



NEWS RELEASE

WRLA Applauds Increase In Wage Subsidy *Signals Much-Needed Support For Business*

March 27, 2020, WINNIPEG, MB – The federal government’s new measures to support small and medium-sized businesses through the current COVID-19 crisis are very welcome. The Western Retail Lumber Association thanks the government for expanding the wage subsidy to 75 per cent and for announcing interest-free loans for small businesses.

“We thank the government for listening to us and other business advocacy groups. Increasing the wage subsidy makes sense. It is the fastest and most direct way to support Canadian small and medium-sized businesses and their employees through this crisis,” said WRLA President Liz Kovach. “We will be watching attentively the details of the 75 per cent wage subsidy. The WRLA strongly supports direct wage subsidies through employers in order to enable businesses to keep workers employed throughout this crisis. We are asking the government to ensure that their programs are broad enough to support all our industry in order to keep the economy going during this difficult time.”

“Some of our members have already laid off workers as this crisis has led to a crash in consumer spending,” said Kovach. “This measure will encourage business owners to maintain their workforces, and position them to rebound quickly once the crisis passes. It will also greatly alleviate the pressure on the Employment Insurance system which was never designed to handle this kind of caseload.”

WRLA represents more than 1,200 companies in the lumber and building supply industry across Western Canada, including hundreds of retailers and their extended supply chain. Kovach says she continues to press the government to include lumber and building supply stores as essential services during this crisis. It is crucial that Canadians continue to have access to hardware, lumber and building supplies during this time so they can maintain their premises. The lumber and building supply industry is also vital to the construction industry which continues to operate.

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