

Canada Auditor General Finds a 'Minimum' of \$27.4 Billion in Suspicious COVID Benefit Payments

Auditor general says CRA's 'lack of rigour' in CERB and other pandemic benefits recovery efforts means majority of overpayments not likely to be recovered

By [Christopher Nardi](#)

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Our thanks to the National Post which brought this article to our attention. Selected excerpts below

Canada's auditor general says a "minimum" of \$27.4 billion in suspicious COVID-19 benefit payments need to be investigated because the government did not manage the aid programs efficiently, and it will likely fail to recover "significant" amounts in overpayments.

That's in addition to \$4.6 billion in confirmed government overpayments solely in double-dipping applications for the various COVID-19 aid programs launched within the first months of the pandemic, according to a new report by Auditor General Karen Hogan published Tuesday.

The 92-page report highlights the government's success in setting up six aid programs that doled out a total of \$210 billion to individuals and companies quickly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdowns.

But it's extremely critical of the government's management of the programs and ensuing efforts to find and claw back overpayments.

"The Canada Revenue Agency and Employment and Social Development Canada did not manage the selected COVID-19 programs efficiently given the significant amount paid to ineligible recipients, the limited adjustments as programs were extended, and the slow progress on post-payment verifications," the report concludes.

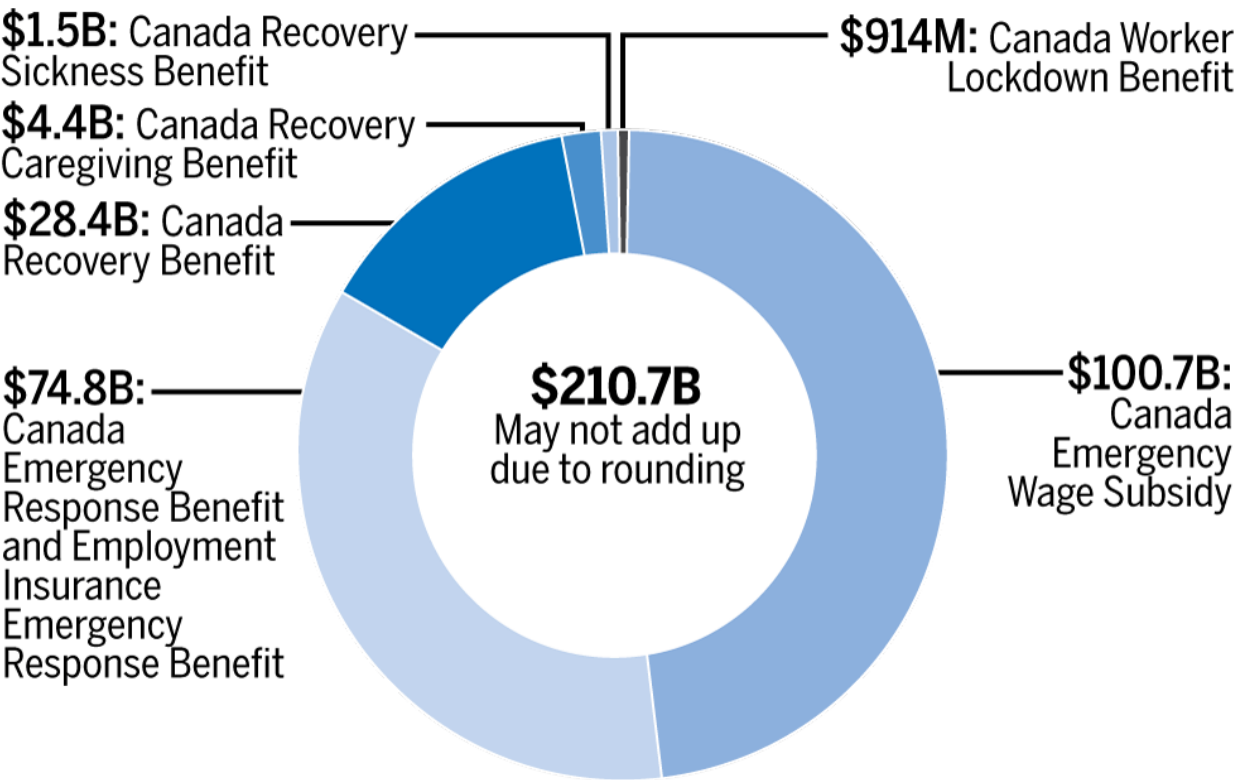
But National Revenue Minister Diane LeBouthillier argued Tuesday that some of Hogan's

numbers are “exaggerated”, namely regarding Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) payments that should be investigated further.

“The agency does not agree with the auditor general’s calculation regarding ineligible recipients of the wage subsidy. The agency’s real verifications indicate that compliance with the subsidy was high, and that the auditor general’s figures were exaggerated,” she said in response to opposition questions Tuesday.

COVID BENEFIT EXPENSES

Payments to recipients for COVID-19 benefit programs



SOURCE: OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

NATIONAL POST

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Featured image: COVID-19 benefit cheques. Scotiabank says the generous benefits likely fuelled excess demand in the economy. PHOTO BY PETER J. THOMPSON/NATIONAL POST



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