

Connecting Ottawa Communiqué July 26, 2022

We are pleased to provide this information for front-line workers to support the information and referral needs of clients. Education sessions that may be of interest to workers are listed first followed by information and updates from our lawyers and partners related to services and programs relevant to clients who have a communication barrier due to language or sensory disability. Please feel free to share this email widely among your networks.

Upcoming Connecting Ottawa education sessions:

Immigration & Social Assistance - information for community workers

Hosted by Community Legal Services of Ottawa

Date: Thursday, August 11, 2022

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Speaker: Éline Simon and Nicholas Churchman, Community Legal Services of Ottawa

Via zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89754682059?pwd=QjI3Vlk1RnVMSUIGcXh0a2wydVpwQT09>

Meeting ID: 897 5468 2059

Passcode: 954309

This session looks at the interaction between immigration applications and social assistance. It aims to answer two questions relevant to immigration and OW/ODSP applicants: (1) are they eligible to receive OW/ODSP benefits if their immigration status is X? and (2) What happens if they receive social assistance benefits while their immigration application is in process?

Legal information and updates:

Work permit expiration letter for employers

There have been repeated issues of clients about to lose their employment because the employer does not understand that a person who has applied to extend their work permit can keep working even though the previous permit expired. There is also an inaccurate belief that the 120 day limit listed on the work permit extension confirmation letter is a real deadline and that people have to stop working after it passes. For clients in this situation, Connecting Ottawa Immigration Lawyer, Heather Neufeld, has prepared a letter that can be provided to employers to explain that clients are still able to work as long as they have applied to extend their permit. You can download the letter at: <https://connectingottawa.com/about-us/connecting-ottawa-resources/>

New Connecting Ottawa InfoSheet: Rights and Responsibilities of Refugees In Canada

Connecting Ottawa lawyer, Heather Neufeld, and Connecting Ottawa's summer student intern, Joel Szota, have prepared a [new InfoSheet](#) on the rights and responsibilities of Refugees in

Canada to answer some of the common questions that arise. You can review and download the letter at: <https://connectingottawa.com/about-us/connecting-ottawa-resources/>

COVID-19 Provincial Paid Sick Leave - Worker Income Protection Benefit program extended until March 31, 2023 and updated Connecting Ottawa InfoSheet

On April 29, 2021, the Government of Ontario amended the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* (ESA) to require employers to provide employees with up to three days of paid infectious disease emergency leave for certain reasons related to COVID-19, including getting vaccinated or staying home due to COVID-19. This entitlement is in addition to employees' rights to [unpaid Infectious Disease Emergency Leave](#), and was available until July 31, 2022. However, the Government of Ontario recently announced an extension until March 31, 2023. Although the benefit has been extended until 2023, employees are not entitled to an additional three days either in 2022 or 2023. Therefore, some employees may have already used up some, or all, of their entitlement to this benefit by now. We encourage you to refer to [Connecting Ottawa's revised information sheet on this benefit](#) available at: <https://connectingottawa.com/about-us/connecting-ottawa-resources/>

Temporary changes to certain *Employment Standards Act (ESA)* rules in effect until July 30, 2022

During the period March 1, 2020 until July 30, 2022, a non-unionized employee is deemed to be on job-protected Infectious Disease Emergency Leave (IDEL) any time their hours of work are temporarily reduced or temporarily eliminated due to COVID-19, and an employee is not considered to be laid off or constructively dismissed under the ESA if their employer temporarily reduces or temporarily eliminates their hours of work or wages for reasons related in whole, or in part, to COVID-19. However, beginning on July 31, 2022:

- Employees in this situation are no longer deemed to be on IDEL.
- The rules around constructive dismissal will resume. This means a significant reduction or elimination of an employee's hours of work or wages may be considered constructive dismissal, even if it was done for reasons related to COVID-19.
- The ESA regular rules around temporary layoff will also resume (layoff clock resets on July 31, 2022), and an employer can place an employee on a temporary layoff for up to 35 weeks, thus moving their return to date to as late as March 2023.
- Employees will be able to file termination and severance claims with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development after July 30, 2022, based on their employer temporarily reducing or temporarily eliminating their wages and/or hours of work even if the reduction or elimination is for reasons related to COVID-19.

For more information, please see [IDEL_COVID_January-4-2022.pdf \(connectingottawa.com\)](#).

