



# Freeland says new 'targeted' COVID-19 benefit programs to cost \$7.4-billion, run until May 7

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland take part in a news conference outside the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa, Oct. 21, 2021.

BLAIR GABLE/REUTERS

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estimated cost of over \$111-billion, the CEWS has been the largest by far of Ottawa's more than \$289-billion in direct support measures announced during the pandemic.

Speaking at a news conference with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Ms. Freeland announced what she said will hopefully be the "final pivot" in terms of direct income support programs.

"The existing income and business support programs will end on October 23rd as previously announced. We are moving from the very broad based support that was appropriate at the height of our lockdowns, to more targeted measures that will provide help, where it is needed, while prudently managing government finances," she said.

Thursday's announcement includes two new programs: one is a wage and rent support program aimed at the tourism sector called the Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program. The minister said this would apply to hotels, restaurants and travel agencies that are still facing public health restrictions.

The second measure is called the hardest hit business recovery program. It is aimed at employers that can show they have faced "deep and enduring losses" due to COVID-19, the minister said. It will also provide wage and rent supports, up to a maximum subsidy of 50 per cent for businesses that have experienced a 75 per cent drop in revenue. These two programs will run until May 7, with support levels decreasing after March 13.

The minister also announced a new lockdown support program in the event that the pandemic leads to new restrictions on businesses, called the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit. It would provide \$300 a week in income support for workers who are unable to work due to a lockdown.

That means the existing CRB will not be extended. However the related programs for sickness and caregiver benefits will be extended until May 7 and the maximum duration of benefits will be increased by two weeks.

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