

NEWS Release

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OCC renews call for construction shut down

TORONTO – The Ontario Construction Consortium (OCC) is renewing its call for 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.

OCC Executive Director Phil Gillies reacted to Labour Minister Monte McNaughton’s statement *Ontario Stepping Up Measures to Limit the Spread of COVID-19 on Construction Sites*.

“The Minister calls for better on-site sanitation, better communications on health and safety policies, enabling greater distances on jobsites and better tracking and monitoring of workers – all of which would be positive practices. But they are not always happening on the sites and are often impossible to monitor or enforce”.

Gillies went on: “It makes no sense to ban gatherings of 5 or more people in most circumstances, but still have hundreds of workers reporting to construction jobsites”.

OCC maintains that it’s impossible to maintain proper social distancing on sites. Many job responsibilities such as moving

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equipment, lifting heavy beams or sheets of drywall require workers to be in close proximity to one another.

The Ministry of Labour does not have the resources to police the thousands of sites across the province.

There is no protection for subcontractors to refuse work when they are contractually bound to general contractors – who are often pressuring their suppliers to keep working.

Proper sanitation and safety measures are often impossible to maintain onsite. The only source of fresh water may be on the ground floor, with workers operating 40 storeys up. Workers have to share elevators and stairwells to get to their jobs.

OCC is hearing many jobsites do not have hand sanitizer – or if bottles are there at 7 am, they're gone by 11.

“We are hearing from workers and their family members from throughout Ontario who are afraid to go to work, but also afraid not to report for fear of losing their jobs”, said Gillies.

The Province should shut down truly non-essential sites for two weeks until the situation can be improved for the health and safety of construction workers.



For more information contact

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PLEASE NOTE: For safety reasons, OCC will not be available
for in-person interviews. Phone comments only.