

May 22, 2020 Update

The Relief Grant cheques were mailed May 19, 2020 and e-transfers went May 20, 2020 after a few technical glitches over the past 24 hours. Happy to report that some e-transfers have already been accepted. Cheques will arrive in members' mailboxes in due course.

Please note that in order to get the e-transfers out as expeditiously as possible, members who have Relief Grant payment weeks due them in more than one month, will have received an email for each month in which they are entitled to payments. They will have received information on which weeks the payments are for, so they should be able to tell whether they have received all of their money.

E.g. A member who has Relief Grant weeks payable March and April will get two emails notifying them of a pending payment. Each email will describe that it's an IBEW Local 353 Relief Grant Payment and describe the number of weeks and number of payments for that month.

If they have weeks in all three months, they will receive three emails, with each email describing a different number of weeks and dates.

As our industry opens up fully, we must remain vigilant in the safe working protocols. Below are some of the basic protocols from the Ontario Government. Your employer may have additional requirements so please ensure you protect yourself and others by following all the best practices outlined below.

If you have been on a temporary COVID 19 layoff and have returned to work, please ensure that you contact dispatch, so your member records are correct.

Protecting yourself and your co-workers

Coronaviruses are spread through close contact, including at work. Here are some helpful tips to help prevent the spread of germs:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.
- If you use a tissue, discard immediately and wash your hands afterward.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid high-touch areas, where possible, or ensure you clean your hands after.
- Where possible, wear gloves when interacting with high-touch areas. Do not touch your face with gloved hands. Take care when removing gloves. Ensure you wash your hands after removing them.
- Wash your clothes as soon as you get home.
- If you are ill: notify your supervisor immediately, complete the [self-assessment](#) and follow the instructions you get.

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development reporting requirements

If an employer is advised that a worker has tested positive for COVID-19 due to exposure at the workplace, or that a claim has been filed with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), the employer is required to notify:

- the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development in writing within four days
- the workplace joint health and safety committee or a health and safety representative
- a trade union (if applicable)

Physical distancing (two metres)

As advised by the Chief Medical Officer, public health officials, and outlined throughout government communications, physical distancing is required to control the spread of COVID-19.

In order to ensure physical distancing on site, employers should consider:

- staggering start times
- staggering breaks
- staggering lunches
- restricting the number of people on-site and where they are assigned to work
- controlling site movement (by limiting the potential for workers to gather, including personnel in material hoists and site trailers)
- limiting the number of people who use elevators and hoists at one time
- holding meetings in an outside or large space to enable physical distancing
- limiting unnecessary on-site contact between workers, and between workers and outside service providers, and encourage physical distancing in these areas (for example, by removing coffee trucks from site)

On-site sanitation

Coronaviruses are spread person to person through close contact, including at work. While employers always have an obligation to maintain clean worksites, that obligation is under sharper focus during an outbreak like the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Employers should focus on:

- access to soap and water (ways to properly clean hands) or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- washroom facilities
- sanitizing commonly touched surfaces or areas (hoists, site trailers, door handles, equipment, residential units)
- avoiding the sharing of hand tools and power tools. If sharing is necessary, enable sanitization of shared equipment.
- posting signage on hygiene in English and the majority workplace language so everyone can understand how to do their part

It is expected today that the provincial government will announce a new Ontario Tool Grant for apprentices who have completed their first term of trade school.

The government is providing an Ontario Tools Grant of \$2.5 million in 2020-21 and \$7.5 million in 2021-22 and ongoing. This will help new eligible apprentices purchase the equipment they need to start their careers. The funding amounts will be distributed as follows:

- \$1,000 for those in motive power sector trades;
- **\$600 for those in construction and industrial sector trades;**
- \$400 for those in service sector trades.

To be eligible for the new grant, apprentices must have:

- completed level 1 training on or after April 1, 2020;
- an active registered training agreement; and
- been registered as an apprentice for at least 12 months.

The government is also forgiving more than \$10 million in outstanding loans owed by apprentices for tool purchases made at the beginning of their careers. The Loans for Tools Program allowed thousands of new apprentices to buy tools, equipment, clothing, manuals and code books required for their trade. About 19,000 apprentices who participated in the program owed, on average, \$495.

Please also be advised that all June Unit meetings have been cancelled.