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Information / support lines

- Stop the Spread [Business Information](#) Line: 1-888-444-3659
- Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000
- [Price gouging complaint](#) line: 1-800-889-9768
- COVID-19 Enforcement Support Line: 1-866-389-7638. **NOTE: Not to be disclosed to the general public.**

What's new: 2020-04-28

Provincial declaration

Are outdoor community gardens allowed to be used during this emergency?

The emergency order closing outdoor recreational amenities ([O.Reg. 104/20](#)) has been amended to allow the use of outdoor allotment gardens and community gardens. Anyone using such a garden must comply with the advice, recommendations and instructions of public health officials.

Essential businesses ([O.Reg. 82/20](#))

Do any emergency orders for COVID-19 prevent homeowners from carrying out home improvements on their own private residence?

[O.Reg. 82/20](#) permits businesses to continue residential construction projects where:

- i. a footing permit has been granted for single family, semi-detached and townhomes,
- ii. an above grade structural permit has been granted for condominiums, mixed use and other buildings, or
- iii. the project involves renovations to residential properties and construction work was started before April 4, 2020.

There are no provincial emergency orders that explicitly restrict a home owner from conducting their own repairs or improvements. However, if they contract any business, then that business must comply with [O.Reg. 82/20](#) and any other relevant laws and by-laws.

Home repairs, construction, improvements, and other renovations must still comply with relevant laws and by-laws.

Are garage sales prohibited under the essential businesses emergency order?

Garage sales that are not operated as a business are not required to be closed under the emergency order closing non-essential businesses ([O.Reg. 82/20](#)). However, they should still comply with physical distancing guidelines and advice from public health officials.

Social gatherings of more than five people are prohibited by [O.Reg. 52/20](#). There may be requirements set out in municipal by-laws for garage sales.

The Ontario government continues to urge people to [stay home](#).

Health and public health

What are the strategies and specific guidance used to assist fighting the spread of COVID-19 in congregate living?

The Ministry of Health has provided a number of resources to provide guidance on infection prevention and control in both health and non-health congregate living situations. Specific guidance for Group Homes, Homeless Shelters, Food Services, Funeral and Bereavement Services, and more can be found [here](#).

On April 24th, the emergency order [O.Reg. 177/20](#) was issued that contains restrictions on labour movement between congregate living settings.

Provincial assistance

Where can I get information on fire protection service issues?

We request that all questions pertaining to fire protection service matters be addressed by the Fire Chief to the municipality's assigned Fire Protection Adviser, from the Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM), primarily or to other OFM sections as appropriate, and as per previous practices.

All previous questions and answers

Provincial declaration

What does a declaration of Provincial Emergency enable the province to do?

Under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA)*, upon declaring a provincial emergency, the Lieutenant Governor In Council (LGIC) has the authority to make orders. The purpose of making orders is to promote the public good by protecting the health, safety and welfare of the people of Ontario. The LGIC may make orders that the LGIC believes are necessary and essential in the circumstances to prevent, reduce or mitigate serious harm to persons or substantial damage to property, if the LGIC is of the opinion that:

- a. The harm or damage will be alleviated by an order; and
- b. Making an order is a reasonable alternative to other measures that might be taken to address the emergency

The EMCPA allows for 14 types of orders, the making of which can be delegated by the LGIC to a minister or to the commissioner of emergency management.

1. Implementing any emergency plans formulated under the *EMCPA*.
2. Regulating or prohibiting travel or movement to, from or within any specified area.
3. Evacuating individuals and animals and removing personal property from any specified area and making arrangements for the adequate care and protection of individuals and property.
4. Establishing facilities for the care, welfare, safety and shelter of individuals, including emergency shelters and hospitals.
5. Closing any place, whether public or private, including any business, office, school, hospital or other establishment or institution.
6. To prevent, respond to or alleviate the effects of the emergency, constructing works, restoring necessary facilities and appropriating, using, destroying, removing or disposing of property.
7. Collecting, transporting, storing, processing and disposing of any type of waste.
8. Authorizing facilities, including electrical generating facilities, to operate as is necessary to respond to or alleviate the effects of the emergency.
9. Using any necessary goods, services and resources within any part of Ontario, distributing, and making available necessary goods, services and resources and establishing centres for their distribution.
10. Procuring necessary goods, services and resources.

11. Fixing prices for necessary goods, services and resources and prohibiting charging unconscionable prices in respect of necessary goods, services and resources.
12. Authorizing, but not requiring, any person, or any person of a class of persons, to render services of a type that that person, or a person of that class, is reasonably qualified to provide.
13. Requiring that any person collect, use or disclose information that in the opinion of the LGIC may be necessary in order to prevent, respond to or alleviate the effects of the emergency.
14. Consistent with the powers authorized in this subsection, taking such other actions or implementing such other measures as the LGIC considers necessary in order to prevent, respond to or alleviate the effects of the emergency.

Under section 7.1 of the *EMCPA*, LGIC may make orders to assist victims of an emergency by temporarily suspending laws and replacing them if required.

All emergency orders must be consistent with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Where can I find the details of the provincial emergency declaration?

The details of the provincial emergency declaration can be found at the following link: <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-extends-declaration-of-emergency-to-continue-the-fight-against-covid-19.html>

Where can we find an official copy of the provincial emergency declaration and emergency orders?

The Order in Council 518/2020 for the declaration of emergency can be found at the following link: <https://www.ontario.ca/orders-in-council/oc-5182020>

A list of orders with links to their specific texts can be found at the following link:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/emergency-information>

Is there any requirement to enforce physical distancing?

There are currently no provincial emergency orders that make physical distancing a requirement. While the emergency orders may not explicitly require physical distancing, many of them are designed to facilitate it (e.g., [O.Reg. 52/20](#) banning public events over five people, [O.Reg. 82/20](#) closing non-essential businesses, [O.Reg. 51/20](#) closing public gathering venues, etc.), in line with the Chief Medical Officer of Health's directions. Some municipalities, at the advice of their local Medical Officers of Health, have issued orders/bylaws requiring residents to practice social distancing.

[Physical distancing](#) is a guideline to reduce exposure to other people that all Ontarians should be following. It means staying at least two metres away from anyone outside your household. Public Health Ontario has posted fact sheets on [physical distancing](#).

Do essential workers require any kind of identification or authorisation letter that proves they are exempt from restrictions imposed by the emergency orders?

