

Daily Update – 28 January 2021

Common employer: CFA unlikely to be granted intervenor status in the BC LRB common employer case

While the BC Labour Relations Board (LRB) has not yet issued a formal decision on the CFAs intervenor application in the Sobeys et al v. UFCWI – they have indicated they are not seeking submissions from the other parties, at this time. In practical terms this means they are unlikely to grant the CFA intervenor status in the case at this point in time.

Currently, all the parties are waiting the outcome of the Reconsideration Application that was filed in the late fall following the LRBs decision to declare Sobeys and several of its franchisees in BC as common employer.

The CFA will continue to monitor the case and we will update members on next steps once the BC LRB formally issues its decision on the reconsideration.

Quebec restrictions will remain in place in Montreal after Feb. 8

Premier François Legault said he will announce a lifting of some COVID-19 prevention measures in some parts of the province next week, but those in place in the greater Montreal region will almost certainly be extended beyond Feb. 8.

While hospitalizations are still far too high to consider lifting restrictions in Montreal, Legault noted the trend in new cases is positive. He cited an average of 1,500 per day across Quebec this week, down from 2,500 two weeks ago, and he credited the measures his government has taken to reduce the spread for that drop.

In-person learning to resume in London, Ottawa on Monday

Students in four more regions of the province, including London and Ottawa, will be permitted to return to in-person learning starting Monday.

In a news release issued Thursday, Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce confirmed that students at schools in four more public health units, including Ottawa, Eastern Ontario, Middlesex-London, and the Southwestern Public Health Unit, have now been given the green light to return to the classroom.

The province previously said that for the five regions with the highest transmission of COVID-19, including Windsor-Essex, Peel Region, York Region, Toronto and Hamilton, in-person learning will not resume until at least Feb. 10.

All schools in northern Ontario were permitted to reopen on Jan. 11 due to lower rates of case growth. Last week, the province announced that schools in seven more public health units could reopen on Jan.

25, including Grey Bruce, Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge, Hastings and Prince Edward Counties, Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington, Leeds, Grenville and Lanark, Peterborough, as well as the Renfrew County and District Public Health Unit.

Ontario Economic Report (OER) released today

Today, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) released the fifth annual [Ontario Economic Report](#) (OER), which provides data on Ontario's economy and business confidence, for the extraordinary year that was 2020 and the uncertainty for 2021 and the recovery.

Here are some of the key highlights of the report

- Ontario witnessed a steep decline in real GDP growth (-5.6 percent) in 2020 but is projected to see a moderate rebound of 4.8 percent in 2021, fuelled largely in part by expectations for vaccination rollout and the eventual re-opening of the economy.
 - In 2020, only 21 percent of survey respondents expressed confidence in Ontario's economic outlook. Less than half of Ontario businesses (48 percent) are confident in the outlook of their own organizations over the next year.
 - Small businesses are more pessimistic about Ontario's outlook than larger ones. Only 20 percent of small businesses expressed confidence in Ontario's economy, compared to 27 percent of medium and large businesses.
 - The majority (58 percent) of survey respondents said their organizations shrank between April and September, while only 17 percent grew.
 - Employment growth declined throughout the province in 2020, with 47 percent of organizations indicating they let employees go due to COVID-19.
 - Sectors most negatively impacted by the crisis included: accommodation and food services; arts, entertainment, and recreation; and retail. Businesses in these sectors were among those most pessimistic about the economic outlook and most likely to have shrunk and let go of staff in 2020.
 - Businesses' priorities for governments during economic recovery included enhancing access to capital, reforming business taxes, encouraging Ontarians to buy local, and investing in broadband infrastructure.
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Ontario Extends Off-Peak Electricity Rates

The Ontario government is extending electricity rate relief for families, small businesses and farms to support those spending more time at home in response to the provincial Stay-at-Home Order. The government will continue to hold electricity prices to the off-peak rate of 8.5 cents per kilowatt-hour until February 9, 2021. This lower rate is available 24 hours per day, seven days a week for Time-Of-Use and tiered customers.

Have you applied for Ontario Small Business Support Grant?

The Ontario government has opened applications for the [new Ontario Small Business Support Grant](#).

The grant, announced in December, provides a minimum of \$10,000 to a maximum of \$20,000 to eligible small businesses who have had to restrict their operations due to the province-wide shutdown.

Small businesses required to close or significantly restrict services under the lockdown will be able to apply for a one-time grant. Examples given include paying employee wages and support with rent.

Eligible small businesses include those that:

- were required to close or significantly restrict services due to the province-wide shutdown being imposed across the province effective 12:01 a.m. on Dec. 26.
- have fewer than 100 employees at the enterprise level.
- have experienced a minimum of 20 per cent revenue decline in April 2020 compared to April 2019. New businesses established since April 2019 will also be eligible if they meet the other eligibility criteria.

[Apply for the Ontario Small Business Support Grant here](#)

U.S. economy contracted 3.5% in 2020, worst drop since WW2

The U.S. economy contracted 3.5 per cent in 2020, the Commerce Department reported Thursday.

The report estimated that the nation's gross domestic product — its total output of goods and services — slowed sharply in the October-December quarter after a record 33.4 per cent surge in the July-September quarter. That gain had followed a record-shattering annual plunge of 31.4 per cent in the April-June quarter.

The economy grew at a four per cent annual rate in the final three months of 2020.

The pandemic's blow to the economy early last spring ended the longest U.S. economic expansion on record — nearly 11 years. The damage from the coronavirus caused GDP to contract at a five per cent annual rate in last year's January-March quarter. Since then, thousands of businesses have closed, nearly 10 million people remain out of work and more than 425,000 Americans have died from the virus.

The estimated drop in GDP for 2020 was the first such decline since a 2.5 per cent fall in 2009, during the recession that followed the 2008 financial crisis.

That was the deepest annual setback since the economy shrank 11.6 per cent in 1946, when it was demobilizing after the Second World War. The most catastrophic annual contraction in records dating to 1930 was a 12.9 per cent fall in 1932, during the Great Depression.

#BellLetsTalk day: How to join the conversation and help raise funds

Bell Let's Talk Day aims to dismantle stigma and raise money for the cause.

Now in its 11th year, [Bell Let's Talk Day](#) is the world's largest conversation about mental health. More than 1.1 billion interactions have been recorded since the event launched in 2011, raising more than \$113 million toward mental health initiatives across Canada.

Bell will donate five cents to Canadian mental health programs for every applicable text, local or long distance call, tweet or TikTok video using #BellLetsTalk.

Five cents will also be donated for each view of the Bell Let's Talk Day video, which will be shared on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Pinterest](#), [Snapchat](#), [TikTok](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#)