



Q&As

BC Wine Industry & COVID-19

Last update: April 22, 2020

1. As a BC winery, how can I stay up-to-date on the most relevant industry information related to COVID-19?

Bookmark the BC Wine Institute's [COVID-19 UPDATE](#) web page. This page hosts and posts the most up-to-date information for BC wineries on what you need to know, what you can do, and critical key links with professional guidance and information from BC Centre of Disease Control and tourism partners.

2. Can the BC Wine Institute clarify what BC winery business operations are currently allowed and not allowed under the essential service designation?

BC wineries that are licensed to serve alcohol (including tastings) in their own lounges or tasting rooms are no longer permitted to do so.

BC wineries may continue to manufacture alcohol. Retail liquor sales may continue as before at BC wineries from their on-site and on-line stores, subject to specific conditions, outlined [here](#).

3. How has the extension of store and delivery hours for liquor retail outlets including BC winery retail (or Manufacturer Onsite Store) changed?

Effective April 3, 2020, the Liquor & Cannabis Regulation Branch (LCRB) is [temporarily extending the hours of liquor service](#) for Licensee Retail Stores, Wine Stores and Special Wine Stores, and Manufacturer Onsite Store endorsements to no earlier than 7:00 AM and end no later than 11:00 PM.

These optional extended hours are intended to assist retailers in implementing the [Provincial Health Officer's recommendations](#), including social distancing and providing early shopping hours for seniors and the vulnerable population. The LCRB is also authorizing delivery services to purchase liquor on behalf of a customer from a liquor store or from any licensee authorized to sell in unopened containers, and deliver and sell that liquor to a customer, provided the delivery does not take place between 11:30 PM and 7:00 AM. This new policy is effective immediately and is in effect until July 15, 2020. Licensees do not need to apply to change their hours of sale.



4. What small business programs and supports are available for BC wineries?

Governments and the private sector are providing a wide-range of supports for businesses in BC affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

BCWI auditor Grant Thornton has a comprehensive online overview of federal and provincial government support. The website provides updates to guiding businesses through Coronavirus (COVID-19) including what government measures impact businesses, changes to employment and labour, and provides [links](#) to find more information.

Key support programs that the federal government has introduced include:

- [Canada Emergency Response Benefit: applications opened April 6](#)
- [Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy: applications opening soon](#)
- [Canada Emergency Benefit Account: applications available through your primary lending institution in mid-April \(three weeks after March 27\)](#)
- [Federal Support for Farmers and Agri-Food Businesses](#)

The Province of BC has produced a short 2-page document with links to the most up-to-date information and resources relating to: financing and credit, wage subsidy programs, federal tax information. Download the document [here](#).

For the latest information on BC small business supports, resources and advisory services during COVID-19, BC wineries can also visit [Small Business BC](#). Advisors are ready to help by phone at 1-800-667-2272, [email](#) and daily [digital meetups](#).

5. What programs and services are available for BC winery employees that have or could be laid off from regular or seasonal positions?

Employment Insurance (EI) provides regular benefits to individuals who lose their jobs through no fault of their own (for example, due to shortage of work, seasonal or mass lay-offs) and are available for and able to work, but can't find a job. Visit [EI Regular Benefits Overview](#) for application information.

If you have stopped working because of COVID-19, the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) now provides temporary income support. On April 15, the Federal Government expanded the benefit to include; workers whose income is less than \$1000/month, workers who have run out of EI since January 1, and seasonal workers unable to return to work.

Learn more about [qualifying](#) for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit and how to [Apply](#)".



6. What is the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA)?

To ensure that small businesses have access to the capital they need to see them through the current challenges, the Government of Canada has launched the new Canada Emergency Business Account, which has been implemented by eligible financial institutions in cooperation with Export Development Canada (EDC).

This \$25 billion program provides interest-free loans of up to \$40,000 to small businesses and not-for-profits, to help cover their operating costs during a period where their revenues have been temporarily reduced, due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 virus.

