

## COVID-19: Fear, Uncertainty and Hope on Main Street Canada

*Most Approve of Provincial and Federal Responses to Date*

*Communication is Key*

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**TORONTO, ON, March 25, 2020** – Express Employment Professionals franchise owners, and the people they interact with day-to-day, are worried about the economic impact of COVID-19. But they are also hopeful the tide will turn, and a recovery is possible.

Express provides staffing and human resources solutions around the globe, allowing for a glimpse from the front lines of employment in the time of the COVID-19 crisis.



When asked about the local job market, Jessica Culo, Express franchise owner in Edmonton, Alberta, noted that fear is having a big impact.

“The majority of permanent roles are being put on hold. Some companies are reluctantly, temporarily laying off employees,” she said. “I think this could be a bit of a knee-jerk reaction in some cases, but also required in others. Temporary employment requests are going to increase as we continue to make our way through this crisis.”

In Halifax, Nova Scotia, Express franchise owner Shane DeCoste made the point that although many sectors have seen significant layoffs, notably hospitality and shipbuilding, others have seen increased demand.

“The areas of delivery/logistics services, warehouse support for food, medical and online orders material handling and, of course, healthcare staff are all looking for workers,” DeCoste said.

Speaking from Delta, British Columbia, franchise owner Niven Lee remarked that “hiring will be on an indefinite hold unless it is an essential service.

“More than 90% of companies have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis, with a majority experiencing a reduction in revenue. A large portion of companies expect to reduce staffing levels by at least half,” Lee said.

The top concerns right now are focused on financial security and the physical safety of employees.

Bruce Hein, franchise owner in Sarnia, Ontario, suggested that most Express clients are concerned about the health and safety of their workforce.

“Several clients have instituted questionnaires for all employees to complete before entering the workplace to determine if employees have been out of the country or came into contact with someone displaying symptoms. Others are requiring all non-essential employees to work remotely,” he said.

Culo echoed this concern but also noted that, “no one wants to get sick, however, the biggest concern and conversation seems to be around declining production levels, declining productivity, declining access to product, declining revenues and the fear of a loss of income.”

Express franchise owners generally agreed that the federal and provincial governments are doing the best they can in these difficult circumstances.

DeCoste noted that the reduction in Employment Insurance (EI) wait times is welcome and that “the commitment to help from all levels of government has been quick.” However, he argued that “the 10% wage subsidy falls short of having any meaningful impact on helping businesses bridge the gap to keep staff employed.” DeCoste noted that he would be “surprised” if it helps prevent any layoffs.

“Small business support remains uncertain in terms of who qualifies and how long it will take to access these critical resources,” said DeCoste.

Culo applauded government communication, which has been “good and thorough. I think both provincial and federal governments are doing a decent job of balancing all factors involved – health, resources and financial. Communication has been so critical, and I believe that they are doing the best they can in this regard.”

Some people are approaching this crisis by looking to the future, others by taking it day-to-day, but most see the opportunity to innovate and be creative.

Culo suggested that this crisis could change the way business is conducted going forward.

“Being able to adapt is going to be critical,” she said. “Those that innovate well and quickly will thrive during this time and when we are out the other side.”

“If we do our best to remain positive and work together for the common good, we’ll realize these opportunities as things progress,” DeCoste noted.

Culo also stated that, “it is important for us as business leaders to be aware and perceptive to the human aspect of all this. The stress of this experience is different for everyone, but fair to say stressful for all. Making sure we are all aware of that, and that the experience is different for everyone, I think is important.”

In this time of uncertainty for workers, the Express experts offer this advice:

- Try to stay committed to a daily routine. Take care of yourself as much as possible. Once this situation is under control, there will be a flood of opportunities for those who want to work.
- Stay positive and ready for work when things start to pick back up.
- Be flexible and understand that we are all going through the same situation together.
- Stay healthy, work hard and stay at work, safely, when possible. Control the things you can control.

“We’ve seen people come together in tough times, and like so many times before, we will get through this one together,” said Express CEO Bill Stoller. “It may take some creativity to get people back to work, but it’s worth the effort.”

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If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Adria Minsky at (416) 620-7111 or email [adria@mapleleafstrategies.com](mailto:adria@mapleleafstrategies.com).

#### **About Bill Stoller**

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the international staffing company has more than 825 franchises in the U.S., Canada and South Africa, and beginning in 2020 will expand to Australia and New Zealand. Since its inception, Express has put more than 8 million people to work worldwide.

#### **About Express Employment Professionals**

At Express Employment Professionals, we’re in the business of people. From job seekers to client companies, Express helps people thrive and businesses grow. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, OK, our international network of franchises offer localized staffing solutions to the communities they serve, employing 552,000 people across North America in 2019. For more information, visit [www.ExpressPros.com](http://www.ExpressPros.com).