

## LAYOFF DETAILS

### **Q: What exactly does temporary layoff mean - am I being fired?**

**A:** This temporary layoff is not a permanent termination of employment. A temporary layoff results from a need for a staffing reduction at a point in time, usually because of a slowdown of work, a facility closure or the reduction in service. It is not the same as being “fired”, which is an action taken by an employer after a serious incident or misconduct on the part of the employee. Assuming there are no changes to City services and operations as we reimagine how we serve Edmontonians, when the facilities are cleared to reopen or the service you provide resumes, the City is expecting to call laid off employees back to work.

### **Q: What else has the City considered before choosing temporary layoffs?**

**A:** The City's revenues could fall between \$168 million and \$260 million this year as a result of the COVID crisis. Like other organizations, the City has to make difficult financial decisions. We are using several strategies to make up that shortfall, but managing expenses is the main tool. The City will reduce spending in consulting, contractors, training, travel and hosting budgets. The balance of the shortfall will come from the redirection of capital funding. Increasing taxes is not being considered given the economic challenges Edmonton residents and businesses are already facing. Given that a significant proportion of our budget goes towards employee salaries, temporary layoffs along with not filling vacancies are a necessary part of the strategy.

### **Q: How were employees selected for temporary layoff - was it based on seniority?**

**A:** Please refer to the [Letter of Understanding](#).

Here is a general description of the agreement reached with the City's unions. If your organizational unit is affected by a layoff, it will occur in the following sequential order:

- 1) If there are redeployed employees from other union jurisdictions in your work area, they will be laid off first;
- 2) Then we will consider if any of the employees affected by the layoff can be redeployed to reduce the number of layoffs;
- 3) Temporary employees in your area will be laid off next;
- 4) Provisional employees in your area will be laid off next. (CUPE Provisional employees will be laid off in reverse order of seniority after first considering specific knowledge, qualifications and/or skills that are difficult or impractical to acquire related to the work that remains.)
- 5) And finally, permanent employees in your area will be laid off in reverse order of seniority after first considering any specific knowledge, qualifications and/or skills that are difficult or impractical to acquire related to the work that remains.

**Q: I was given a notice period prior to my temporary layoff date, am I required to work during this time?**

**A:** Yes. This is a 'working notice' period, which means employees need to report for their scheduled shifts in order to continue to be paid until their temporary layoff date. You will be paid for the days you work.

**Q: Will there be more temporary layoffs in the future?**

**A:** It is difficult to say at this time and really depends on a number of factors, including how long the COVID-19 crisis lasts, the City's financial position, and decisions made by Alberta Health Services that may require further reductions to municipal services. If further temporary layoffs are announced, you will hear from us first.

**Q: Are the managers/supervisors in these areas also getting laid off?**

**A:** The City is making difficult decisions to lay off staff based on whether there is meaningful, essential work for them to do, regardless of whether employees are unionized or management.

**Q: When will my temporary layoff end?**

**A:** The City is not able to confirm specifically when employees will return to work. How the City responds and recovers will determine when and how we bring employees back. If the City of Edmonton calls you back to your pre-layoff or comparable work, you will be provided with as much advance notice as possible. It is your responsibility to be available if you are contacted to return to work.

**Q: What are the areas where layoffs are occurring?**

**A:** These temporary layoffs affect employees in all Departments of the City. Decisions regarding staffing levels are being made by each program area after assessing business needs and considering factors such as Alberta Health Services' recommendations and public health orders around when businesses and activities must be closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Q: Can I look for other jobs with the City while I'm laid off?**

**A:** Yes, you are free to seek alternative employment while you are laid off.

**Q: Do I still remain a City of Edmonton employee while on temporary layoff?**

**A:** Yes. Even while on temporary layoff you are reminded that you are still bound by the City's [Code of Conduct](#) as outlined in the [Handbook](#), including the requirement to keep City information that is not publicly available confidential.

**Q: Can I still reach out to my supervisor and colleagues while on temporary layoff?**

**A:** Yes. We encourage you to keep in contact with your supervisor during the temporary layoff period. They can provide you with updates or additional information on your temporary layoff and can also serve as a source of support. We also encourage you to continue to stay engaged and informed on the City's work during the pandemic. You will continue to have access to your City of Edmonton email account and the onecity portal so you can read the Interim City Manager's daily email and access internal City of Edmonton information.

## **PAY, BENEFITS, STATUS AND SUPPORT**

**Q: What is CERB?**

**A:** The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), offered by the federal government, is for employees who have stopped working because of reasons related to COVID-19. More information about CERB can be found [here](#).

**Q: How much will my take-home pay be?**

**A:** The CERB benefit is currently \$2000 per month. Employees can earn an additional \$1000 per month and still maintain eligibility for CERB. At this time, the City is supplementing CERB with a top up of a maximum of \$1000. The City will calculate your average weekly earnings and “top up” your CERB in an attempt to bring your layoff income to 75% of your normal income (before deductions). For some employees this will be possible but for others, the \$1000 allowance won't be enough to help them reach 75% of their salary.

