

## Connecting Ottawa Communiqué January 10, 2023

We are pleased to provide this information for front-line workers to support the information and referral needs of clients. Connecting Ottawa 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:

We are finalizing our winter schedule. Watch this newsletter for upcoming sessions.

### Legal information and updates:

#### **Issue concerning new policy expediting work permits for refugee claimants**

Although IRCC launched a new policy in November 2022 to permit refugee claimants to receive their work permit prior to their in-person eligibility interview, we have heard that some claimants are having trouble obtaining their Social Insurance Number because they have only an Acknowledgement of Claim document, rather than a Refugee Claimant Document (the paper with their photo on it). If any community worker has refugee claimant clients granted a work permit who are nevertheless turned away from Service Canada when applying for a SIN number, please contact [heather@connectingottawa.com](mailto:heather@connectingottawa.com) to assist.

For your information, here's the info from our previous *Communiqué* on the new policy: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) launched a public policy on November 16, 2022 to grant work permits to refugee claimants faster. In the past, a refugee claimant was not eligible to receive their work permit until after their in-person eligibility interview, at which they received their refugee claimant document (referred to informally as the "brown paper"). Under the new policy, as long as a claimant either submits their claim through an IRCC portal or submits their forms to the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), they will be eligible for their work permit prior to their in-person eligibility interview. However, they must first undergo their immigration medical exam, provide biometrics, and have indicated that they desire a work permit. The way a claimant indicates that they want a work permit is by checking a box either on the online portal when asked or by checking "yes" to a question about requesting a work permit on one of the refugee claim forms they email to CBSA. Claimants do NOT need to submit a separate online work permit application to benefit from the new accelerated work permit policy. The only individuals who must submit an online work permit application are those who failed to indicate that they want a work permit through the portal or on their forms. For more information, see: [https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/claim-protection-inside-canada/work-study.html#work\\_permit](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/claim-protection-inside-canada/work-study.html#work_permit).

## **Proxy marriages not permitted under Canadian immigration law**

At Connecting Ottawa, we receive many questions concerning whether an individual can sponsor their spouse for permanent residence after marrying in a ceremony that did not involve both spouses being together in-person. In many cases, one spouse is in Canada and the other abroad. They conduct the ceremony by video or relatives represent one of the spouses at the wedding. It is important to know that such "proxy" marriages are not permitted for Canadian immigration purposes. Individuals who seek to sponsor a spouse based on marriage must have physically married in the presence of the other spouse.

## **All children have the right to attend school in Ontario except visitors (other than CUAET)**

We often speak to workers who are confused about who may study at elementary school and secondary school in Ontario. Please note that all children have the right to study for free, including children with no immigration status. Whether children may study has nothing to do with whether or not their parents pay taxes. The only children who may not study at elementary and secondary school for free are those who are in Canada on a visitor visa. All other children have the right to study. Although children on visitor visas are not permitted to attend school, the province has made an exception for Ukrainians who enter as visitors pursuant to the Canada Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET). All Ukrainian children are permitted to study without paying fees.

## **Can Ukrainians and refugee claimants apply for the one-time top-up to the Canada Housing Benefit?**

Short answer: it depends. Ukrainians who came to Canada on CUAET and refugee claimants must meet all of the [eligibility criteria](#) to apply for this benefit. In particular, you have to be a resident of Canada for tax purposes in 2022 ([Determining your residency status - Canada.ca](#)) and you and your spouse or common-law partner have filed your 2021 income tax and benefit returns. Since Ukrainians on CUAET and some refugee claimants did not file 2021 income tax returns, they must declare their world income for 2021 and any income in 2022 before arriving in Canada to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) general benefits line: 1-800-387-1193 (press "0" to speak with an agent). Ukrainians on CUAET and refugee claimants can presumably apply for the benefit as soon as the CRA updates their income information: [How to apply - One-time top-up to the Canada Housing Benefit - Canada.ca](#).

