

# COVID-19: Measures for self-employed workers (Canada except Quebec)



Numerous self-employed workers have been affected because of the current situation. Many of them have seen their orders dwindle in the last few weeks. If you're a self-employed worker who's been affected by the situation, know that there are many measures and programs set up by governments and financial institutions that are available for self-employed workers. Here's our advice and our suggestions to get through this unusual time.

## 1. Take advantage of this time to update your invoices

"When self-employed workers are swamped, accounting and invoicing are often what get pushed to the side," reveals Martin Cinq-Mars, senior advisor, commercial banking sales effectiveness at National Bank. "It's important to invoice all the clients you've worked for to maximize your cash inflow."

We also suggest following up with clients who have unpaid invoices. "But be careful – you need to be understanding," warns Martin Cinq-Mars. "Your customers are in the same situation as you are. Suggest getting paid by credit card, if possible. That way, you'll get paid and they'll have an additional delay to pay off the amount."

## 2. Take advantage of relief provisions and payment deferrals

Financial institutions and government bodies have set up various relief provisions to alleviate the current crisis. Visit the National Bank's website to learn more about the options at your disposal. For example, you may be able to defer one or several of your mortgages, increase your credit limit, reduce your credit interest rate, or apply for a line of credit.

Do you rent? Try to strike a deal with your landlord. While there aren't any measures forcing them to accept payment deferrals, some may be more understanding than you think, especially if they're taking advantage of mortgage payment deferrals themselves.

Do you expect having to pay taxes? Postpone sending in your income tax returns to the end of May, as the new deadline is now June 1. If you have to pay anything off, the new deadline for this is September 1. However, if you're sure you'll receive a reimbursement, don't wait – send your income tax returns as soon as possible.

### **3. Clearly define your status before taking a look at the assistance programs**

The definition of “self-employed worker” varies from one organization to another. “Do you work from home on your own? Do you have some people on a payroll? These are excellent questions to ask yourself before poring over the governments programs one by one,” Martin Cinq-Mars adds.

Why? “Because if you work from home on your own, you’ll probably be eligible for programs offered for individuals. If you have workers on your payroll, you may be eligible for assistance programs aimed at SMBs.”

Here’s another very important question: are you a self-employed worker who contributes to employment insurance? “Some do, but it isn’t mandatory. If you do, you could qualify for employment insurance.”

### **4. Examine all the available measures and submit applications**

The provincial and federal governments are working to set up various assistance programs, like the Government of Canada’s Canada Emergency Response Benefit. This assistance program grants all workers who have lost their employment income or self-employment income due to COVID-19 \$2,000 every 4 weeks, for a maximum of 16 weeks. “Take the time to carefully read the eligibility conditions and keep up with daily government press conferences. The eligibility criteria may quickly change to allow more workers to take advantage of programs,” Martin Cinq-Mars advises.

### **5. Think about the future, seize opportunities, and communicate**

As the current situation may persist and change the way people work, it’s important to think about the future as of right now. “Communicate and make yourself known. Offer your services on social media. You could help organizations that are going through difficult times themselves. They may turn into new clients once circumstances improve.”

Do you have other talents? Thinking of making a career change? This may be the right time. Could the current situation present an opportunity for you? Think about it as long as your new opportunities allow you to respect social distancing guidelines and other sanitary measures.

Visit our website regularly to stay up to date on the latest developments related to measures and programs available for businesses and individuals.

*Important note: Specific conditions apply to every support measure set up by financial and government bodies. Make sure to pay close attention to the conditions that apply to each in order to verify your eligibility. Furthermore, these measures may change as the exceptional situation we are living in evolves. We recommend keeping up with the news regularly.*

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