There is currently no identification required for essential services workers, though some organizations have elected to provide them. Policing personnel are aware of the exemptions allowing essential businesses to continue operation and will use their discretion and undertake a graduated approach to enforcement of the emergency orders. Should a person believe they have been wrongfully charged, they would have recourse through the regular judicial channels.

Are people permitted to travel between communities within Ontario, for work or otherwise?

There are currently no emergency orders prohibiting travel between communities within Ontario. However, the Ontario government is continuing to encourage people to stay home wherever possible to [stop the spread](#).

Non-essential workplaces in Ontario are closed under the emergency order [O.Reg. 82/20 - Closure of Places of Non-Essential Businesses](#). Workers are allowed to travel to a workplace that is permitted to stay open under this emergency order.

Teleworking and online commerce are permitted at all times for all businesses.

Are beaches to be ordered closed under the emergency order to close outdoor recreational areas?

Beaches, like other recreational areas, are subject to the restrictions set out in [O.Reg. 104/20, Closure of Outdoor Recreational Amenities](#). For example, the order does not prohibit individuals from walking through a beach area, but picnic sites and benches are closed.

Social gatherings on beaches of more than five people are prohibited by [O.Reg. 52/20](#).

The emergency order does not preclude a municipality from completely closing a beach under its own existing authority.

For the purposes of WSIB coverage, does the provincial declaration of emergency allow volunteers to be considered workers?

WSIB coverage of volunteers depends on the specific circumstances. Municipalities and other employers should consult with the WSIB or their professional advisors (e.g., legal

counsel) to ensure they have proper coverage. Contact details for the WSIB can be found at the following link: <https://www.wsib.ca/en/contact-us>

Will there be any changes to the minimum highway maintenance standards under the declared emergency to reduce staff workload?

The Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS) provide municipalities with guidelines for maintaining their highways according to the road maintenance industry’s best practices and standards. As the MMS are voluntary, we do not intend, at this time, to make changes to the regulation.

The province does not mandate that municipalities meet the MMS. However, if a municipality wishes to use the MMS as a legal defence in court proceedings, the municipality must have met the standard of care outlined in the regulation and be able to prove this through accurate and verifiable recordkeeping.

Municipalities may benefit from reviewing their municipal maintenance schedules, working with their municipal councils. In addition, municipalities may want to review other relevant sections of the *Municipal Act*, such as s43.3B “Reasonable Steps”.

With regard to Ministry of Transportation (MTO) maintained provincial highways, MTO is working with contractors to ensure that operators and equipment are available to respond to highway incidents and winter storms.

Any further questions can be directed to the MTO duty officer:

Emergency.MTO@ontario.ca

Does the order to close non-essential businesses require municipal governments to shut down or work remotely?

The order does not in any way preclude the operation or delivery of services by any government or any publicly-funded agency that delivers or supports government operations and services. Municipal governments should nonetheless put in place protocols for social distancing and increased hand hygiene and explore options to continue operations through remote work arrangements where possible.

When does an emergency declaration expire?

A provincial declaration of emergency automatically expires after 14 days, unless it is extended. After a second 14-day period, the assent of the Legislature is required to extend the emergency declaration further. Municipal emergency declarations do not automatically expire and may be terminated by the head of council or the council of a municipality at any time.

Who is responsible for enforcing fines for a violation of an emergency order made under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*?

The province has launched a toll-free line to provide support to chiefs of police, police officers, and other enforcement personnel regarding the enforcement of emergency orders under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (EMCPA). For your information, the orders under the EMCPA can be found as regulations and can be accessed at <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e09>.

The COVID-19 Enforcement Support Line has been established at **1-866-389-7638**. Assistance is available Monday to Sunday, from 8:00 a.m. EST – 9:00 p.m. EST.

To ensure the line can effectively respond to enforcement inquiries, **we ask that information associated with the Support Line not be disclosed to the general public.**

What information are people required to provide under the new emergency order on *Enforcement of Orders*? Are people required to carry identification with them?

Under order, *Enforcement of Orders*, a police officer or any other provincial offences officer can require an individual to provide identifying information if they have reasonable and probable grounds to believe that individual has breached an emergency order under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (EMCPA). The individual is required to comply promptly with such a demand and can face a fine of \$750 to \$1,000 for failing to do so. This is in addition to any fine or penalty for the violation of an emergency order.

The identifying information required is limited to the individual's name, date of birth, and address. There is no requirement to provide information on employment or any other details. The individual may provide identifying information orally and is not required to produce documentation. This order cannot be used to compel an individual to provide identifying information for the purpose of enforcing any other statute and does not create any additional powers of arrest.

The full text of the order can be found here:

[https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200114\[RC\(1\)\]](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200114[RC(1)])

Will the Province be restricting recreational use of public lands?

The Government of Ontario [has issued an emergency order](#) prohibiting recreational camping on public land as of April 9, 2020 ([O. Reg. 142/20](#)). This includes public lands covered by water or ice.

Under the emergency order, no individual can camp on public land, including the placement of tents or other camping structures, while the order is in effect. The order includes a prohibition of occupying public lands with watercraft equipped for overnight accommodation.

The emergency order includes clarification on permitted activities. The government will continue to monitor the situation and re-evaluate if further actions are required.

Can a provincial emergency order be used to force a business to stay open? For example, gas stations.

Provincial emergency orders under s.7.0.2 of the [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#) cannot be used to require a person to provide services.

If a municipality experiences or anticipates a shortage of a critical supply or service, they may make a request for assistance to the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre. Municipalities should ensure that they have exhausted all other options before making a request for Provincial assistance.

Does a municipality have to declare an emergency in order to be authorized to use the work deployment measures described in [O.Reg. 157/20](#)?

Yes. An emergency must be declared by the head of council under section 4 of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act in order to have the authority to use those work deployment measures.

Closure of public places and establishments ([O.Reg. 51/20](#))

Does the emergency order closing restaurants and other establishments impact municipal services like homeless serving shelters, soup kitchens or women's shelters?

Local public health officials should be consulted on the operation of these types of services. The emergency orders made under the provincial declaration of emergency do not specifically prohibit the operation of municipal services like homeless serving shelters, soup kitchens or women's shelters, but local public health officials may have additional restrictions or guidance that should be followed.

Should college and university food halls / cafeterias stay open to serve students in residence?

Cafeterias should provide food for takeout, rather than allow students to dine-in. Local public health authorities should be consulted for further advice. Public health units are

listed online at the following link:

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>

Can the general public enter a food premises to pick up their takeout food?