## **Information Session: Canada Housing Benefit Top-Up**

Further to the information shared last week. Woodgreen's Financial Empowerment Team has been offering information sessions about the new Canada Housing Benefit Top-up for front-line workers in Ontario. The final session will run this **Thursday, January 12 at 3:30 p.m.** The Canada Housing Benefit top up is a one-time payment of \$500 available to families and individuals living on a low-income for help with rent. The session will cover, who's eligible, how to apply, how to answer common questions about the benefit, and where to go for more help. To register, visit: [https://teams.microsoft.com/registration/erv3o1K-ekWp4LEgYpk-wg,7u8RCGhCtECmn6TQKONhkw,yyv7FQfjJkKPG2SI5QJHIA,qH8LS1yQDUeJlgDRh1sKyG,BVmlUSDL7keRc\\_AOPJafnQ,BGtoKq4Grku6pjOYbOeyOg?mode=read&tenantId=a3f7bb7a-be52-457a-a9e0-b12062993ec2](https://teams.microsoft.com/registration/erv3o1K-ekWp4LEgYpk-wg,7u8RCGhCtECmn6TQKONhkw,yyv7FQfjJkKPG2SI5QJHIA,qH8LS1yQDUeJlgDRh1sKyG,BVmlUSDL7keRc_AOPJafnQ,BGtoKq4Grku6pjOYbOeyOg?mode=read&tenantId=a3f7bb7a-be52-457a-a9e0-b12062993ec2)

Also, don't forget to check out Connecting Ottawa's infosheet on the new benefit that can be downloaded at: <https://connectingottawa.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/One-time-top-up-info-sheet-Dec-21-2022.pdf>

### **Monthly earnings exemption to increase for Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) from \$200 to \$1,000 per month**

As of February 1, 2023, ODSP is increasing the monthly earnings exemption from \$200 to \$1,000 per month without affecting ODSP income support, benefits, or eligibility. This means that the amount people can earn without any deductions will increase from \$200 to \$1,000. The new exemption rules apply only to adult benefit unit members who are either persons with a disability or members of a prescribed class - other benefit unit members remain subject to current exemption rules. The amount that is deducted on income above the new exemption amount will also increase from 50% to 75%. This change will be reflected in the March 2023 payment.

### **10 paid sick days for workers covered by federal labour laws**

If you are employed in an industry that's covered by Federal labour laws such as airlines, railways, trucking, banking, or telecommunications, you will have up to 10 paid sick days in 2023. These permanent, employer-paid sick days came into effect under the Canada Labour Code on December 1, 2022. However, the earliest that workers can access their paid sick days is January 1, 2023 when they will have access to 3 days after 30 days of continuous employment. After that, you earn 1 additional day at the start of each month. Any paid sick days not used each year can be carried to the next calendar year. For more information on Federal paid sick leave, visit the Workers' Action Centre: [10 Paid Sick Days for Workers Covered by Federal Labour Laws \(workersactioncentre.org\)](https://workersactioncentre.org/10-Paid-Sick-Days-for-Workers-Covered-by-Federal-Labour-Laws) or read their helpful information sheet: [Federal-Paid-Sick-Leave-Factsheet\\_English\\_Dec-2022.pdf \(workersactioncentre.org\)](https://workersactioncentre.org/Federal-Paid-Sick-Leave-Factsheet-English-Dec-2022.pdf).

### **Community dental screenings**

Ottawa Public Health has confirmed that community dental screenings activities will continue to be provided in the new year at Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs. Front line workers are encouraged to refer clients that have dental needs. A full schedule for services and locations is available at: [www.OttawaPublicHealth.ca/NeighbourhoodHub](http://www.OttawaPublicHealth.ca/NeighbourhoodHub). In between dental screening dates, if front-line workers have clients that need urgent attention, please call the OPH Dental Information Line at 613-2424, ext 23510 to see if they are eligible for a dental program.

### **CLEO's Guided Pathway to fight eviction now has a personalized checklist**

CLEO's free Guided Pathway can help clients whose landlord is trying to evict because of unpaid rent. The Eviction Solution Explorer asks questions about the situation, gives information to help answer them, and creates documents based on the answers. At the end of the pathway, clients can download and save or print all selections and notes in a personalized list. For more information on the Eviction Solution Explorer, visit: [stepstojustice.ca/guided-pathways/housing-law-eviction-solution-explorer](https://stepstojustice.ca/guided-pathways/housing-law-eviction-solution-explorer).