Lifting of some OW and ODSP temporary services and charges

Ontario Works (OW) and ODSP public pages on the impact of COVID-19 have been updated to reflect the lifting of some of the temporary service and process changes introduced in response to the pandemic: see [OW and COVID-19](#) and [ODSP and COVID-19](#). In particular:

- there is no longer an advisory that some offices may be closed or operating with reduced staff
- clients are no longer being asked to visit OW and ODSP offices "only if necessary" and to contact their caseworker first
- information about federal pandemic recovery benefits and Employment Insurance has been removed
- clients with expiring special diet allowance, health, or other recurring benefits are now being advised to contact their local office - there is no longer an advisory that expired benefits will be automatically extended
- clients are no longer being advised to ask their caseworker about discretionary benefits if they have exceptional costs related to COVID-19

Eligibility reviews appear to be resuming province-wide and physical (or pen-and-ink) client signatures are once again being required in some circumstances where verbal consent had been temporarily accepted (e.g. for EI Assignment of Benefit forms). However, it appears that some practices adopted during the pandemic are being maintained as part of regular OW and ODSP business moving forward, such as local offices continuing to be able to send disability determination packages directly to healthcare professionals.

Ontario recognizes previous driving experience for refugees

Ontario will credit foreign driving experience for protected persons, refugees, and people from Ukraine to help them get their driver's licence sooner. Present a photocopy of the foreign driver's licence (DL) bearing a stamp from Border Services, or complete a self-declaration if the foreign driver's licence is not available. [Learn more about this program.](#)

Infographic: Free legal help for people applying for Refugee Status

Legal Aid Ontario has created a new infographic on the free legal services available to individuals applying for refugee status. It covers what services are available and how to obtain a legal aid certificate. Download the infographic at: https://www.legalaid.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/LAO-PLFI-Refugee-status-infographic_EN.pdf

Newcomer Information Hub

Refugee 613 has created [the Newcomer Info Hub](#). Funded by IRCC, the Hub's initial goal was to create multilingual, culturally appropriate COVID-related information for newcomers and make them accessible in the channels newcomers use. Refugee 613 has now expanded the scope of the Info Hub to include more general information useful to support newcomers with their settlement and integration. Visit the Hub at: <https://www.refugee613.ca/pages/newcomer-info-hub>

Answers to all your questions about Ukrainians changing or extending immigration status in Canada plus information on access to benefits

Many community workers have questions about how Ukrainians in Canada change or extend their status, remove conditions on work permits, access government benefits or apply to leave and re-enter the country. Find answers to all these questions and more in our [Question and Answer document](#) which covers a great number of the most frequently asked questions.

This [document](#) was prepared by Connecting Ottawa immigration lawyer Heather Neufeld as a companion document to the CLEO Webinar: *Ukrainians in Canada: Special immigration measures and supports for temporary residents* ([slides available here](#)). We welcome your ongoing Ukraine immigration and benefits questions at heather@connectingottawa.com

Services Near Me database

[Services Near Me](#), a service in partnership with Findhelp and 211 on [Settlement.Org](#), now offers users the ability to filter agency results by languages served. The service is leaner, more efficient, and more accessible. Service organizations are urged to keep their 211 listings updated so that the agency is found more easily. Listings are also provided in French if the agency offers French language services.

CERB Amnesty Campaign

[Campaign 2000's](#) work with the CERB Amnesty campaign is ongoing. They continue to look for stories of people who are willing to speak about their experience of accessing CERB/CRB and for some, now being asked to pay it back. Many front-line workers in Ottawa have clients who have received letters asking for repayment. If you know of a client, please distribute this link and ask people who are able to complete it to do

so: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1BO2qace8B61GSTCThfwnZbnH8UbNwxJZqUgTMYWhLh/viewform?edit_requested=true This will help with upcoming advocacy and media work. Please also note that your clients' incomes could be affected soon. The week of July 18, letters will go out letting people know if their refundable tax credits including the Canada Child Benefit, the Canada Workers Benefit, GST/HST and Trillium are lower for the next year. This could be the case for people who received the CRB.

SAWIS Report - Low-income and precariously employed immigrant women and COVID-19

Shared by our friends at [OCASI](#): "Understanding the Multidimensional Impacts of COVID-19 on Low-Income and Precariously Employed Immigrant Women Report" was released recently by South Asian Women's and Immigrants' Services ([SAWIS](#), formerly known as the South Asian Women's Rights Organization - SAWRO). The report features the experiences of low-income and precariously employed immigrant women from the East-Danforth community in Toronto. [Download the report here](#)

In case you missed it ... (we think the following information bears repeating) Updated Connecting Ottawa information sheets

The following resources have been produced by Connecting Ottawa lawyers to provide front line workers and community members with information and referral resources for common legal issues. Please feel free to share with your clients and networks.