Yes.

Is self-service at buffets/cafeterias permitted if the food is eaten off the premises (to takeout)?

Yes.

Essential businesses (O.Reg. 82/20)

How do I know if a workplace is considered an essential service that can stay open under the revised emergency order?

A list of essential services can be found online at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/list-essential-workplaces>.

Businesses, including construction sites, or people who have questions about closures or how emergency measures impact their business or employment can call the Stop the Spread Business Information Line at 1-888-444-3659.

If your business is not mentioned on this list, you can still provide work and services online, by telephone or by mail/delivery. Teleworking and online commerce are permitted at all times for all businesses.

As with all matters that may require a legal opinion or interpretation, it is recommended that parties seek advice from their legal services.

The Provincial Emergency Operations Centre is not able to answer questions on what constitutes an essential business.

Are private boat launches required to be closed?

Refer to the emergency order closing non-essential businesses ([O.Reg. 82/20](#)).

If a boat launch is part of a marina, then it may be open only to the extent that it is necessary to enable individuals to access their primary place of residence.

If a boat launch is part of a business that is not permitted to operate as an essential business, then that boat launch must be closed.

Privately owned boat launches that are not part of a business are not required to be closed under current emergency orders.

Regardless of the status of a boat launch, social gatherings of more than five people are prohibited by [O.Reg. 52/20](#).

Are federal boat launches required to be closed?

The emergency order closing non-essential businesses ([O.Reg. 82/20](#)) does not apply to:

1. Any government.
2. Any person or publicly-funded agency or organization that delivers or supports government operations and services, including operations and services of the health care sector.

The federal government may choose to close its own boat launches.

Regardless of the status of a boat launch, social gatherings of more than five people are prohibited by [O.Reg. 52/20](#).

Are municipal boat launches that are not part of a marina required to be closed?

Municipal boat launches that are not part of a marina are not required to be closed under the current emergency orders. However, municipalities may still choose to close boat launches.

Regardless of the status of a boat launch, social gatherings of more than five people are prohibited by [O.Reg. 52/20](#).

Do food trucks qualify as restaurants under the essential businesses schedule?

Yes, food trucks that only provide food for takeout / delivery are permitted to operate.

Are overnight, recreational camps permitted to continue operation? (Recreational camp defined as a camp for recreational activities on a site in which sleeping and eating facilities are provided for temporary occupancy, with or without charge, for five or more persons who are under eighteen years of age or persons who have special needs.)

Overnight recreational camps are generally required to be closed as they likely do not meet the requirements of an essential business under [O. Reg. 82/20](#). There may be exceptions depending on the purpose of the camp. Municipalities should refer to Schedule A of [O. Reg. 82/20](#) and consult with their professional advisors (e.g., legal counsel) to determine if a specific camp might be able to remain open.

There is a business continuing to operate in my municipality that claims to have confirmed through the Stop the Spread Business Information line that they are classified “essential”. How can the municipal government verify this?

A list of essential services can be found online at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/list-essential-workplaces>.

If a municipal government is unsure if a business is allowed to continue operating under the emergency order, they should likewise seek confirmation through the Stop the Spread Business Information Line at 1-888-444-3659.

Are there limits for the number of children in a home child care?

Home day cares are limited to fewer than six children. Refer to [O. Reg. 82/20 Closure of places of non-essential businesses](#).

Order prohibiting organized public events and certain gatherings (O.Reg. 52/20)

The order on *Organised Public Events and Certain Gatherings* prohibits any gathering of more than five people who are not members of the same household. What is considered a “household”?

The order prohibits more than five people from attending any

- organized public event; or
- social gathering; or
- gathering to conduct religious services, rites or ceremonies

Funerals with up to 10 attendees and gatherings of members of a single household are the exception to the above rule. People are considered members of a single household if they are currently living together in the same dwelling unit.

Are churches and places of worship allowed to be open if they allow five or fewer people in at a time?

Gatherings for the purposes of religious services, rites or ceremonies are permitted as long as the number of people in attendance, including those presiding over the gathering, is five people or fewer. Funerals would be permitted to proceed with up to 10 people at one time. Refer to [O. Reg. 52/20](#) for further details.

Does the emergency order prohibiting public gatherings of more than five people apply to gatherings in places of worship, weddings, and funerals?

The emergency order applies to organized public events and social gatherings. This includes weddings and communal services within places of worship. This includes events and gatherings even if they are held in private dwellings.

Funerals would be permitted to proceed with up to 10 people at one time.

Specific details of the new emergency order can be found in [O. Reg. 80/2020](#).

Does the emergency order prohibiting public gatherings of more than five people apply to families of more than five people?

No. The new emergency order does not apply to a gathering of members of a single household. Specific details of the new emergency order can be found in [O. Reg. 80/2020](#).

Does the emergency order prohibiting public gatherings of more than five people apply to essential businesses, such as grocery stores?

No. The new emergency order only applies to organized public events and social gatherings. Specific details of the new emergency order can be found in [O. Reg. 80/2020](#).

Essential businesses are permitted to continue operating, following the conditions under the [emergency order to close places of non-essential business \(O. Reg. 82/20\)](#).

Child-care centres supporting frontline health care workers and first responders are limited to a maximum of 50 persons, including any children. Further details on the limits for child-care centres can be found in [O. Reg. 81/2020](#).

Does the emergency order prohibiting public gatherings of more than five people apply to Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG) meetings?

No. The new emergency order only applies to organized public events and social gatherings. Specific details of the new emergency order can be found in [O. Reg. 80/2020](#).

It is strongly recommended that MECG members meet remotely to reduce risk of spreading COVID-19.

Price gouging (O.Reg. 98/20)

What is the prohibition against price gouging?

The prohibition is a regulatory offence that prohibits people from selling or offering to sell necessary goods at an unconscionable price.

What is an “unconscionable price”?

“Unconscionable price” includes a price that grossly exceeds the price at which similar goods are available to like consumers.

What does “necessary goods” include?

The prohibition defines “necessary goods” as including:

- i. Masks and gloves used as personal protective equipment in relation to infections.
- ii. Non-prescription medications for the treatment of the symptoms of COVID-19, as those symptoms are described by Public Health Ontario.
- iii. Disinfecting agents intended for cleaning and disinfecting objects or humans.
- iv. Personal hygiene products, including soap products and paper products.

