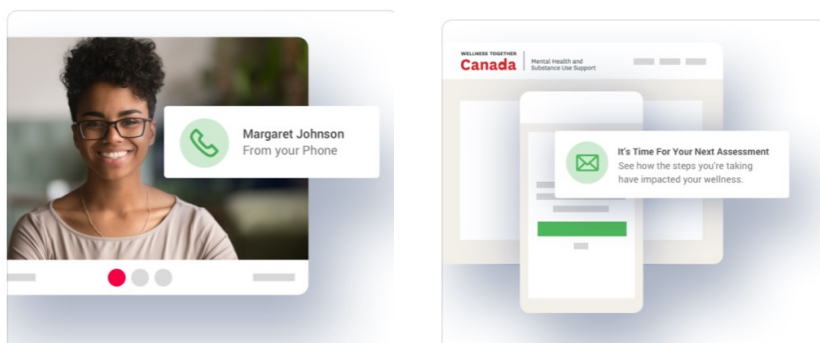


MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

It's okay to not be okay. It's been a really tough year, and there's a lot going on. So if you're feeling anxious or overwhelmed, know that you're not alone - and know that there are resources available to help you, including our Wellness Together Canada App. To get connected to them, please visit <https://ca.portal.gs/>.

It is available 24/7, for everyone, and there are no fees for this service.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call the Canada Suicide Prevention Service at 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645. If your kids need someone to talk to, let them know they can call Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or text TALK to 686868.



905 688 5600

St. Catharines City Hall

905 688 3711

Distress Centre (24 hour)

905 688 3762

Niagara Region Public Health

905 682 4584

Niagara Region Sexual Assault Center

905 685 1571

Regional Municipality of Niagara

While our office remains closed to walk-ins, we remain available to assist you with federal government matters by appointment, by email, or by phone. We can still help with all of the following benefits and agencies:

- ◆ Canada Pension Plan (CPP)
- ◆ Old Age Security (OAS)
- ◆ Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)
- ◆ Canada Child Benefit (CCB)
- ◆ Employment Insurance (EI)
- ◆ Canada Revenue Agency
- ◆ Immigration & Citizenship Canada
- ◆ Service Canada
- ◆ Veterans Affairs

INFO

CONSTITUENCY OFFICE

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**TOGETHER, WE WILL BUILD
A MORE RESILIENT CANADA —
ONE THAT IS HEALTHIER AND SAFER,
CLEANER AND MORE COMPETITIVE,
AND FAIRER AND MORE INCLUSIVE
FOR EVERYONE.**