- [Paid Infectious Disease Emergency Leave \(July 25, 2022\)](#)
- [Work Permit Letter \(July 25, 2022\)](#)
- [Rights and Responsibilities of Refugees in Canada \(July 22, 2022\)](#)
- [Q & A about Ukraine Immigration status and access to benefits \(June 23\)](#)
- [Financial Assistance for Ukrainian Families \(June 6, 2022\)](#)
- [Transition Child Benefit \(May 31, 2022\)](#)
- [Wills & Powers of Attorney Resource Sheet \(May 17, 2022\)](#)
- [Canada Child Benefit \(May 17, 2022\)](#)
- [Newcomer Owned Small Businesses in Ottawa \(April 5, 2022\)](#)

Webinar: CRA's Benefits and Credits Available to Persons with Disabilities - July 27

[Reach Canada](#) will be hosting this session on July 27, 2022 from 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. to teach persons with disabilities, their families and/or caregivers about the Disability Tax Credit (DTC). They will also provide general information on the Child Disability Benefit (CDB), the Canada Workers Benefits (CWB) supplement, the Canada Caregiver Credit (CCC), the Disability Support Deduction, Medical Expenses and other tools and services that the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) offers. Registration for this event is free; however, contributions are welcome. Register at: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0sdO2qrDgtEtbTPMVg_WokltaYlzVXGg1z.

Student Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) debt reduction available

A significant number of students are being asked to repay the CERB by either the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) or Service Canada. Some of these students might be eligible for a credit towards their CERB debt if they meet the eligibility criteria for debt reduction (see here for information on eligibility): [Student CERB debt reduction - Canada.ca](#). Their credit will be based on the number of 4-week CESB periods they could have received between May 10, 2020 and August 30, 2020. Application forms can be downloaded and submitted to the CRA by fax, mail, or CRA My Account: [Student CERB debt reduction - Canada.ca](#). We encourage you to share this information with your networks because the CRA is not informing students about this credit when they send out repayment notices. If a student has already repaid the CERB benefits they received, they will be reimbursed the difference upon application. For more information on this credit marriage certificate, not just a religious marriage document like a marriage contract.

2023 guideline amount for rent increases capped at 2.5%

The Ontario government confirmed that the 2023 guideline amount for rent increases is 2.5%, the maximum amount permitted under the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006*: [Ontario Caps 2023 Rent Increase Guideline Below Inflation at 2.5 Per Cent | Ontario Newsroom](#). Landlords must wait 12 months between increases and give tenants written notice at least 90 days before their rent goes up. Note: a landlord is permitted to increase a tenant's rent above this amount if the rental unit is:

- in a building, mobile home park, or land lease community that was first occupied for residential purposes after November 15, 2018,
- in an addition to a building, mobile home park, or land lease community, and the addition was first occupied for residential purposes after November 15, 2018, or
- a self-contained unit created after November 15, 2018 in a house that contained no more than two residential units at any time up to November 15, 2018 and meets certain other conditions.

For more information on rent increases, please visit Steps to Justice: [How much can my rent go up? - Steps to Justice](#).

Ontario Works: Information and resources

On July 7, 2022, Connecting Ottawa held a special session on Ontario Works and settlement. Following the session, caseworkers from Ontario Works shared the following helpful resources that may be of interest to all front-line workers. Please review and share with your clients as appropriate.

- [Ontario Works General Information Brochure](#)
- [Ontario Works Resource list](#) (listing of community resources for education, language, child care, health care, etc)
- [Introduction to OW video available in multiple languages](#) (includes: Somali, Spanish, Arabic, English and French)

Information: Consumer rights and issues

On June 28, Consumer Protection Ontario made a presentation to Connecting Ottawa's partnership network on a number of consumer-related topics, including consumer rights, signing contracts, hiring contractors, cancelling a door-to-door sale purchase, buying a home, renting or buying a car, calling a two truck driver, and filing a complaint with Consumer Protection Ontario. We are pleased to share with you the [slide deck](#) from the presentation for your reference (note that this information is current as of June 28, 2022). If you would like more information about the subjects covered in this presentation, we encourage you to visit www.ontario.ca/consumer. If you have questions about a specific scenario or transaction, Consumer Protection Ontario strongly recommends that you call their office using the toll-free number instead of emailing or filing a complaint right away: 1-800-889-9768. Speaking with a Consumer Services Officer directly is the most efficient way to determine if 1) the issue in question falls within Consumer Protection's jurisdiction 2) if it is within their jurisdiction, what your rights are and what steps should be taken and 3) if it is not within their jurisdiction, what organization or agency might be able to assist instead. To access the slide deck, visit: https://connectingottawa.com/cpo_june-28/