To whom does the prohibition apply?

The prohibition applies to:

- i. persons who own or operate a retail business; and
- ii. persons who did not ordinarily deal in “necessary goods” before March 17, 2020.

Note that “persons” includes not just individuals but also other entities and corporations.

The prohibition does **not** apply to manufacturers, distributors or wholesalers.

Municipal declaration

Now that the Premier has made a provincial emergency declaration, is it necessary or advisable for municipalities to also make an emergency declaration?

The provincial declaration of an emergency is separate from a municipal declaration of emergency. The decision to declare a municipal emergency remains with the head of council in each municipality.

Are municipalities automatically considered to have declared an emergency, now that a provincial declaration of emergency has been made?

No. The provincial declaration of an emergency is separate from a municipal declaration of emergency.

When should a municipality declare an emergency?

A municipal declaration of an emergency is at the discretion of the municipality's head of council. There are a few considerations that could inform the decision to declare:

Authority to Declare an Emergency

The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA) S. 4(1) states "The head of council of a municipality may declare that an emergency exists in the municipality or in any part thereof and may take such action and make such orders as he or she considers necessary and are not contrary to law to implement the emergency plan of the municipality and to protect property and the health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the emergency area."

Reasons to Declare an Emergency

Some reasons that could be considered in the decision to declare an emergency or not are:

- A declaration of emergency provides a municipality's head of council the authority to take actions or make orders, which are not contrary to law, in order to protect the inhabitants in the area of the emergency;
- If volunteers are being employed by the municipality in support of the emergency, it can provide those volunteers with WSIB protection; or
- It can demonstrate to their residents that the municipality is taking the current situation seriously and is taking every step that they can to protect them from the threat.

Authorities When an Emergency is Declared

The declaration of an emergency in a municipality provides the head of council the ability to take actions and make orders that they consider to be necessary to protect the

property, health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the emergency area. These actions or orders cannot be contrary to law, which means that if the head of council doesn't have the authority to do something, or to order something otherwise, an emergency declaration will not provide them with this authority.

The *EMCPA* s.4(3) requires the head of council to ensure that the Solicitor General is notified forthwith of a declaration made under subsection (1) or (2). R.S.O. 1990, c. E.9, s. 4 (3). This is generally done through phone call and faxed form to the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre.

What an Emergency Declaration Does Not Provide

An emergency declaration does not provide a head of council, nor anyone else in a municipality, with any extraordinary authorities that are not otherwise provided for in law. For example, a head of council will not have the authority to order a private business or service to cease operations or to close by virtue of having declared an emergency.

The declaration of an emergency also does not provide access to any funding programs to assist with the extraordinary costs of an emergency. Questions regarding municipal funding should be directed to your local municipal services office.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-your-municipal-services-office>

If you have any further questions about the potential to declare an emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, please send an email to the PEOC duty officer at peocdo01@ontario.ca.

What kind of orders can municipalities make?

Municipalities can make orders that fall within the scope of their authority as provided for in the *Municipal Act* or the *City of Toronto Act*. The *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA)* does not permit any additional orders for municipalities.

Do municipalities have the power to close a business under an emergency declaration?

The *EMCPA* does not give powers to municipalities to order a business to close. However, municipalities have powers under the *Municipal Act* to make by-laws forcing businesses to close.

Do provincial orders take precedence over municipal orders?

Provincial legislation takes precedence over municipal legislation. Municipal powers are defined by provincial legislation.

Does the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* provide any powers to municipalities to close their borders to people that show symptoms of COVID-19?

There are no powers granted to municipalities under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* to allow them to close their borders to people that show symptoms of COVID-19.

The province continues to urge the public to stay home where possible and limit non-essential travel. Municipalities are encouraged to be proactive with messaging to the public to limit their travel.

Municipalities should consult with their professional advisors before exercising their existing authorities to close roads and highways under the [Municipal Act, 2001](#).

Mandatory quarantine

The public alert sent on Friday March 27 indicates “travelers returning to Ontario” must self-isolate. Is this only international travelers, or does it include people returning from other provinces?

The instructions in the public alert apply to those returning from outside the country. It is not meant to apply to individuals returning to Ontario from other provinces.

The federal government has issued an order under the *Quarantine Act* that requires individuals entering Canada to self-isolate for 14 days. Further information can be found at the following link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2020/03/new-order-makes-self-isolation-mandatory-for-individuals-entering-canada.html>

Public education

Does the province have any guidance on public education for COVID-19?

Ontario does not have any templates for municipalities to use for COVID-19 messaging. The PEOC recommends that municipalities refer to existing Ontario government messaging when conducting their own public education activities:

- The public should be directed to Ontario’s [COVID-19 website](#) for the most up-to-date information on COVID-19.
- The public may also be directed to the [Ministry of Health’s daily updates](#).
- Ontario government messaging on social media:
 - Ontario Government: Twitter ([@ONgov](#)) and [Facebook](#)
 - Ministry of Health: Twitter ([@ONThealth](#)) and [Facebook](#)
 - Ministry of the Solicitor General: Twitter ([@ONSafety](#)) and [Facebook](#)

The Government of Ontario is conducting a widespread marketing campaign across the province in response to COVID-19. Note that while the marketing campaign is subject to updates, currently Ontario's key messages are:

1. Stop the spread. COVID-19 can be deadly. Stay home.
2. Stop the spread. Stay home. Save lives.
3. Stop the spread. Don't put others at risk.

Local donation bins are overflowing. Can the province issue messaging to notify people not to drop donations off at boxes for the time being?

At this time, the province does not have any official messaging regarding overuse of donation bins during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Some operators of donation bins have messaging that municipalities could incorporate into their own messaging to discourage the use of bins. E.g., [Diabetes Canada](#).

Social assistance

1. What changes to social assistance have been announced?

Effective immediately, the government is providing social services relief funding to help protect the health and safety of the province's most vulnerable people.

This includes enhanced support as follows:

- For people who are not currently receiving social assistance:
 - expanding access to **emergency assistance** for those facing a crisis or **emergency situation** who have no access to other supports, including those who are waiting for new COVID-19 support from the federal government to become available
https://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/social/apply_online.aspx
- For people who are already receiving social assistance:
 - making **discretionary benefits** more accessible for those receiving social assistance who need increased support for extraordinary needs, while ensuring no disruption to current assistance

2. What is Emergency Assistance?

Ontario Works helps people who are in temporary financial need. It includes Emergency Assistance for Ontarians who are in a crisis or facing an unexpected emergency and are unable to meet basic living expenses.