CEBA works to better position businesses so they can quickly return to providing services to communities and creating employment.

Repaying the balance of the loan on or before December 31, 2022 will result in loan forgiveness of 25 percent (up to \$10,000).

Small businesses and not-for-profits should contact their financial institution to apply for these loans.

NOTE: Government recently expanded the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) to businesses that paid between \$20,000 and \$1.5 million in total payroll in 2019. This new range will replace the previous range between \$50,000 and \$1 million, and will help address the challenges faced by some small businesses to cover non-deferrable operating costs.

To learn more, visit ceba-cuec.ca

7. Is the BC Wine Institute talking to Governments about industry specific cash injections and tax breaks?

Beyond what has been announced to date, the BC Wine Institute continues to talk with both provincial and federal governments on policies and programs to assist BC wineries.

To assist with lobbying efforts and to inform government on the state of the BC Wine industry, we encourage all wineries to complete the most current BC Wine Institute [Impact Survey](#).



We encourage wineries to participate in this survey regularly, as it gets updated every couple of weeks to maintain accurate and timely reporting to government. The most recent Impact Survey can be found on the BC Wine Institute's [COVID-19 UPDATE](#) web page. Please bookmark this page and visit it weekly, as it hosts and posts the most up-to-date information for BC wineries on the health and wellness, government programs, and general business operations during this difficult time.

8. Do you have a basic summary of everything Canadian wineries need to know regarding business supports announced by the Federal Government to assist companies through COVID-19?

Yes. Wine Growers Canada teamed up with MNP to provide an overview of business supports currently offered by the Federal Government. [Click here](#) for a recording of this webinar on April 21, 2020. This link is also available to BCWI members and can be found on the BC Wine Institute's [COVID-19 UPDATE](#) web page.

9. Will there be any further funding for the Buy BC program so that wineries can access funds now to help build out DTC marketing strategies? The funding is currently closed until Oct 2020 for the 2021F year.

The BC Ministry of Agriculture is aware of this concern and is currently working on the issue. BC wineries will be updated as new information is received.

10. If I am a BC winery and/or grapegrower, what do I need to know or prepare for to ensure temporary workers are available?

BC wineries can contact the BC Grapegrowers' Association direct by [email](#) on any questions and for the latest information on the Western Agriculture Labour Initiative (WALI). BC wineries should [sign up](#) for regular updates on temporary workers [here](#).

11. What programs and services are available for BC winery temporary foreign workers?

Employment and Social Development Canada has now confirmed that temporary foreign workers (TFWs) can be eligible for Employment Insurance (EI) or the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). In both cases, temporary foreign workers are subject to the same eligibility criteria as Canadians and permanent residents. See [link](#)

12. What mental health supports are available for BC wineries and their staff?



On April 9, 2020 the Province expanded existing mental health programs and launched new services to support all British Columbians during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Access the virtual mental health supports on the following website:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/virtual-supports-covid-19>

13. How can BC wineries update their online business information and optimize their social media to help reach more consumers and increase wine sales?

BC wineries should create, update, and post regularly on their Google Business Profile to ensure the latest contact information, business hours and special offers are communicated. The BC Wine Institute offers a tutorial on how to harness the power of Google Business. Access the tutorial [here](#).

BC wineries can learn how to drive consumer traffic to their online website stores using Facebook and Instagram Advertising. The Facebook Ad Platform manages this for you. The BCWI is hosting a webinar on this topic on Wednesday, April 8 at 3:00 PM and encourages members register. Members can also visit the [BCWI webinar webpage](#) to learn about or replay any past webinars.

BC wineries can learn to grow their reach and engagement specific to the Instagram by learning how the Instagram Algorithm works. The BCWI provides a webinar on this topic along with a [hand-out](#). Visit this [link](#) to access the complete BCWI webinar.