

CONSTRUCTION

C A N A D A

Ontario closes all non-essential services, but not construction

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Ontario has deemed the following construction activities as essential, and can thus continue operations:

- construction projects and services associated with the health-care 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 critical provincial infrastructure, including transit, transportation, energy, and justice sectors beyond the day-to-day maintenance;
- construction work and services, including demolition services, in the industrial, commercial, institutional, and residential sectors; and
- construction work and services that support health and safety environmental rehabilitation projects.

In a statement released Tuesday, March 24, the Ontario Construction Consortium (OCC) urged 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,” reports [Global News](#).

“It makes no sense that you cannot 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 Phil Gillies, OCC’s executive director.

Meanwhile, the construction industry has come together to release a best practice guide and urges all employers to follow it during this time of uncertainty so that construction can continue to operate safely.

“Safety has and always will be the industry’s top priority,” says Richard Lyall, president of the [Residential Construction Council of Ontario](#) (RESCON). “Site safety is the builders’ responsibility and they must work with sub-trades employers to ensure all onsite workers and work sites are safe.”

The industry best practice guide includes seven safety recommendations developed by health and safety experts in Ontario’s construction industry and endorsed by labour and management representatives. They include onsite sanitation and physical distancing.

British Columbia

Recently, Dr. Bonnie Henry, the health officer of British Columbia, issued an order under the *Public Health Act* prohibiting the gathering of people in excess of 50 people at a place of which a person is the owner, occupier, or operator, or for which they are otherwise responsible.

While this order does not apply to construction sites as a whole, Henry is directing employers to take all necessary precautions to minimize the risks of COVID-19 transmission and illness to themselves and their employees. This includes:

- there should be no more than 50 people in the same space in any circumstances;
- where possible, employees should maintain a distance of 2 m (10 ft) apart from each other;
- post signage that limits the number of occupants in any elevator to four people at a time;
- reduce in-person meetings and other gatherings and hold site meetings in open spaces or outside;
- increase the number of handwashing stations and post signage identifying their location;
- maintain a list of employees that are currently working on sites and update the list daily;
- all common areas and surfaces should be cleaned at the end of each day; and
- anyone with COVID-19-like symptoms must self-isolate at home for 14 days.

Section 4.85 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation* does provide for a minimum standard around the provision of washrooms and hand washing facilities. Where plumbed facilities are impracticable, employers must provide access to portable washroom and hand-washing facilities. Those facilities must be maintained in good working order and must be provided with the supplies necessary for their use.

Employers should reassess their work environment every day and keep updated with the information posted on the province’s [website](#).

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, which is beginning to affect B.C. construction projects and employers across the province, the [B.C. Construction Association](#) (BCCA) is providing a ‘virtual hotline’ to gather the observations, questions, and requests for guidance from the construction sector, including trade and general contractors, project owners, tradespeople, manufacturers and suppliers, and other service providers.

The information shared will be considered by BCCA as it helps guide the industry response to COVID-19. To support any survey/hotline participant that requests assistance, BCCA has assembled a team of industry experts able to help address a range of issues in the areas of human resources, finance, project terms/contract terms, legal, health, safety, communications, supply chain, or government (regulation, policy, tax, program, legislation, etc.). BCCA's team of industry experts include B.C. Construction Safety Alliance, B.C. Ministry of Finance, BCCA Employee Benefit Trust, CBRE Ltd., Canadian Construction Association (CCA), Council of Construction Associations, Jenkins Marzban Logan LLP, Jouta Performance Group, Myers Norris Penny (MNP), Pace Group Communications, Partnerships BC, Wylie-Crump Ltd., and WorkSafeBC.

Association recommends the continuation of construction activities

At this time, the [Canadian Construction Association](#) (CCA) recommends that construction and related manufacturing activities remain operational.

CCA has sent out a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau urgently calling on the federal government for the following actions and information:

- specific details on how companies and individuals can access the financial relief announced by the government;
- consistent guidelines and best practices from public health authorities across the country to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all workers on construction sites and at manufacturing facilities;
- a clear statement, supported by a commitment to future legislation, which addresses how the government will treat delays, project disruptions, and other COVID-19 related costs under federal contracts, as well as federal leadership in active dialogue with provincial authorities on a consistent approach to these issues;
- prioritization of critical infrastructure and collaborative work with industry to prioritize allocation of essential resources, including manufacturing capacity to provide needed materials and equipment; and
- instructions to Export Development Canada (EDC) and Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) to urgently engage with industry and the financial services sector to deploy additional domestic credit to mitigate the short-term financial impact of COVID-19 related project delays and costs.