### **Refugee 613 multilingual infographic on COVID-19, the flu and RSV**

Multi-lingual infographics to help clients stay safe from COVID-19, RSV, and the flu are now available in 12 languages (Arabic, Dari, English, French, Hindi, Pashto, Punjabi,

Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Traditional Chinese, Ukrainian and Urdu). Visit [https://bit.ly/Flu\\_COVID\\_RSV](https://bit.ly/Flu_COVID_RSV) to download these important infographics.

**Ateliers gratuit: Centre d'information juridique de l'Ontario**  
**Survól du formulaire N5 : Avis de résiliation de la location en raison d'entrave à la jouissance raisonnable, de dommages ou de surpeuplement**

Date: Thursday January 12, 2022

Time: 12 :00 to 1 :00 pm

Speakers: Jaelle Bain, Ontario Legal Information Centre, Eric Cabana, Clinique juridique francophone d'Ottawa

Zoom: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_RD7Lp8INRNOsr2ZtBCZbhA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_RD7Lp8INRNOsr2ZtBCZbhA)

**Survól du formulaire N12 - Avis de résiliation de la location parce que le locateur, un acheteur ou un membre de la famille veut occuper le logement locatif**

Date : Thursday January 26, 2022

Time : 12 :00 to 1 :00 pm

Speaker : Eric Cabana, Clinique juridique francophone d'Ottawa

Zoom : [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_RD7Lp8INRNOsr2ZtBCZbhA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_RD7Lp8INRNOsr2ZtBCZbhA)

**Job posting: Manager: Reach Legal Programs**

ABLE2 is looking for a Manager: Reach Legal Programs. The individual will oversee and support all aspects of the service including the legal referral and educational programs. For more information visit: <https://charityvillage.com/jobs/manager-reach-legal-program-in-ottawa-ontario-ca/>

**"Stay with them": survivors of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) share insights on how friends and family can help**

The Learning Network in partnership with the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations (CDHPV) amplifies the voices of survivors and shares their advice to family and friends of those who are experiencing IPV. Each piece of advice is directly informed by what survivors shared, and quotes from survivors. To download this resource, visit: ["Stay with them": Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence Share Insights on How Friends and Family Can Help - Learning Network - Western University \(vawlearningnetwork.ca\)](https://vawlearningnetwork.ca/).

**Ontario Human Rights Commission and homelessness**

The Ontario Human Rights Commission released a statement on December 15 regarding human rights, encampments, and shelter closings. You can read the statement at: [https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news\\_centre/ohrc-statement-human-rights-and-encampments-and-shelter-closings](https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news_centre/ohrc-statement-human-rights-and-encampments-and-shelter-closings). As part of the Poverty priority of its 2017–2022 Strategic Plan, the OHRC is conducting an ongoing province wide consultation, [Poverty POV](#), on the right to housing and the right to mental health and addiction care. Please go to the link to share your views and opinions on the current crisis.

**City of Ottawa Accessibility Advisory Committee is recruiting**

The City of Ottawa is looking for persons with a disability to serve on the Accessibility Advisory

Committee (AAC). The role of AAC members is to fulfill the duties, as outlined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, to provide advice to Council on programs, policies and services provided to persons with disabilities and seniors. The deadline to apply to be a member of our AAC is Monday, January 23, at 4:30pm. To learn more about the committee recruitment process, to apply online, and to sign-up for notices of future recruitment drives, visit [ottawa.ca/committees](http://ottawa.ca/committees).