Ontario Works Administrators determine eligibility for emergency assistance based on an assessment of the applicant's ability to access other resources and meet their basic living expenses and the danger to health or risk that a child would be unable to continue living with the family if assistance is not issued.

People already receiving Ontario Works or ODSP are not eligible.

3. What changes have been made to Emergency Assistance?

Rule Changes:

Effective immediately, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has made the following changes to increase flexibility for Administrators and expand access to emergency assistance:

1. Extended the length of period for which an Administrator may provide emergency assistance from 16 to 48 consecutive days.
2. Adjusted eligibility criteria to provide Administrators **more flexibility** related to considering "access to credit" when assessing whether a person has enough money to meet the basic living expenses of his/her benefit unit.
3. The ministry has suspended the rule that limits emergency assistance to only once in any six-month period.

This means that Administrators may issue multiple, discrete periods of emergency assistance (where there is a break in assistance between periods), in any six-month period, based on their determination of need.

New Online Application for Emergency Assistance

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services is also working to develop a more streamlined and accessible, online application for emergency assistance that will be available as soon as possible, recognizing the challenges faced by vulnerable populations in applying for assistance during the COVID-19 crisis. Further details will follow when available.

Individuals may continue to apply for income assistance and emergency assistance, by contacting their local Ontario Works office or through the existing Online Application for Social Assistance (OASA).

Health and public health

Where is the best location for local municipalities to receive the most up to date and accurate information from the Ministry of Health?

Visit the Ministry of Health's [COVID-19 website](#) for the latest information on how the government continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.

Will the Ministry of Health be expanding testing for COVID-19?

Ontario is [expanding its testing for COVID-19](#), including the launch of [an online portal](#) for viewing test results. Testing guidelines have been provided to health-system partners, including public health units, assessment centres, primary care settings and long-term care homes.

Where can I find disinfecting guidelines to mitigate the spread of COVID-19?

Public Health Ontario has prepared a series of fact sheets, including "Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings" that can be found at the following link:

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/public-resources>

What should the messaging be for people who have travelled recently?

Refer to the Ministry of Health's website for the most up-to-date guidance, under the heading "Travellers returning from affected areas", which can be found at the following link: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>

Can we differentiate quarantine vs self-isolation?

Quarantine is an order for a person to remain isolated to prevent the spread of a communicable disease under the federal *Quarantine Act* or by a local medical officer of health or the chief medical officer of health under Ontario's *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. Self-isolation is when a person is recommended to isolate themselves to prevent the spread of a communicable disease.

Is there any guidance on when a building should be closed as a result of the COVID-19?

Local public health units should be consulted regarding building closures (and other public health threats) as local medical officers of health can order a building closed under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* for a threat to public health.

Is there guidance for what staff should do if an individual is found to be positive for COVID-19 at a shelter, warming centre, or other similar municipal facility?

The local public health unit should be consulted with for guidance on dealing with those who have tested positive for COVID-19 in municipal sheltering systems. Public health units

are listed online at the following link:

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>

What's being done to prevent the transfer of COVID-19 between workplaces by workers in seniors' homes who work in multiple places of employment?

The Government of Ontario has [issued an emergency order](#) requiring employees of long-term care providers to only work in one long-term care home, beginning April 22nd, 2020. This means that employees are restricted from working in multiple locations such as another retirement home or as an employee of another health service provider.

The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Long-Term Care continues to [provide guidance to long-term care homes](#) on managing their response to COVID-19.

Are there any provincial guidelines for setting up temporary morgues for mass fatality?

There are a number of local considerations and factors that go into setting up temporary morgues. Questions should be directed to the Regional Supervisory Coroner. Contact information for Regional Supervisory Coroners can be found at the following link:

<http://www.infogo.gov.on.ca/infogo/home.html#orgProfile/-155/en>

Can a non-hospital facility be used to support an existing hospital, or be set up as a temporary hospital location?

In order to increase capacity in the health system, the Ministry of Health has given general approval to all public hospitals under subsection 4(2) of the *Public Hospitals Act* to operate and use an institution, building or other premises or place ("premises") for the purposes of a hospital, provided that certain conditions are met. Further details have been provided by the Ministry of Health to all public hospitals in Ontario.

What is the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect first responders and other frontline staff from exposure to COVID-19?

Public Health Ontario has been monitoring the scientific evidence on how the virus is transmitted. They have concluded, based on evidence, that COVID-19 is spread through contact or droplets. There currently is no evidence to confirm airborne spread of the virus. This means that N-95 respirators are only required for specific medical procedures that generate aerosol. Appropriate precautions against contact/droplet transmission include physical distancing, barriers, surgical masks, gloves, gowns, eye protection, and meticulous hand hygiene.

The Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health issued a memorandum to the Ministry of the Solicitor General on March 25, 2020 providing recommendations for the use of masks by front line fire and police service staff. This memo recommended a number of

controls that could be put in place across all fire and police services before resorting to personal protective equipment (PPE):

- Providing services virtually, where possible, or curtailing non-essential services
- Engineering controls (like plexiglass windows and barriers)
- Administrative controls (passive AND active screening)
- Physical distancing of two meters and hand hygiene should be practiced at all times.

Where frontline fire and police service staff may experience exposure to members of the public who are symptomatic, the use of surgical masks (but not N-95 respirators) may be appropriate.

Who is currently coordinating the provision of personal protective equipment and other supplies for the health sector?

A Control Table has been established as a forum to coordinate oversight, access and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) in response to COVID-19. The Control Table makes decisions regarding access and distribution of PPE based on needs and risks, using an ethical allocation framework and in consideration of the appropriateness of use/need. The Ministry of Health co-leads this control table with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. Additionally, the Ministry of Health continues to work with Ontario Health, manufacturers and suppliers, and health system partners to monitor PPE supply and needs and to procure available supplies.

If health system organizations and providers have a supply shortage, despite stewardship and conservation efforts, they should:

- Work with their regular supplier to determine when they will get regular shipments of PPE and equipment.
- Work within their Ontario Health region/regional table and with other local health care providers to determine if others in their local area have supplies they can provide.
- If none of these actions are successful, the Ontario Health regional lead can escalate the request to the Ministry of Health's Emergency Operations Centre (MEOC).

