

# Provincial Emergency Operations Centre

## COVID-19 Response – Questions and Answers

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### What's new: 2020-03-24

#### **Essential services and workers**

**How do I know if a workplace is considered an essential service that can stay open under the emergency order?**

A list of essential services can be found online at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/list-essential-workplaces>. A toll-free number will be available shortly to answer enquires about specific workplaces. Please note that this order does not preclude the provision of work and services by entities not on this list either online, by telephone or by mail/delivery. Note that teleworking and online commerce are permitted at all times for all businesses.

**Is Canada Post considered an essential service?**

Yes. However, Canada Post may experience delays or post office closures due to circumstances beyond their control. If post offices must close, customers will be redirected to the next closest location. Customers should refer to Canada Post's website for the latest updates: <https://www.canadapost.ca>

### What's new: 2020-03-23

#### **Emergency declarations**

**Who is responsible for enforcing fines for a violation of an emergency order made under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*?**

Police are responsible for enforcing emergency orders under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*. Offences are described under s7.0.11 under the act, and set fines have been established by the Ontario Court of Justice:

<https://www.ontariocourts.ca/oci/how-do-i/set-fines/changes-to-the-consolidated-set-fine-schedules/schedule-4-0-1-2020-03-18/>

#### **Essential services and workers**

### **Is there any child care support for employees who are deemed to be essential?**

Ontario plans to exempt certain child care centres from the order to close all licensed child care centres pursuant to the state of emergency declared earlier this week. This initiative is being done in partnership with service system managers and First Nations partners. Once emergency child care centres open, a list of locations will be made available on [ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://ontario.ca/coronavirus). Further details can be found here:

<https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2020/03/province-takes-steps-to-ensure-frontline-staff-can-continue-to-work.html>

## **What's new: 2020-03-20**

### **Health and Public Health**

#### **Is there guidance for what staff should do if they have an individual be found to be positive for COVID-19 at a shelter, warming centre, or other similar municipal facility?**

The local public health unit should be consulted with for guidance on dealing with those who have tested positive for COVID-19 in municipal sheltering systems. Public health units are listed online here:

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>

### **Evacuation planning**

#### **In light of COVID-19, will you be reaching out to communities for the hosting of evacuees from Northern communities?**

The Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC) is currently engaging in advanced planning for flooding and forest fires. As with emergencies in previous years, there may be a need to evacuate communities in order to protect lives. The PEOC is working with ministry partners to develop a plan to do this safely, with consideration for the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Emergency declarations**

#### **Should college and university food halls / cafeterias stay open to serve students in residence?**

Cafeterias should provide food for takeout, rather than allow students to dine-in. Local public health authorities should be consulted for further advice. Public health units are listed online here:

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>

## **Labour**

### **For the purposes of WSIB coverage, does the provincial declaration of emergency allow volunteers to be considered workers?**

WSIB coverage of volunteers depends on the specific circumstances. Municipalities and other employers should consult with the WSIB or their professional advisors (e.g., legal counsel) to ensure they have proper coverage. <https://www.wsib.ca/en/contact-us>

## **Continuity of operations**

### **How can a municipal council continue to support the public without holding public meetings?**

Ontario passed the *Municipal Emergency Act, 2020* amending the *Municipal Act, 2001* and the *City of Toronto Act, 2006* to include provisions for electronic meetings. The text can be found here: <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-42/session-1/bill-187>

Further questions should be directed to your local municipal services office. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-your-municipal-services-office>

## **What's new: 2020-03-19**

### **Emergency declarations**

#### **Does the emergency order prohibiting public gatherings of more than 50 people apply to weddings and funerals?**

The emergency orders made under the provincial declaration of emergency do not apply to private events like weddings and funerals, but this does not make large gatherings advisable. Public health officials strongly discourage any large gatherings of people.

#### **Does the emergency order closing restaurants and other establishments impact municipal services like homeless serving shelters, soup kitchens or women's shelters?**

Local public health officials should be consulted on the operation of these types of services. The emergency orders made under the provincial declaration of emergency do not specifically prohibit the operation of municipal services like homeless serving shelters, soup kitchens or women's shelters, but local public health officials may have additional restrictions or guidance that should be followed.

## **Provincial assistance**

**Is there any plan in place to deliver food to people should the self-isolation protocols lead to a large number of people staying in their homes?**

Food deliveries would be coordinated at the municipal level under municipal emergency response plans. Many municipalities have agreements in place with non-governmental organizations to assist them with this type of support. If a municipality needs assistance with food deliveries or other emergency social services, they can reach out to the province for assistance through the PEOC duty officer:

\*Direct Tel: 416-314-0472 or 1-866-314-0472

\*Email: [peocdo01@ontario.ca](mailto:peocdo01@ontario.ca)

## **Other**

**Are there job protections for employees who are in self-isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19?**

The Ontario Legislature passed the *Employment Standards Amendment Act (Infectious Disease Emergencies)*, 2020 on March 19, 2020. This act provides job protections for employees unable to work due to COVID-19. For more details, see here:

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/employment-standards-amendment-act-infectious-disease-emergencies-2020.html>

## **What's new: 2020-03-18**

### **Emergency declarations**

**Now that the Premier has declared a provincial state of emergency, is it necessary or advisable for municipalities to also declare a state of emergency?**

The provincial declaration of an emergency is separate from a municipal declaration of emergency. The decision to declare a municipal emergency remains with the local council in each municipality.

