

COVID-19 update as of Dec. 21

Ontario has announced a province-wide shutdown to stop the spread of COVID-19. The shutdown goes into effect at 12:01 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 26.

Construction remains unaffected and open throughout the lockdowns.

Please continue to refer to sector specific guidelines developed by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development in conjunction with the IHSA. For sector-specific guidelines, click [here](#) and [here](#).

The government, meanwhile, is providing grants of up to \$20,000 via the Ontario Small Business Support Grant to small businesses impacted by the new public health measures and is also providing \$12.5 million to implement a high priority communities strategy to contain the virus in high-risk communities.

The decision to shut down was made because COVID-19 cases continue to rise.

"The number of daily cases continue to rise putting our hospitals and long-term care homes at risk," Premier Doug Ford said in a statement. "We need to stop the spread of this deadly virus. That's why, on the advice of Dr. Williams and other health experts, we are taking the difficult but necessary decision to shutdown the province and ask people to stay home. Nothing is more important right now than the health and safety of all Ontarians."

All Ontarians are advised to stay home as much as possible with trips outside the home limited to necessities such as food, medication, medical appointments, or supporting vulnerable community members.

The shutdown:

- Restricts indoor organized public events and social gatherings, except with members of the same household (the people you live with). Individuals who live alone may consider having exclusive close contact with one other household.
- Prohibits in-person shopping in most retail settings. Curbside pickup and delivery can continue. Discount and big box retailers selling groceries will be limited to 25 per cent capacity for in-store shopping. Supermarkets, grocery stores and similar stores that primarily sell food, as well as pharmacies, will continue to operate at 50 per cent capacity for in-store shopping.
- Restricts indoor access to shopping malls - patrons may only go to a designated indoor pickup area (by appointment only), essential retail stores that are permitted to be open (e.g. pharmacy, grocery store), or, subject to physical distancing and face-covering requirements, to the food court for takeout purchases. Shopping malls may also establish outdoor designated pickup areas.
- Prohibits indoor and outdoor dining. Restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments will be permitted to operate by take out, drive-through, and delivery only.

The impacts of the measures will be evaluated throughout the 14 days in Northern Ontario and 28 days in Southern Ontario to determine if it is safe to lift any restrictions or if they need to be extended.

Ontario Small Business Support Grant

The grant will provide a minimum of \$10,000 and up to \$20,000 to eligible small business owners.

Small businesses required to close or restrict services under the province-wide shutdown will be able to apply for the one-time grant. Each small business will be able to use the support in whatever way makes the most sense for their individual business. For example, some businesses will need support paying employee wages or rent, while others will need support maintaining their inventory.

Eligible small businesses include those that:

- Are required to close or significantly restrict services subject to the province-wide shutdown effective 12:01 a.m. on Dec. 26, 2020;
- Have less than 100 employees at the enterprise level; and
- Have experienced a minimum of 20 per cent revenue decline in April 2020 compared to April 2019.

Starting at \$10,000 for all eligible businesses, the grant will provide businesses with dollar-for-dollar funding to a maximum of \$20,000 to help cover decreased revenue expected as a result of the shutdown.

The business must demonstrate they experienced a revenue decline of at least 20 per cent when comparing monthly revenue in April 2019 and April 2020.

More information about the grant is [available here](#). Further details, including how to apply, will be announced in January 2021. Business can apply for the rebates [here](#).

Schools

All publicly funded and private elementary and secondary schools will move to teacher-led remote learning when students return from the winter break on Jan. 4, 2021.

Schools located in the following regions can resume in-person instruction on Jan. 11, 2021 for both elementary and secondary students:

- The District of Algoma Health Unit
- North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit
- Northwestern Health Unit
- Porcupine Health Unit

- Sudbury and District Health Unit
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- Timiskaming Health Unit

For schools in all other regions, elementary school students are planned to be able to return to in-person learning on Jan. 11, 2021, and secondary school students will continue learning remotely until Jan. 25, 2021, at which point they may resume in-person learning.