What is the global status of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies?

The global reach of COVID-19 has created significant pressures on the availability of clinical PPE for health and non-health essential service workers in Ontario and around the world, disrupting global supply chains. Many organizations are experiencing supply and equipment shortages. While the Ontario Government has successfully procured some of the much-needed supplies and equipment to protect health workers and critical service providers against COVID-19, there remain concerns about ongoing available

supply given high system usage and uncertainty of new shipments. Procurement efforts will continue provincially, and in collaboration with the Federal government, to augment PPE supply in Ontario. There are ongoing efforts to support Ontario-based manufacturing of PPE, and there is a process in place for accepting donations at local, regional, and provincial levels.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has been assured that regular shipments through local supply chains are continuing; the Ministry is also asking providers to share resources where they may have a large stockpile. As MOH works to replenish stock, all avenues are being explored to ensure best use of available supply. MOH is asking everyone to ensure optimal use of existing stock by following conservation guidance, appropriate use, and the hierarchy of controls. The hierarchy of controls includes those directed at the source (engineering controls such as barriers), along the path (administrative controls such as screening) and, finally, those with the worker (PPE). Ways to conserve PPE include:

- Limiting contact by providing only essential services;
- Redesigning services to provide alternative methods of protections (e.g., use of plexiglass barriers; virtual or telephone-facilitated care/service provisions).

Health care organizations have reported issues of disappearing supplies (specifically surgical/procedure masks and N95 respirators). Health care organizations should consider ways in which to secure their supplies while still ensuring staff can readily access PPE.

Can homemade masks be worn in place of disposable surgical masks?

[Health Canada](#) is advising the public, as well as health care providers to **use caution when considering the use of homemade masks** to protect against the transmission of COVID-19. These masks may be made of cloth (e.g., cotton) with or without pockets to insert other masks or filters, or they may be worn over N95 respirators to extend the duration of use for the latter. Homemade masks have not been tested to recognized standards and are not designed to form a seal around the nose and mouth, so their **effectiveness in blocking virus practices released in coughing, sneezing and other medical procedures is unknown**. In addition, depending on the materials used to make them, it can be difficult to breathe through these masks and putting users at risk of not getting the required amount of oxygen. Their design (or lack of) may also require frequent adjustment by the users, increasing the **risk of hand contamination**.

The [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) also indicates that the **use of homemade cloth masks (e.g., scarves) should be a last resort interim solution ONLY IF surgical masks or respirators are not available**, as there is limited

guidance and clinical research to inform on their use for protection against viral respiratory infections. In [one study](#), **40 per cent to 90 per cent of particles were found to penetrate through masks made of cloth**, and **cases of influenza-like illness and laboratory-confirmed viral illness were significantly higher among health care providers using cloth masks** compared to those using surgical masks.

[World Health Organization](#) recommends against the use of cloth masks (e.g., cotton or gauze) under any circumstances, as these are not considered personal protective equipment. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic where surgical masks are not available, the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) states that health care providers **might use homemade masks (e.g., bandana, scarf) for care of patients with COVID-19 as a last resort**, ideally in combination **with a face shield** that covers the entire front and sides of the face.

Has there been any provincial direction for the health sector to use the Incident Management System (IMS)?

There has been no new direction for the health sector to begin using IMS as part of the response to COVID-19.

Public Health Units are directed to use an IMS routinely as part of the [Ontario Public Health Standards](#).

Can Public Health Units share more specific information with the municipalities regarding COVID-19, such as number of cases and test results?

The Ministry of Health does not stipulate what information a public health unit shares on their website or disseminates to their partners. That is the decision of the local medical officer of health.

Is the Government of Ontario considering redeployment of paramedics to other services to meet potential staffing shortages? If so, will those paramedics continue to be covered by the benefits and liability coverage of their home services?

The Ministry of Health (MOH) is working closely with paramedic service operators to address health human resource concerns. On April 17, 2020, a number of [regulatory amendments](#) to Ontario Regulation 257/00 under the *Ambulance Act* came into force, with the intent to help increase workforce capacity during declared provincial states of emergency. These measures will help mitigate potential staffing pressures in the event of a regional or provincial surge. At this time, legislative or regulatory measures to redeploy paramedics to other paramedic services have not been taken.

What triggers deployment of the “Infection Control SWAT” teams to a Long-Term Care home?

Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) teams (SWATs) are being deployed to long-term care homes to assist in prevention and control of COVID-19 outbreaks, based on a risk assessment conducted by local health partners.

Are there any additional supports available to victims of domestic violence during the COVID-19 outbreak response measures?

The Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP+) administered by the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) provides short-term financial support towards essential expenses for victims, their immediate family members and witnesses in the immediate aftermath of a violent crime. This includes victims of domestic violence. In light of COVID-19, temporary enhancements have been made to the program increasing temporary accommodation and meal benefits.

Eligibility for the program must be assessed by the local VQRP + service provider. To find the service provider nearest to you please visit the online [Victim Services Directory](#) or call the toll-free multilingual Victim Support Line at 1-888-579-2888 or 416-314-2447 in the Greater Toronto Area.

Essential services and workers

Is Canada Post considered an essential service?

Yes. However, Canada Post may experience delays or post office closures due to circumstances beyond their control. If post offices must close, customers will be redirected to the next closest location. Customers should refer to Canada Post’s website for the latest updates: <https://www.canadapost.ca>

Is there any child care support for employees who are deemed to be essential?

Ontario has exempted certain child care centres from the order to close all licensed child care centres pursuant to the emergency declaration. This initiative is being done in partnership with service system managers and First Nations partners.

Some essential workers can send their children to these emergency child care centres while they are at work. Workers that are eligible to send children to emergency child care centres are outlined in [O. Reg. 78/20](#). A current list of Emergency child care centres can be found at the following link: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/child-care-health-care-and-frontline-staff#section-2>

Continuity of operations

How can a municipal council continue to support the public without holding public meetings?

Ontario passed the *Municipal Emergency Act, 2020* amending the *Municipal Act, 2001* and the *City of Toronto Act, 2006* to include provisions for electronic meetings. The text can be found at the following link: <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-42/session-1/bill-187>

Further questions should be directed to your local municipal services office. Contact details can be found at the following link: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-your-municipal-services-office>

Are there any resources available to help with municipal continuity of operations (COOP) planning?