**Are municipalities automatically considered to have declared an emergency, now that a provincial declaration of emergency has been made?**

No. The provincial declaration of an emergency is separate from a municipal declaration of emergency.

**Where can we find an official copy of the provincial emergency declaration and emergency orders?**

The Order in Council 518/2020 for the declaration of emergency can be found here:  
<https://www.ontario.ca/orders-in-council/oc-5182020>

There are two Orders in Council for the emergency orders that were made.

- For the closures of specific establishments, refer to Order in Council 519-2020:  
<https://www.ontario.ca/orders-in-council/oc-5192020>
- For the prohibition of public gatherings of more than 50 people, refer to Order in Council 520/2020:  
<https://www.ontario.ca/orders-in-council/oc-5202020>

## **Continuity of operations**

**Are there any resources available to help with municipal continuity of operations (COOP) planning?**

Community Emergency Management Coordinators (CEMCs) have access to the CEMC handbook, which contains useful templates and checklists. The handbook can be found online at <https://emergencymanagementontario.ca/login.aspx>

Attached to this distribution is a toolkit for Continuation of Operations Plan decision making developed through the Ontario Critical Infrastructure Assurance Program.

# All previous questions and answers

## Emergency declarations

### **Where can I find the details of the provincial emergency declaration?**

The details of the provincial emergency declaration can be found here:

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-enacts-declaration-of-emergency-to-protect-the-public.html>

### **Where is the emergency funding announced by the Premier being allocated?**

Ontario is investing \$304 million to enhance the province's response to COVID-19.

Further details can be found here:

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/03/ontario-enacts-declaration-of-emergency-to-protect-the-public.html>

### **When should a municipality declare an emergency?**

A municipal declaration of an emergency is at the discretion of the municipality's head of council. There are a few considerations that could inform the decision to declare:

#### Authority to Declare an Emergency

The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA) S. 4(1) states "*The head of council of a municipality may declare that an emergency exists in the municipality or in any part thereof and may take such action and make such orders as he or she considers necessary and are not contrary to law to implement the emergency plan of the municipality and to protect property and the health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the emergency area.*"

#### Reasons to Declare an Emergency

Some reasons that could be considered in the decision to declare an emergency or not are:

- A declaration of emergency provides a municipality's head of council the authority to take actions or make orders, which are not contrary to law, in order to protect the inhabitants in the area of the emergency;
- If volunteers are being employed by the municipality in support of the emergency, it can provide those volunteers with WSIB protection; or

- It can demonstrate to their residents that the municipality is taking the current situation seriously and is taking every step that they can to protect them from the threat.

### Authorities When an Emergency is Declared

The declaration of an emergency in a municipality provides the head of council the ability to take actions and make orders that they consider to be necessary to protect the property, health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the emergency area. These actions or orders cannot be contrary to law, which means that if the head of council doesn't have the authority to do something, or to order something otherwise, an emergency declaration will not provide them with this authority.

The EMCPA s.4(3) requires the head of council to ensure that the Solicitor General is notified forthwith of a declaration made under subsection (1) or (2). R.S.O. 1990, c. E.9, s. 4 (3). This is generally done through phone call and faxed form to the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre.

### What an Emergency Declaration Does Not Provide

An emergency declaration does not provide a head of council, nor anyone else in a municipality, with any extraordinary authorities that are not otherwise provided for in law. For example, a head of council will not have the authority to order a private business or service to cease operations or to close by virtue of having declared an emergency.

The declaration of an emergency also does not provide access to any funding programs to assist with the extraordinary costs of an emergency. Questions regarding municipal funding should be directed to your local municipal services office.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-your-municipal-services-office>

If you have any further questions about the potential to declare an emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, please send an email to the PEOC duty officer at [peocdo01@ontario.ca](mailto:peocdo01@ontario.ca).

## Health and public health

**Where is the best location for local municipalities to receive the most up to date and accurate information? Some report that their local public health units are not communicating effectively.**

The Ministry of Health provides daily updates at 10:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. here:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>

### **Where can I find disinfecting guidelines to mitigate the spread of COVID-19?**

Public Health Ontario has prepared a series of fact sheets, including “Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings”. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/public-resources>

### **Are there any guidelines around event planning?**

All organized public events of over fifty people are prohibited, including parades and events and communal services within places of worship.

