

NEWS Release

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OCC calls on provincial government to shut down construction

TORONTO – The Ontario Construction Consortium (OCC) is calling on the provincial government to suspend work on construction sites across Ontario for 14 days to protect the safety of workers and employers amid the COVID-19 crisis.

OCC Executive Director Phil Gillies reacted to Premier Doug Ford’s directive yesterday calling for non-essential business and services to shut down, saying the message to the construction industry was confusing and contradictory.

“It makes no sense that you can’t have your neighbour over for a cup of coffee yet construction sites are expected to continue operations and they can have hundreds of employees working in close proximity to each other,” said Gillies. “This is contrary to the best advice of public health officials to maintain social distancing.”

The provincial government yesterday ordered all non-essential businesses to close but published a list of 74 businesses deemed essential, including several construction-related business activities including:

26. 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;
27. Construction projects and services required to ensure safe and reliable operations of critical provincial infrastructure, including transit, transportation, energy and justice sectors beyond the day-to-day maintenance;

28. Construction and work services, including demolition services, in the industrial, commercial, institutional and residential sectors;

29. Construction work and services that supports health and safety environmental rehabilitation projects.

Gillies said the OCC supports positions taken by both the Carpenters' and Painters' unions in calling on the government to shut down construction temporarily.

"As Premier Ford announced [yesterday], the construction workers of this Province should not be expected to work on jobsites where the basic safety requirements for COVID-19 are not being met," said Tony Iannuzzi, the Executive Secretary Treasurer of the Carpenters' Union. "Those minimum standards simply do not exist on most of our jobsites."

Bruno Mandic, Business Manager and Secretary Treasurer of the Painters and Allied Trades District Council 46, echoed those sentiments, saying "it's impossible to do our jobs [and maintain social distancing]. If you're on the 20th or 50th floor of a building working, the only way to get there is by elevator and there's no social distancing."

He also cited unsanitary conditions on construction job sites including a lack of running water.

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For More Information

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