

How Does Repayment of Hardship Assistance Work?

The ministry only collects a repayment when your EI benefits are above a certain amount. This amount is called the Minimum Weekly Living Allowance (MWLA).

Example: For a single person the MWLA is \$164. This is calculated by dividing the monthly hardship rate (\$710) by the average number of weeks in a month (4.33).

For this person, EI above \$164 per week will be deducted in order to repay hardship assistance.

Please plan ahead for the repayment deduction. If you have other debts to the federal government, these debts may also be deducted from your EI, **even if this means the EI you receive is less than the MWLA.**

Example:

You are a single person, without the Persons with Disabilities designation, who was laid off May 31.

You apply for EI benefits May 31, and apply for assistance June 1.

Your EI benefits claim is approved at \$250 weekly minus \$50 income tax (\$200 per week received). Your start date is June 7 because of the one week waiting period for EI.

June Benefit Month

You are issued hardship assistance of \$710. The \$710 is recorded on the Assignment of Benefits (AOB) for June.

You receive EI benefits of \$600 (\$200 per week for three weeks) Any EI benefits you receive above the MWLA are repaid to the ministry.

In this case, your MWLA is \$492 (\$164 x 3 weeks). This means \$108 is deducted from your EI to repay the ministry.

\$600 EI received = \$492 MWLA you keep + \$108 money deducted to repay hardship.

July Benefit Month

Your eligibility for income assistance in July depends on your income in June.

You received \$600 in EI after tax, so you are eligible for a top-up of \$110 to bring you up to the income assistance level of \$710 for a single individual.

Contact the ministry for information about your personal circumstances. You may be asked to contact Service Canada.

For More Information

If you have questions about assistance and the AOB, please contact the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction by calling

1-866-866-0800

or by visiting

gov.bc.ca/sdpr

If you have any questions about EI benefits and the deductions and processing of the Assignment of Benefits, contact Service Canada. You can call toll-free at 1-800-206-7218, or find information online at <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei.html>

Hardship assistance must be repaid to the ministry and will be deducted from your EI benefits. Please plan ahead for this deduction.



Employment Insurance and Assignment of Benefits

Information for people awaiting Employment Insurance



Ministry of
Social Development
and Poverty Reduction

Waiting for Employment Insurance

When you apply for Employment Insurance (EI) benefits from the federal government, it may take several weeks before you receive your first payment.

If you need help with rent, food or other basic needs during the wait, you may apply for hardship assistance from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (“the ministry”).

You must repay the hardship assistance for any weeks that you received both hardship assistance and EI.

To reduce the hardship assistance you must repay, you may choose to accept less than the maximum amount. You can discuss this with a ministry worker.

Hardship assistance is provided one month at a time. This means your eligibility must be renewed every month.

For example, if you applied for hardship assistance in January and are eligible, you may receive the assistance in January.

If you still require hardship assistance for February, you can submit a Monthly Report at the end of January, and attach proof of any income you received in January, to be assessed for hardship assistance for February.

Hardship Assistance and Employment Insurance

EI benefits issued by the federal government may be back-dated. This means there could be an overlap of EI payments and hardship assistance from the ministry.

When you get hardship assistance, you are required to sign a form called the Assignment of Benefits (AOB).

The AOB form authorizes the federal government to deduct a repayment directly from your EI for any weeks where you received both hardship assistance and EI benefits.

What Happens When You Receive EI Benefits

If the amount of EI benefits you receive is **more** than the maximum hardship assistance, you will no longer be eligible for assistance.

If the amount of EI benefits you receive is **less** than the maximum hardship assistance, you may be eligible for a “top-up” from the ministry. This type of assistance does not have to be repaid.

A ministry worker will be able to determine your eligibility for the top-up.

Note: Your eligibility for a top-up is based on your EI benefit after taxes. If money is deducted from your benefits for repayment of hardship assistance or other debt, the ministry still considers you to have received this EI.

How is the Assistance Recovered?

The ministry works directly with the federal government to coordinate the repayment. Your repayment is automatically deducted from your EI benefits.

The hardship assistance you receive will be deducted from your EI benefits by Service Canada — the federal government department responsible for administering EI benefits. For an explanation of how repayment works, please see the other side of this brochure.

If you have other debts to the federal government, these debts may also be deducted from your EI. The ministry does not have any authority over your EI benefits or federal government decisions. You will need to discuss this with Service Canada.