If an employee acquires new employment during temporary layoff, there is no limit to income. However, it may cancel their eligibility for CERB and it will cancel eligibility for the City top up.

**Q: What payments and benefits will I be eligible for during my temporary layoff?**

**A:** At this time the federal government allows the City to ‘top up’ your CERB payment by a maximum of \$1000 per month:

- The City will provide a Top Up payment of up to \$1000 (maximum allowed by the Federal Government) which, when combined with your federal CERB benefit, will provide up to a maximum of \$3,000 monthly income in an attempt to achieve 75% of your average weekly insurable earnings before deductions.
- The maximum allowance under CERB rules will not get all employees to 75% of average weekly (insurable) earnings; therefore, the City and its union partners are advocating hard to have the City's SUB Plan approved by the Federal Government.
- The City Top Up will be paid for 16 weeks for permanent employees and 8 weeks for laid off temporary and provisional employees.
- In order to continuously receive the City Top Up payment (for maximum weeks outlined), employees must provide proof of CERB benefits for every 4 week period that they are eligible for. Please refer to the document: [Accessing Federal Income Support & Records of Employment FAQ](#) for further information.

The City has registered a Supplementary Unemployment Benefit (SUB) plan to coordinate with EI so that you would receive approximately 75% of your average weekly insurable earnings. Unfortunately, the Federal Government has transitioned all COVID related temporary layoffs to CERB which does not allow the City to apply a SUB plan ‘top up’, as the EI benefit would have. The City and its union partners are working very hard to advocate on your behalf to convince the Federal Government to address this problem. If Edmonton and other cities are successful in getting the Federal Government to permit a ‘top up’ of the CERB benefit with SUB Plans then the City of Edmonton's SUB ‘top up’ payment will provide employees with approximately 75% of their average weekly earnings (insurable), before deductions. As of today, May 8, the Federal government has not confirmed permission for a top up beyond \$1,000, and so we are not able to provide the 75%. We will communicate any decision on this to you as soon as we can.

- Permanent employees would be eligible for SUB ‘top up’ plan payments for up to 16 weeks while in receipt of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB).
- Provisional and temporary employees would be eligible for SUB ‘top up’ plan payments for up to eight (8) weeks while in receipt of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB).

**Q: IS CERB tax-free? Is the City's ‘top-up’ tax-free?**

**A:** Unlike most standard paycheques, CERB payments do not have income tax deducted before they are sent out. [Questions and Answers on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit](#) states .“ *These benefits are taxable. You will need to report any payments received on next year's tax filing. An information slip will be made available for the 2020 tax year in My Account under Tax Information Slips (T4 and more).*”

The City's 'top up' is also subject to Income Tax & CPP.

**Q: I applied for CERB while laid off. If I get a redeployment assignment for several weeks, what do I do with my CERB benefits? Once my assignment is over do I need to reapply again and would I be subject to another waiting period?**

**A:** The City understands that moving from CERB to a redeployment assignment and back to CERB would be difficult and disruptive. We are reaching out with these work opportunities as this is an opportunity for laid off staff to defer or avoid layoff. If you will be working in a redeployment assignment and are currently receiving CERB benefits, you will need to advise Service Canada. Should this work assignment end and another is not available, you would need to advise Service Canada who will provide you with instructions regarding your CERB claim. For more information please review Service Canada's [website](#), or contact them at 1-800-206-7218. Be sure to have your Social Insurance Number and your access code on hand when you call.

**Q: Does this issue with CERB affect those employees already on temporary layoff? Are they only collecting an additional \$1,000 from the City?**

**A:** Yes. All COVID related layoffs are being diverted away from Employment Insurance, therefore employer SUB Plan payments are not allowed. The City and our local and national union partners are advocating and lobbying the Federal Government to approve registered SUB Plans as they normally would be under Employment Insurance.

**Q: If I find another job while on temporary layoff will I continue to get the City's "top-up"?**

**A:** No. The City is in a very difficult financial position and is offering the top up to assist employees in meeting their financial responsibilities while on temporary layoff. If employees are able to achieve new employment during their layoff period, the top up will not be available to them.

**Q: Will the City extend the top up for longer than 8 or 16 weeks if the pandemic isn't over by then?**

**A:** These very difficult times for the City are due to the significant reduction in revenue and the added costs caused by the pandemic. As such, the City will need to review and assess its financial position at that time before any decisions are made. The City considers all its costs (including the top up costs) when making these decisions.

**Q: Will my COE medical and health benefits continue?**

**A:** Under the current agreement with the unions, all employees on temporary layoff resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic will maintain their major medical, dental, the health care spending account and life insurance benefits during their entire layoff period. The employee's share of the associated benefit premiums will be deducted from pay using the City's 'top up' payment. Once the 'top up' payment ends, the City will pay both the employee and employer share of the associated benefit premiums until the temporary layoff ends, or the Letter of Understanding "Temporary Layoff Provisions" ceases (whichever occurs first).

