

DO YOU NEED TO APPLY FOR ONTARIO WORKS ASSISTANCE WHILE YOU'RE WAITING FOR YOUR EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS?

If you have been laid-off from your job or you are on sick leave or maternity leave you know that you must wait quite a few weeks before you receive your first Employment Insurance (EI) cheque and that any vacation pay you receive when you leave the job is deducted from your first EI entitlement. Some people do not have enough money to get through the waiting period and obviously cannot wait that long to feed themselves or their families and pay the rent.

What are the options?

Often people will go to Ontario Works for financial assistance to get them through the waiting period. If you receive assistance from Ontario Works you will be required to sign an "Assignment of Benefits" agreement with Ontario Works. This means that whatever money you receive from Ontario Works each month during the waiting period must be paid back. Employment Insurance pays it all back to Ontario Works directly before they send you any EI, unless the monthly amount you receive from EI is less than the amount you receive from Ontario Works each month. In this case, the amount paid back to Ontario Works is the total amount of your EI, not the total amount you received from Ontario Works.

Although this may seem like a good idea at the time, it can cause some problems when EI is sending all your money to Ontario Works directly. **There will still be a period of time when you do not receive any money at all.**

Below is a table, which you can use to track what will happen to you. It is over a three-month period as this is usually how long it takes to make the transition from Ontario Works to EI.

| August | | | | | | |
|------------------|--------|------------------------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Laid Off July 29 | | Apply for OW / Month 1 | | | | |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

| September | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|--------------------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| | | Receive OW Month 2 | | | | |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | EI processed - vacation pay deducted - 27 | | | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | OW is sent the remainder | | | | | |

| October | | | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| No OW this month | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 2 weeks of EI sent to OW | | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | OW paid back in full - 23 | | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |
| | | Recipient sent the remainder | | | | |

Melissa is a sole-support parent of one child aged 10 years old. She is laid-off on July 29th and given vacation pay of \$400.00. She is entitled to \$250/wk of EI benefits. While she is waiting for her EI, she goes to Ontario Works (OW) for assistance because her rent is \$600 plus utilities.

Melissa is entitled to \$538 for shelter and \$460 for basic needs, but the NCBS claw-back deducts \$121.91 from this amount. Thus, over two months she receives \$1752.18 from OW that must be paid back.

When her EI is processed for the week of September 24th, Ontario Works is forwarded the \$1,100 representing six weeks of EI benefits owing, minus the vacation pay. Two weeks later Ontario Works is sent an additional payment of \$500 and two weeks following this payment OW is sent the remaining \$152.18 owed to them and EI forwards the leftover \$97.82 to Melissa.

Thus, in the third month Melissa's total income was \$364.48, comprised of the EI and her National Child Benefits for the month. She is served eviction papers and her utilities are suspended until she can pay the arrears and \$300 in security deposits.



This resource was created and published by LIFE*SPIN with support from the Law Foundation of Ontario. LIFE*SPIN's Office of the Community Advocate is located at 866A Dundas Street East in London. LIFE*SPIN can be reached at (519) 438-8676 or at www.lifespın.org

To find, share and learn about community legal education in Ontario visit www.cleonet.ca