Community Emergency Management Coordinators (CEMCs) have access to the CEMC handbook, which contains useful templates and checklists. The handbook can be found online at <https://emergencymanagementontario.ca/login.aspx>

A toolkit for continuity of decision making developed through the Ontario Critical Infrastructure Assurance Program is also available online at the above website.

Courts

If municipalities are responsible for maintaining Provincial Offences Act courts, where is the legislation/documentation that states this?

In Ontario, municipalities administer the courts in which *Provincial Offences Act* (POA) matters are heard. The Ministry of Attorney General entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with municipalities to administer POA matters. The transfer to 52 municipal partners started in 1999 and was completed in 2002.

Under section 2.1 of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, municipal emergency management programs:

2.1 (1) Every municipality shall develop and implement an emergency management program and the council of the municipality shall by by-law adopt the emergency management program. 2002, c. 14, s. 4.

Same

(2) The emergency management program shall consist of:

- (a) an emergency plan as required by section 3;
- (b) training programs and exercises for employees of the municipality and other persons with respect to the provision of necessary services and the procedures to be followed in emergency response and recovery activities;
- (c) public education on risks to public safety and on public preparedness for emergencies; and
- (d) any other element required by the standards for emergency management programs set under section 14. 2002, c. 14, s. 4.

What is the Continuity of Operations Plan responsibility for Provincial Offences Act Courts?

All *Provincial Offences Act* matters scheduled from Monday, March 16, 2020 through to and including Friday, May 29, 2020 will be adjourned and rescheduled to a later date.

<https://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/notice-to-public-regarding-provincial-offences-act-matters/>

Provincial assistance

How can a municipality request personal protective equipment supplies from the province?

Requests for PPE and masks may be sent to PEOC.Log.Chief@ontario.ca and PEOCDO01@ontario.ca.

At this time, the province is prioritizing PPE/mask supplies for the health sector only. The PEOC will continue to take requests for supplies from non-health sectors, but may not be able to respond to them until supplies become available.

What should our municipality do to ensure continuity of operations during a pandemic?

Municipalities should be prepared to enact their Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) in the event that time-critical services are affected by an outbreak.

For specific COOP planning questions, please contact the PEOC duty officer, and copy your Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management field officer. A COOP planning toolkit has been circulated.

*Direct Tel: 416-314-0472 or 1-866-314-0472

*Email: peocdo01@ontario.ca

Are there any resources such as templates or guidelines available for unincorporated communities?

There are resources that have been developed for municipalities that can be made available to unincorporated communities:

- Basic Emergency Management Training module on Emergency Response Plans, including examples
- Decision-making toolkit for municipalities

Note that these resources may include references to municipal requirements that may not be applicable to unincorporated communities.

If you would like a copy of these materials, please contact askOFMEM@ontario.ca or your local field officer.

An announcement was made stating 24,000 military personnel would be available to support COVID response. What are they able to do and how does a municipality request Department of National Defence (DND) assistance for COVID response?

The Minister of National Defence has pre-approved the employment of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) assistance in support of the Whole-of-Government response to COVID-19 to provide greater flexibility and quick response should CAF resources be deployed as a result of a Request For Federal Assistance (RFA) from a Province or Territory. However, the CAF is considered a “last resort” option and should not replace solid planning and asset sourcing by the municipality and Province. The CAF cannot provide capabilities or resources when there are viable commercial options unless the emergency prevents the Province from seeking alternate means in a timely manner. In addition, due to the strain that concurrent COVID and natural disaster responses may cause on CAF operations, the ability of the federal government to assist will need to be measured and strategic and ensure a sustainable approach over time. Therefore, municipalities should ensure that they have exhausted all other options before making a request for Provincial assistance. The Province will then determine if they have the capabilities to respond and will then determine if a RFA to the federal government needs to be actioned. Any questions regarding the use of provincial or federal assets or facilities should be directed to the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre Duty Officer.

*Direct Tel: 416-314-0472 or 1-866-314-0472

*Email: peocdo01@ontario.ca

Is there any plan in place to deliver food to people should the self-isolation protocols lead to a large number of people staying in their homes?

Food deliveries would be coordinated at the municipal level under municipal emergency response plans. Many municipalities have agreements in place with non-governmental organizations to assist them with this type of support. If a municipality is unable to arrange this, they should inform the province through the PEOC duty officer:

*Email: peocdo01@ontario.ca

What help can the province provide to support our response to COVID19?

Specific questions can be sent to the PEOC duty officer and copy your Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management field officers, who can help to find answers.

*Direct Tel: 416-314-0472 or 1-866-314-0472

*Email: peocdo01@ontario.ca

Who can be contacted about utilizing provincial/ federal facilities (e.g., Armouries)?

Municipalities should ensure that they have exhausted all other options before making a request to use a provincial or federal facility. Any questions regarding the use of provincial or federal facilities should be directed to the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre duty officer.

*Direct Tel: 416-314-0472 or 1-866-314-0472

*Email: peocdo01@ontario.ca

Will the Province compensate businesses for shutting down? How much?

Through the Province's economic and fiscal update on March 25, Ontario is making \$10 billion available to improve cash flows for people and businesses through tax and other deferrals over the coming months to provide relief during this challenging economic time.

Ontario is providing a five-month interest and penalty-free period for businesses to make payments for the majority of provincially administered taxes. Beginning April 1, 2020, the Province is providing flexibility to about 100,000 businesses in Ontario to help manage their cash flows during this challenging time. This will continue for a period of five months, up until August 31, 2020, and is expected to make available \$6 billion to improve the cash flows of Ontario businesses.

Working in conjunction with the government of Ontario, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) will allow employers to defer payments for a period of six months. This will provide employers with \$1.9 billion in financial relief.

The government is deferring the property tax payments municipalities make to school boards by 90 days, which will provide municipalities with the flexibility to provide over \$1.8 billion in property tax deferrals to residents and businesses.

The Province is also supporting employers through a proposed temporary increase to the Employer Health Tax exemption and a proposed new Regional Opportunities Investment Tax Credit.

Other

Are there job protections for employees who are in self-isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19?

The Ontario Legislature passed the *Employment Standards Amendment Act (Infectious Disease Emergencies)*, 2020 on March 19, 2020. This act provides job protections for employees unable to work due to COVID-19. For more details, refer to the following link: <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/employment-standards-amendment-act-infectious-disease-emergencies-2020.html>

In light of COVID-19, will you be reaching out to communities for the hosting of evacuees from Northern communities?

The Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC) is currently engaging in advanced planning for flooding and forest fires. As with emergencies in previous years, there may be a need to evacuate communities in order to protect lives. The PEOC is working with ministry partners to develop a plan to do this safely, with consideration for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Can you provide direction on Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) representation? With staff layoffs, organizations may lose key members of their committees but still meet the requirements for workforces over 20 or 50 staff. Can a safety representative be identified instead under these circumstances?

We understand that, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many workplaces have had to adjust workplace operations and practices, up to and including ceasing operations. The ministry expects that workplace parties will continue to comply with the requirements of *OHSA* and its regulations, including meeting the composition of a joint health and safety committee, and conducting committee meetings and inspections.

For questions related to joint health and safety committee certification training at this time, please email JHSC.InquiryLine@ontario.ca.

Information on the requirements for joint health and safety committees can be found on the [ministry's website](#).

Employers still have obligations to ensure the health and safety of workers who are teleworking. Employers should consult with their joint health and safety committees to help address the health and safety concerns of workers.

Where possible, workplaces may find it helpful to modify practices (for example: updating the terms of reference regarding meeting frequency for their joint health and safety committee) as long as the minimum requirements of the *OHSA* are met.

While a joint health and safety committee has a requirement to conduct monthly workplace inspections, it is recognized that some workplaces are temporarily closed or

workers are working from remote locations. During the current pandemic, joint health and safety committees may wish to consider video conferencing/teleconferencing and other methods of conducting remote meetings and providing health and safety support to the employer and other workers.

We appreciate the efforts being made by all workplace parties to keep Ontario workers safe at this time. For the most up to date information on how individuals can protect themselves and what to do if they suspect they may be at risk, please visit [Ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://ontario.ca/coronavirus). Employers and employees may wish to also visit Public Health Ontario's website at publichealthontario.ca for additional specific information.

Where can I access information on Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) providing emergency services?

The NGO Alliance has developed a handbook with information on major NGOs in Ontario with a role in emergency management. The handbook can be accessed at the following link: <https://oaem.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2018-NGO-Alliance-Handbook-VER-02-low-res-PDF-reducedfilesize.pdf>

If there is no language in a collective agreement that specifically speaks to emergencies, what authorities does the employer have to make changes on items that may be needed in a declared emergency, such as hours of work or redeployment, assuming they don't contravene law.

Ministries' are not in a position to provide legal advice to municipalities. Issues surrounding the employer's collective agreement should be referred to the employer's Human Resources, Labour Relations staff or the employers legal counsel.

How do I report a business or individual charging unfair prices or engaged in price gouging?

The Ontario government has issued an [emergency order](#) that retail businesses and individuals in Ontario cannot charge unfair prices for necessary goods. This includes new penalties for price gouging and holds offenders accountable for raising prices significantly on necessary goods. Consumers can report a business or individual who is price gouging by filing a complaint at 1-800-889-9768 between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, or by filing a report online at the following link: <https://www.ontario.ca/form/report-price-gouging-related-covid-19>

What expenses should be tracked as part of the COVID-19 response?

Questions regarding municipal funding should be directed to your local municipal services office. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-your-municipal-services-office>

Will the Ministry of Transportation recognize United States government waivers on expired commercial driver licences?

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) will acknowledge commercial drivers from the United States (US) with expired licences covered under the recent US Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) waiver in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, from March 20 to June 30, 2020.

Jurisdictions throughout North America have declared states of emergency due to COVID-19. MTO is supporting the trucking industry so that they can keep goods moving and continue to provide people with essential supplies.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, several regulations have been put in place by the ministry to extend the validity of a range of driver, vehicle and carrier products and services that expired on or after March 1, 2020 until further notice (e.g., driver's licences including commercial licences, vehicle validation stickers, cab card, special permits, Safety Standards Certificates, etc.).

On March 26, 2020, MTO received notice that, given the national emergency declared in the US due to COVID-19 and immediate need for transportation of essential supplies, equipment and persons, the FMCSA has granted a waiver for commercial vehicle drivers whose driver licences expire after March 20th through June 30th to ensure an adequate number of commercial vehicle drivers are available to deliver essential transportation services. The waiver also includes waiver of other requirements such as medical certification and skills testing.

What types of loads are exempted from reduced load period weight limits?

The reduced load period allows local road authorities to implement Section 122 of the [Highway Traffic Act, via local bylaws to protect pavement infrastructure during the spring thaw period.](#)

In response to the current COVID outbreak, the Ministry of Transportation has exempted the following commodities from reduced load period weight limits in defined areas within Southern Ontario:

- Medical supplies and equipment related to the testing, diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19.
- Supplies and equipment necessary for community safety, sanitation, and prevention of community transmission of COVID-19 such as masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, soap and disinfectants.
- Paper products and other groceries for emergency restocking of distribution centers or stores.
- Immediate precursor raw materials-such as paper, plastic or alcohol-that are required and to be used for the manufacture of items in categories (1), (2) or (3).
- Fuel.
- Equipment, supplies and persons necessary to establish and manage temporary housing, quarantine, and isolation facilities related to COVID-19.

Further, in order to assist farmers and agribusinesses, the Ministry of Transportation has also temporarily exempted the following commodities, in areas of Southern Ontario, from reduced load period weight limits:

- Food
- Farm products
- Products that support the production of farm products (e.g. seed, animal feed, fertilizer).

In what areas do the reduced load period weight limits apply?

The reduced load period weight limit exemptions apply to those portions of Southern Ontario that lie in regions south of the Ontario frost penetration depth of 1.6 m, running along a line extending from Penetanguishene, through Lake Simcoe to Cornwall. This includes the geographic areas of:

1. Brant, Bruce, Chatham-Kent, Dufferin, Durham, Elgin, Essex, Grey, Haldimand, Halton, Hamilton, Huron, Lambton, Middlesex, Niagara, Norfolk, Northumberland, Oxford, Peel, Perth, Peterborough, Prince Edward, Simcoe, Toronto, Waterloo, Wellington or York.
2. The part of each of the following geographic areas that is south of the King's Highway No. 7:
 - Frontenac
 - Hastings
 - Kawartha Lakes
 - Lennox and Addington.
3. The part of the geographic area of Leeds and Grenville that is within the City of Brockville or that is within one of the following townships:
 - Athens
 - Elizabethtown-Kitley
 - Front of Yonge
 - Leeds and the Thousand Islands.