## **In case you missed it ... (we think the following information bears repeating)**

### **Canada Dental Benefit - New Connecting Ottawa infosheet updated on December 13, 2022**

The new Canada Dental Benefit that started on December 1, 2022. The InfoSheet was updated recently to include information on applying by phone, validating your application, returning a payment, and applying on behalf of someone else. According to the Government of Canada, the Canada Dental Benefit will expand to under 18-year-olds, seniors, and persons living with a disability in 2023, with implementation by 2025: [Government of Canada releases Budget 2022 - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/government/news/2022/12/government-of-canada-releases-budget-2022.html). To download the updated information sheet, visit: <https://connectingottawa.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/CDB-Infosheet-UPDATED-December-13-2022.pdf>

### **Self help tenant forms**

The Lake Country Community Legal Clinic has shared a series of helpful information sheets and forms for tenants. Please click on the link below to download:

- [Tenant Issues Notice](#)
- [Self Advocacy Information Sheet](#)
- [Moving Checklist](#)
- [Move out Inspection Form](#)
- [Move in Inspection Form](#)
- [Maintenance Request Form](#)

### **Employment Insurance (EI) benefit rate increase**

The maximum insurable earnings (MIE) is the income level up to which EI premiums are paid. Effective January 1, 2023, the MIE will increase from \$60,300 to \$61,500. This means an insured worker will pay EI premiums in 2023 on insured earnings up to \$61,500. In 2023, the employee EI premium rate will be \$1.63 per \$100. This premium rate and the MIE increase means that insured workers will pay a maximum annual EI premium in 2023 of \$1,002.45 compared with \$952.74 in 2022. **Because of the increased MIE, beginning in January 2023, the maximum weekly EI benefit rate will increase from \$638 to \$650 per week. Claims established before December 31, 2022, will not be affected by the 2023 MIE increase.**

### **Changes to rules of procedure at the Social Security Tribunal**

The following changes to the rules of procedure at the Social Security Tribunal came into effect on December 5, 2022:

- Appellants now have up to 2 years to prepare for their Canada Pension Plan, Canada Pension Plan disability, or Old Age Security appeals at the General Division. These types of appeals are called “Income Security appeals”
- If someone brings an Income Security appeal to the Appeal Division, these types of appeals will now be dealt with as new proceedings. That means that the Appeal Division can look at new evidence in these cases
- Appellants at the Appeal Division can choose the type of hearing for their appeal

Additional changes include having the rules written in plain language, simplifying the test to give appellants more time to appeal, providing more flexibility for rescheduling hearings, and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all the participants in an appeal to make sure that unrepresented appellants can participate effectively in appeals. The new rules of procedure are available at: <https://www.sst-tss.gc.ca/en/decisions-laws-and-policies/social-security-tribunal-rules-procedure>

### **Canada stops almost all deportations to Iran**

Due to the current crisis in Iran, Canada recently imposed an Administrative Deferral of Removals (ADR) for Iran. The ADR is meant to be a temporary measure when immediate action is needed to temporarily defer removals in situations of humanitarian crisis. This means that Iranians will not be deported to their country until Canada lifts the ADR. The only Iranians who may now be deported are those who are inadmissible to Canada for criminality, serious criminality, human rights violations, organized crime or security reasons. For the list of countries for which an ADR is currently in place, see: <https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/security-secure/rem-ren-eng.html>

### **OW/ODSP treatment of "Catch Up Payment" benefits**

At the end of October, the Ontario government announced the new "Catch Up Payment" benefit to help pay for student learning supports to help fill gaps that may have emerged because of COVID-19. MCCSS has advised that the new COVID-19 "Catch Up Payments" being issued through the Ministry of Education to address learning gaps due to the pandemic will not be considered income for purposes of determining eligibility for social assistance. Eligible applicants (parents/guardians or secondary students aged 18) can apply from now **until the end of March 2023** for one-time payments of:

- \$200 for each student between kindergarten and Grade 12, up to age 18
- \$250 for each student with special education needs between kindergarten and Grade 12, up to age 21

Connecting Ottawa lawyer Liz Majic recently published an information sheet on this new benefit. You can view the info sheet at: [https://connectingottawa.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CatchUpPayments\\_Nov-1.pdf](https://connectingottawa.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CatchUpPayments_Nov-1.pdf) For further details and to access the application form, see <https://www.ontario.ca/page/catch-up-payments>.

**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](mailto: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

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

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