

NO NOTICE, NO BENEFIT



OMBUDSPERSON
BRITISH COLUMBIA

THE BC EMERGENCY BENEFIT FOR WORKERS WAS DELIVERED UNFAIRLY

What was the BC
Emergency Benefit
for Workers from the
Ministry of Finance?

A one-time, tax-free \$1,000 payment
to eligible residents whose work
had been impacted by COVID-19

~700,000
applications paid out
\$643M in benefits



PROGRAM LAUNCHED MAY 1, 2020

- Applicants had to agree to file their 2019 taxes – no deadline for doing so

90%

of applications
were received in
the first 8 weeks

On June 24, 2020 – New requirement
imposed tax filing deadline

- People who applied before June 24,
had no notice
of this change
- Thousands later required to repay
benefit

CASE EXAMPLE

Mr. Michaels

- Self-employed contractor
- Applied for \$1,000 benefit before June 24, 2020
- Met all criteria
- Approved for and received benefit
- After audit, required to repay benefit due to missed tax filing deadline he was never informed about



“When I tried to appeal this decision, I was told I had no avenue for appeal or reconsideration because the program was closed.”

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RECOMMENDATIONS
TO MINISTRY OF FINANCE
0/3 ACCEPTED

- 1 Provide written notice to all affected benefit recipients that if they have filed their 2019 taxes since January 1, 2021 or agree to do so within 90 days, the ministry return the benefit or forgive the debt owed.
- 2 Develop and make public a review process specific to decisions to issue or recover the benefit.
- 3 Develop a process to ensure changes to public information are clearly identified and where those changes will impact an individual's eligibility, communicate the information to affected individuals.