### **What should the messaging be for people who have travelled recently?**

Refer to the Ministry of Health’s website for the most up-to-date guidance, under the heading “Travellers returning from affected areas”. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>

### **Can we differentiate quarantine vs self isolation?**

Quarantine is an order for a person to remain isolated to prevent the spread of a communicable disease under the federal *Quarantine Act* or by a local medical officer of health or the chief medical officer of health under Ontario’s *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. Self-isolation is when a person is recommended to isolate themselves to prevent the spread of a communicable disease.

### **Is there any guidance on when a building should be closed as a result of the COVID-19?**

Local public health units should be consulted regarding building closures (and other public health threats) as local medical officers of health can order a building closed under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* for a threat to public health.

## **Supplies for the health sector**

### **Who is currently coordinating the provision of personal protective equipment and other supplies for the health sector?**

The Ministry of Health is working to ensure providers have supplies at the right time and in the right place, based on evidence, to deal with increased demand. The ministry’s goal is to steward supply inventories to make appropriate use of existing supplies and maintain the valuable use of them when it is most necessary (e.g. during an active outbreak).

The ministry is working with health sector partners to understand supply inventories across the health system and is collecting information from public health units, hospitals, emergency services, long-term care, home and community care and interprofessional primary care teams.

We are also working with manufacturers and supply chain organizations to understand their approach and available inventories and are in touch almost daily.

### **What is the current global status supply availability?**

Due to the increased demand for supplies globally, manufacturers are prioritizing regions experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19 and, therefore, those areas most in need of supplies. Manufacturers are reviewing personal protective equipment (PPE) and supply orders on a case-by-case basis and are not filling orders automatically. That means that if health care organizations are putting in new, rush orders that are for items not routinely ordered or larger than usually submitted, they are being told that those orders are not being processed. The ministry has been assured that manufacturers are prioritizing PPE orders where there are active cases or where there is critically short supply.

It is important that health care organizations steward their supply inventory to make appropriate use of existing supplies and maintain the valuable use of them when it is most necessary.

The hierarchy of controls includes those directed at the source (engineering controls), along the path (administrative controls) and, finally, at the worker (PPE).

- Health care organizations should minimize the number of workers who need to use PPE through the preferential use of engineering and administrative controls.
- Prompt screening is one of the administrative controls that matters most in ensuring possible patients are quickly identified and moved to an isolated area and, in some settings, re-directed as appropriate. This will reduce the risk to other staff and patients.

Health care organizations have reported issues of disappearing supplies (specifically surgical/procedure masks and N95 respirators). Health care organizations should consider ways in which to secure their supplies while still ensuring staff can readily access PPE.

## **Courts**

### **What is the Continuity of Operations Plan responsibility for Provincial Offences Act Courts?**

All *Provincial Offences Act* matters scheduled from Monday, March 16, 2020 through to and including Friday, April 3, 2020 will be adjourned and rescheduled to a later date.

<https://www.ontariocourts.ca/oci/notice-to-public-regarding-provincial-offences-act-matters/>

**If municipalities are responsible for maintaining Provincial Offences Act courts, where is the legislation/ documentation that states this?**

In Ontario, municipalities administer the courts in which Provincial Offences Act (POA) matters are heard. The Ministry of Attorney General entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with municipalities to administer POA matters. The transfer to 52 municipal partners started in 1999 and was completed in 2002.

Under section 2.1 of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, municipal emergency management programs:

2.1 (1) Every municipality shall develop and implement an emergency management program and the council of the municipality shall by by-law adopt the emergency management program. 2002, c. 14, s. 4.

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(2) The emergency management program shall consist of:

- (a) an emergency plan as required by section 3;
- (b) training programs and exercises for employees of the municipality and other persons with respect to the provision of necessary services and the procedures to be followed in emergency response and recovery activities;
- (c) public education on risks to public safety and on public preparedness for emergencies; and
- (d) any other element required by the standards for emergency management programs set under section 14. 2002, c. 14, s. 4.

## **Provincial assistance**

**What should our municipality do to ensure continuity of operations during a pandemic?**

Municipalities should be prepared to enact their Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plans in the event that time-critical services are affected by an outbreak.

For specific COOP planning questions, please contact the PEOC duty officer, and copy your Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management field officer. A COOP planning toolkit has been circulated.

\*Direct Tel: 416-314-0472 or 1-866-314-0472

\*Email: [peocdo01@ontario.ca](mailto:peocdo01@ontario.ca)

**What help can the province provide to support our response to COVID19?**

Specific questions can be sent to the PEOC duty officer, and copy your Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management field officers, who can help to find answers.

\*Direct Tel: 416-314-0472 or 1-866-314-0472

\*Email: [peocdo01@ontario.ca](mailto:peocdo01@ontario.ca)

**Who can be contacted about utilizing provincial/ federal facilities (i.e. Armouries)?**

Any questions regarding the use of provincial or federal facilities should be directed to the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre duty officer.

\*Direct Tel: 416-314-0472 or 1-866-314-0472

\*Email: [peocdo01@ontario.ca](mailto:peocdo01@ontario.ca)