

## **Ontario's Response to COVID-19 - Tuesday, March 17, 2020**

This morning, Ontario Premier Doug Ford declared a state of emergency in the province through the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*.

The first order under the declaration is the prohibition of public events with 50 people or more until March 31. In addition, the following establishments are to be closed immediately:

- All recreation facilities
- Public libraries
- Private schools
- Licenced childcare centres
- All bars and restaurants, except those which can provide takeout or delivery
- All theatres and cinemas

Premier Ford stated that the Legislature will sit on Thursday in an effort to pass the emergency legislation.

### **What this Means**

Premier Ford emphasized that this is not a provincial shutdown and noted that the vast majority of businesses will not be negatively impacted by this order. Essential services will still be available to all residents, and grocery stores, convenience stores, pharmacies, public transit and important public services and workplaces - like office buildings and construction sites - will continue to remain open at this time.

Ford noted that this decision was not made lightly and was based on advice received from Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. David Williams.

As part of his remarks, Premier Ford also called on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to create a loan program for businesses and enhance employment insurance measures to protect employees.

### **First Stage of Ontario's COVID-19 Relief Plan**

As part of the Ontario government's COVID-19 relief plan, Premier Ford has committed up to \$304 million for immediate measures to stop the spread of COVID-19. This includes:

- Increasing capacity in hospitals to assist with the treatment of COVID-19 patients both in critical care and medicine beds
- Increasing testing and screening through public health, including funding to support costs incurred to monitor, detect and contain COVID-19
- Helping hospitals set up 25 more COVID-19 assessment centres
- Purchasing more protective equipment such as masks, gowns and ventilators

- Providing 24/7 support to long-term care homes to help protect care workers and seniors
- Funding for 1,000 additional nurses and personal support workers
- Funding for 50 staff to work at these COVID-19 assessments centres

This is the first stage of a larger relief package which will be announced over the coming days.

## **Travel**

In a news release last night, Dr. David Williams again asked Ontarians who have travelled and are not a healthcare or other essential service worker to self-isolate for 14 days following arrival back in Canada. If these workers are part of workplaces that are essential to daily living, he noted that they are able to return to work as long as they are asymptomatic.

Ontarians who have not travelled but who begin to feel unwell with COVID-19 symptoms, including fever, a cough or difficulty breathing, have been requested to self-isolate immediately and should seek clinical assessment over the phone, either by calling their primary care provider's office or through TeleHealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000).

## **Employers**

Ontario employers have also been asked to facilitate virtual work arrangements where possible to enable employees to work from home, enabling workers to limit their exposure to others, care for their children and self-isolate.

## **Available Healthcare Measures**

Those who are unwell and require a health assessment for COVID-19 have three options to available:

- A Self Assessment Tool available at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>
- Telehealth Ontario at: 1-866-797-0000 (24/7)
- Your primary care provider

## **Other Resources**

Premier Ford's declaration of a state of emergency to help contain the spread of COVID-19 can be accessed [here](#).

Further, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health's statement on enhanced measures to protect Ontarians from COVID-19 can be accessed [here](#).