
Ontario Government Expands List of Non-Essential Workplaces

By: Amanda Boyce

Premier Doug Ford [announced yesterday](#) that the government is updating its emergency order to expand the list of non-essential workplaces. All workplaces that are no longer on the newly pared down list of essential businesses must close their physical locations as of 11:59pm today, March 24, 2020. Those that can continue to operate remotely are still permitted and encouraged to do so.

The announcement was made in an effort to further reduce contact between people and stop the spread of COVID-19. The closures will continue for another 14 days and may be extended again as the situation evolves.

The initial list of essential workplaces announced on [March 23, 2020](#) attracted criticism from some, particularly questioning why various construction projects had been deemed essential. Many expressed confusion as to how workers on such sites could practice the physical distancing and other [health and safety practices](#) recommended by Ontario's Chief Prevention Officer.

Construction

With the expanded list, all non-essential construction projects must shut down. The only construction allowed to take place will be limited to:

- Construction projects and services associated with the healthcare sector, including new facilities, expansions, renovations and conversion of spaces that could be repurposed for health care space.
- Construction projects and services required to ensure safe and reliable operations of, or to provide new capacity in, critical provincial infrastructure, including transit, transportation, energy and justice sectors beyond the day-to-day maintenance.
- Critical industrial construction activities required for,
 - the maintenance and operations of petrochemical plants and refineries,
 - significant industrial petrochemical projects where preliminary work has already commenced,
 - industrial construction and modifications to existing industrial structures limited solely to work necessary for the production, maintenance, and/or enhancement of Personal Protective Equipment, medical devices (such as ventilators), and other identified products directly related to combatting the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Residential construction projects where,
 - a footing permit has been granted for single family, semi-detached and townhomes,
 - an above grade structural permit has been granted for condominiums, mixed use and other buildings, or
 - the project involves renovations to residential properties and construction work was started before April 4, 2020.

- Construction and maintenance activities necessary to temporarily close construction sites that have paused or are not active and to ensure ongoing public safety.

Alternative Methods of Sale

The expanded list also dictates that stores selling the following products may provide them to customers only through an alternative method of sale such as delivery or curbside pickup, except in exceptional circumstances:

- Hardware products
- Vehicle parts and supplies
- Pet and animal supplies
- Office supplies and computer products including computer repair
- Safety supplies

All cannabis store locations have also been ordered to close.

Businesses and Services Permitted to Continue Operating

Supermarkets and grocery stores, big box retailers selling groceries, convenience stores, pharmacies, gas stations, LCBO and Beer Store locations will remain open. Restaurants may continue to offer take-out, drive-through, and delivery. The government has also emphasized that all supply chains necessary for the production of food and healthcare supplies are being protected and remain intact.

Stringer LLP continues to monitor the situation closely and will provide updates on new developments as they occur.

For more information, **please contact:**

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