

Bank of China, anti-abortion groups among coronavirus wage subsidy recipients



By [Amanda Connolly](#) Global News

Posted December 21, 2020 5:20 pm

Updated December 21, 2020 6:32 pm

WATCH: Canadians Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor are marking two years of being imprisoned in China. Mike Le Couteur reports on how the pair is faring, and what one diplomat says needs to be done to free the men – Dec 10, 2020

The Canadian branch of the Bank of [China](#) and [anti-abortion](#) groups are among some of the recipients of the federal [wage subsidy](#).

The [Canada Revenue Agency](#) on Monday released a searchable registry of the 339,938 businesses, charities and non-profits that applied for and received the wage subsidy so far.

Among them is the Bank of China Canada, a wholly owned subsidiary of one of China's largest state-owned banks, along with the anti-abortion Campaign Life Coalition and Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform, [frequently condemned for their use of graphic campaign material](#).

[READ MORE: CRA launches updated wage subsidy calculator before COVID-19 aid program's next phase](#)

Activities that seek to “actively work to undermine or restrict a woman’s access to sexual and reproductive health services” or that “advocate intolerance, discrimination and/or prejudice” are [among those deemed ineligible](#) for taxpayer funds through the Canada Summer Jobs program.

That rule was imposed following outcry after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s government, which he has repeatedly told voters is pro-choice, was found to be allowing taxpayer dollars to fund student summer jobs aimed at restricting access to abortion.

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It was not immediately clear from the registry how much each entity received through the subsidy.

WE Charity was also listed as being among those receiving the funds.

Global News has requested more details on the amounts issued from the CRA.

A spokesperson for Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said the government plans to review the program criteria in light of some of the entities accessing the funds.

“Our government’s top priority since the very beginning of this pandemic has been to support Canadian families and workers,” said Katherine Cuplinkas, press secretary for Freeland.

“That’s why the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy is designed to protect jobs, and help employers rehire those who have been laid off. The program applies to businesses of all sizes and across all sectors, to ensure that no worker falls through the cracks.”

“We recognize that some state-owned enterprises have accessed the program to support Canadian workers. Our government will review this issue for future periods.”

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New bylaw would ban large advocacy signs near Calgary schools – Sep 9, 2020

The registry of businesses receiving the wage subsidy is part of a push for transparency around the government program, which as of last week included payments to 368,000 businesses and non-profits.

For privacy reasons, the agency says the public registry does not include sole proprietors.

The CRA’s announcement notes that it has a separate webpage called CRA Leads for people to report businesses who wrongfully claimed a subsidy.

The wage subsidies are meant to support employee pay cheques at businesses where revenue has dropped, and the CRA says it could make ineligible businesses repay the subsidy plus a penalty, or even imprison fraudsters.

The government estimates the \$54 billion in wage subsidy payments have protected about four million jobs, offsetting about half of the negative economic effects of the pandemic on the unemployment rate.

Officials mum on how much Bank of China, anti-abortion groups got in wage subsidy



By [Amanda Connolly](#) Global News

Posted December 22, 2020 3:43 pm

Updated December 22, 2020 3:54 pm

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday commented on the continued detention of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, who have been arbitrarily detained by Beijing for more than two years, saying China's approach is 'harming its own interests,' but that Canada 'will continue to pursue every avenue to bring the two Michaels home as soon as possible.' – Dec 18, 2020

The federal government isn't saying how much money several [Chinese](#) state-owned enterprises and [anti-abortion](#) groups got through the [wage subsidy](#).

The [Canada Revenue Agency](#) on Monday released a searchable registry of the 339,938 businesses, charities and non-profits that have applied for and received the wage subsidy so far.

But a spokesperson for the agency said tax law only allows the publication of "the name of any person or partnership that makes an application," not the amount they receive.

Corus Entertainment, the parent company of Global News, has previously disclosed it is among those receiving the wage subsidy as well as the amounts received in its quarterly financial records.

READ MORE: [Bank of China, anti-abortion groups among coronavirus wage subsidy recipients](#)

The CRA's registry of recipients includes several Chinese state-owned enterprises, including the Bank of China, one of that country's largest commercial banks; Sinopec Canada, owned by the Chinese Petrochemical Company; PetroChina, Canada, majority-owned by China's state petroleum corporation; Air China, one of that country's largest carriers; and China Mobile, a major telecommunications firm.

It also includes anti-abortion groups like Campaign Life Coalition and the Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform, which frequently displays graphic material in its poster and mailing campaigns, as well as more than a dozen so-called crisis pregnancy centres.

The centres have come under [heavy criticism from sexual health advocates](#) in recent years [amid reports](#) they offer misleading information to pregnant individuals, including claims not backed by science.

READ MORE: [Pro-choice advocates want crisis pregnancy centres defunded and regulated](#)

While a spokesperson for Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said the government plans to review the program criteria in light of state-owned entities accessing the funds, officials are so far providing no information on whether that will include asking for repayment of the funds or changing the criteria.

Applicants are currently required only to prove a drop in revenue.

The CRA registry webpage notes that anyone who suspects a wage subsidy recipient is misusing the subsidy can report “suspicious activity” to the agency’s [Leads Program](#).

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The wage subsidy was first rolled out earlier in the spring and has been modified several times since.

The program currently works by [subsidizing up to 75 per cent of eligible payroll expenses](#) for eligible businesses, charities and non-profits who have seen a revenue decline of 30 per cent or more.

Entities that fraudulently received the subsidy [can be asked to return the amount](#) they received plus up to 25 per cent extra if, for example, they are found to have artificially lowered their revenues.

As of Dec. 13, the program [has given out \\$54 billion in wage subsidies](#), and is slated to remain in place until June 2021.

Other government programs assessing eligibility for access to taxpayer funds, such as the Canada Summer Jobs program, disqualify applicants whose activities “actively work to undermine or restrict a woman’s access to sexual and reproductive health services” or that advocate discrimination.

One government official said the focus of the wage subsidy was on getting money out the door as quickly as possible, but that the government will continue defending reproductive rights.

The World Health Organization warned in the summer that the [coronavirus](#) pandemic has [caused widespread disruptions to access to sexual health services](#) such as abortion and contraceptives.

Some [seven million unplanned pregnancies](#) are expected globally as a result of those disruptions.