Immigration status and social assistance charts

[West Scarborough Community Legal Clinic](#) recently held a webinar on immigration status and social assistance. At this event they shared the following helpful charts and flowcharts with participants to better understand social assistance eligibility based on immigration status:

- [Immigration status and social assistance eligibility chart](#)
- [Status eligibility and immigration consequences chart](#)
- [The Am I a visitor chart](#)
- [What to do if an application for social assistance is denied flowchart](#)

Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB) and Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB) are no longer open for application

The CRCB and CRSB ended on May 7, 2022. However, you could apply for open CRCB or CRSB periods up to 60 days after each period ended. The last period for the CRCB and CRSB was period 84 (May 1 to 7, 2022), which was open for application **until July 6, 2022**. This period is no longer open for application.

University of Ottawa Community Legal Clinic (UOCLC) summer hours and intake schedule 2022-23

The UOCLC provides legal services free of charge to all those who qualify financially and whose cases fall within their following mandated areas of service: criminal law; family law; and tenant law. Undergraduate students of the University of Ottawa and Carleton University automatically qualify financially. The UOCLC is holding intakes during the 2022 summer session from May 16 to August 11, 2022. Clinic intakes happen on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 9:30 to 11:30 am.

Clinic intakes for 2022-23 will be from:

- September 19 to October 17, 2022
- October 31 to November 30, 2022
- January 4 to January 13, 2023
- January 30 to February 28, 2023
- March 13 to March 30, 2023

To schedule an intake, clients should call UOCLC at 613-562-5600.

Ottawa Pro Bono Employment Law Clinic open

The Ottawa Pro Bono Employment Law Clinic has reopened for the 2022 session. Services are provided by volunteer lawyers and law students. The clinic can assist Ontarians facing an employment related challenge due to COVID-19 or other reasons. The clinic will run from June 1, 2022 to August 31, 2022. For more information: <https://www.ottawalegalclinic.ca/>.

Ontario Counselling Finder created to help reduce barriers to access

Individuals, couples and families across Ontario can now find providers and, in some cases, make appointments for counselling through one single door: www.ontario.counselling.finder.ca. With experienced therapists coming from multiple backgrounds and speaking multiple languages, the Ontario Counselling Finder aims to provide a diverse and inclusive environment. The network of therapists are all registered and experienced professionals, who work in collaboration with local services to assist clients with access to other supports as needed. For more information, read this article: [New website aims to improve access to counselling services - Bradford News \(bradfordtoday.ca\)](#).

Ontario Youth Segregation Class Action

A settlement with the Province of Ontario has been approved in a class action concerning young persons who, while under the age of 18, were incarcerated in provincial youth custody facilities and subjected to periods of secure isolation exceeding six (6) hours between April 1, 2004 and December 17, 2018. The only way to receive money from the Settlement is to submit a completed Claim Form and all supporting documentation to the Claims Administrator no later than August 26, 2022. Click [here](#) for more information about how to file a Claim.

Petition: Permanent Resident Status for migrant essential workers

The Migrant Rights Network is launching a summer campaign to push for permanent

resident status for 1.7 million people in Canada. Parliament unanimously called for a plan to be tabled by September 8th 2022 to "allow workers of all skill levels permanent residency." This will finally open the door to citizenship for low wage essential workers. In parallel, Prime Minister Trudeau has instructed the Minister of Immigration to move ahead with "regularizing status for undocumented workers." Mass support for this initiative is needed to ensure it happens. The MRN is asking folks to sign and share the petition: <https://migrantrights.ca/take-action/permanent-resident-status/>

Connect with us ...

Connecting Ottawa is available to support front-line workers in Ottawa to provide appropriate legal information and referrals to clients with communication barriers as a result of language or sensory disability. If you have a question or require a consultation, please send it to info@connectingottawa.com along with an Intake

Form: <https://connectingottawa.com/request-for-information-consultation/>. This will ensure the most efficient response to your request. As a reminder, we do not provide direct legal services to individuals

--

Gina Grosenick, Ph.D. (she/her)
Project Manager
Connecting Ottawa
(613) 862-7601

Please be advised that my standard hours of work are Monday to Thursday, 7:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

The information contained in this correspondence is provided solely for informational purposes. This information is not intended to substitute for professional legal advice or opinion and accessing this information or communicating with a lawyer at Connecting Ottawa by way of email or phone, does not create a lawyer-client relationship.