**Q. What benefits will not continue during the temporary layoff from the City of Edmonton?**

**A:** Permanent employees who receive coverage in the Short Term Disability (STD), Long Term Disability (LTD) and who participate in the Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP) will not receive this coverage or pensionable service during the period of layoff.

**Q. How does this temporary layoff period impact my pension contributions?**

**A:** A temporary layoff will result in a suspension of active participation in Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP) for permanent employees. Therefore, deductions for LAPP will not occur during the temporary layoff period. LAPP deductions will recommence immediately after return to work.

**UPDATE:**

LAPP has confirmed that employees may later apply to voluntarily purchase the whole or portion of the layoff period as a Prior Service Purchase on an actuarial reserve cost basis (employee pays 100% of the cost). This option will be available in the new year directly after return to work has occurred and after the current pension plan year closes and associated year end reporting has been completed.

**Q: Can I use vacation instead of being laid off? Will my vacation be paid out if I'm laid off?**

**A:** The City is unable to delay your layoff date by approving the use of vacation; however, the normal restrictions around vacation payouts have been lifted and employees can submit a request for vacation payout to their supervisor who will request Branch Manager approval by email. Approved applications will be forwarded to the [Employee Service Centre](#) for processing on your next available bi-weekly pay deposit. Your current earned vacation hours will remain in your vacation balance until you use them.

**Q: Do I use any EDOs that I have currently banked prior to being laid off?**

**A:** Yes. Subject to operational impacts, you are encouraged to use your banked EDOs (only earned EDOs, not future EDOs) in addition to any scheduled EDO during the temporary layoff notice period.

**Q: I'm really struggling with this. Is there someone I can talk to for support?**

**A:** Absolutely. You will continue to have access to the services of the **City's Employee & Family Assistance Program** provider during the temporary layoff period and can access these services by calling **1-800-663-1142**. They offer FREE, confidential, professional, short-term, solution-focused counselling services to help employees and their families work through the difficulties that life can present.

**Resource:** [Caring for Yourself and Others in Times of Uncertainty](#)

**Lead Chaplain, John Dowds Senior Mental Health Consultant, 780-496-7863**

As Chaplain, John Dowds provides support and information to City employees and their families. He has extensive experience in the care and support of those going through crisis, stress and grief.

**AHS Mental Health Helpline - 1-877-303-2642** - toll free 24/7 telephone service, which offers help for mental health concerns for Albertans.

**Kids Help Phone - 1-800-668-6868** - an e-mental health service for young people, available 24/7 from anywhere in Canada via phone, text, or online chat.

[Alberta Health Services](#) has a list of resources to support people in a variety of areas including employment issues.

**ACCESS, TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING**

**Q: Do I have to turn in my employee ID?**

**A:** No. You will not need to return your employee ID; however, please be aware that the City's normal layoff protocol is to deactivate access cards during the layoff period.

**Q: Will laid-off employees continue to have access to COE email and internal COE website to access COE employee resources and information?**

**A:** Yes. You will keep access to your City email account and internal COE website through the Portal and you are encouraged to regularly check for COVID-19 update emails from Adam Laughlin, Interim City Manager, as well as possible redeployment information and opportunities.

**Q: I'd like to use the time that I am away from work to get ahead in my learning. Can I access City training through the LMS?**

**A:** During your temporary layoff period, you will have access to learning (elearning and virtual/online learning) through the Learning Management System (LMS). You would follow the usual steps and use your employee id and password to log on to the system. Your employee id will remain active. Information on different learning options is found on [OneCity](#) under Training and Development. Please note that you are not required to complete training during your temporary layoff, and that this would be unpaid time.

**Q: There is training I'd like to participate in during my temporary layoff. If there is a cost for the training, who would pay for it?**

**A:** During the temporary layoff period, you would not be expected to participate in training. If you choose to participate, please note that this would be unpaid time. You will have access to City-wide training through the Learning Management System (LMS). Many of the options available through the Learning Centre do not have costs associated with them. If the course you are interested in has costs attached, this would not be supported during the term of your temporary layoff.

**Q: I have City-issued equipment (ie. cell phone, laptop, tablet) and uniform. Do I have to return them?**

**A:** You may be requested to return your equipment during the notice period. This will be communicated to you by your work area. If you retain City equipment, you are responsible for this equipment and its return if requested during the temporary lay off period.

**Q: I've moved. How do I get my address updated on my Record of Employment?**

**A:** Records of Employment are not mailed to employees. They are electronically submitted to Service Canada after your last paid day has occurred. If your home address has changed, the Employee Service Centre will need to be notified for mailing pay stubs and T4s. Please email your updated address and employee payroll number to: [employeeservicecentre@edmonton.ca](mailto:employeeservicecentre@edmonton.ca)

**Q. Where do I find additional information about the City of Edmonton's response during the COVID-19 Pandemic?**

**A:** There is additional information available on the City of Edmonton webpage including updates and resource guides for employees during the COVID-19 Pandemic: [COVID-19 City of Edmonton Employee Information](#).