

News Release

Ontario Supporting Workers, Municipalities and Retailers in Response to COVID-19

Emergency Sitting Sees Two Critical Pieces of Legislation Receive Unanimous Consent

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TORONTO — Today, the Ontario government took unprecedented action to respond to COVID-19 by convening an emergency sitting of the legislature and passing two pieces of legislation which will protect the jobs of employees who self-isolate or quarantine, help keep store shelves stocked and give municipal councils the flexibility to continue operations while maintaining social distance.

The legislation passed with unanimous consent by only 26 MPPs. The number of members participating in this extraordinary session was intentionally kept small in order to practice social distancing and help prevent the spread of COVID-19. A first in Ontario history.

"I want to thank all parties for coming together to pass this important legislation so we can deliver immediate relief to Ontario workers and families," said Premier Doug Ford. "The health and safety of the people of Ontario is our number one priority and that's why we are protecting the jobs of workers and making sure that essentials like groceries, household basics, and medicine can arrive on store shelves. We must work together as Team Ontario to slow the spread of COVID-19 and flatten the curve."

The *Employment Standards Amendment Act (Infectious Disease Emergencies), 2020* provides job-protected leave for employees who are in isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19, or those who need to be away from work to care for children because of school or day care closures or to care for other relatives. These measures are retroactive to January 25, 2020, the date the first presumptive COVID-19 case was confirmed in Ontario. The legislation will also make it clear employees cannot be required to show sick notes.

"During this time of great uncertainty, the last thing employees should have to worry about is job security," said Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. "People can't be punished for following the advice of our leading medical health professionals."

The *Municipal Emergency Act, 2020* will ensure that for the near future, the delivery of goods to Ontario's businesses and consumers isn't impacted by municipal noise by-laws that may unintentionally be impeding such deliveries when they are most urgently needed. The legislation also gives municipalities the ability to fully conduct Council, local board and committee meetings electronically when faced with local and province-wide emergencies, empowering the government's municipal partners to respond quickly when in-person meetings cannot be held.

"These changes will assist in getting goods to market in a more expeditious manner. Our government wants to do everything we can to help connect distribution centres with grocery stores and pharmacies to replenish empty shelves more quickly," said Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. "As well, we are helping communities respond to this crisis by allowing councils to conduct meetings remotely. These changes empower municipalities to respond quickly and continue to function when in-person meetings cannot be held, and council decisions need to be made."

Background Information

- [Employment Standards Amendment Act \(Infectious Disease Emergencies\), 2020](#)
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