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Subject: Ontario Accelerates Essential Construction Projects During COVID-19

## Ontario Accelerates Essential Construction Projects During COVID-19

### Extending Construction Hours Will Help Keep Ontario Workers Safe

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TORONTO — In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, Ontario is extending construction hours for essential construction projects, like critical projects in the health care sector, to 24 hours a day. Work on new hospital builds, expansions, and COVID-19 assessment centres will be able to continue any time of the night or day in order to help accelerate the construction of these important projects and enable employers to take additional steps to protect the health and safety of workers on these job sites.

Premier Doug Ford, Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, and Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, today announced extended construction hours and other measures to keep Ontario workplaces safe.

"During this escalating crisis, we are taking immediate steps to ensure the necessary infrastructure is in place, particularly to properly care for those with severe COVID-19 symptoms and other patients who require critical care," said Premier Doug Ford. "That's why we're extending construction hours to allow us to build essential infrastructure faster, while ensuring construction workers can practice physical distancing on work sites to stay safe and healthy."

Ontario will temporarily limit local noise bylaws from applying to these types of essential construction activities beginning April 7, 2020. This will allow for expedited construction on key facilities, such as new hospital builds, expansions, temporary COVID-19 response units or structures, and COVID-19 assessment centres. Extending hours for essential construction will also give worksite managers more flexibility to stagger shifts, limit the number of people in one place, and take reasonable precautions to keep workers safe and healthy under the recent guidelines issued by Ontario's Chief Prevention Officer for construction sites.

Ontario is also making essential workplaces across the province safer during the COVID-19 pandemic by:

- \* Redeploying more than 30 employment standards officers to help businesses understand and comply with health and safety requirements;
- \* Working with health and safety associations to deploy up to 30 specialists to support employers and workers in the field;
- \* Issuing health and safety guidance notes to support specific sectors;
- \* Doubling the capacity of Ontario's Health and Safety Call Centre from 25 to 50 phone lines;
- \* Providing job-protected leave under the Employment Standards Act for workers who need to self-isolate or care for a loved one because of COVID-19;

- \* Issuing a call to recently-retired inspectors who may be able and willing to return to their positions;
- \* Providing compliance assistance and enforcing the emergency orders issued under the Emergency Measures and Civil Protection Act.

"Our government is doing everything in its power to make sure workers on the job are safe during this pandemic," said Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. "That means more inspections, more inspectors, more phone lines, and more people to take your calls. We have conducted thousands of inspections and investigations across the province in March and we will continue to conduct more this month. We will do everything in our power to keep the essential workers of our province safe."

"We're helping to protect the health and safety of construction workers and ensure that critical healthcare-related construction projects continue during this outbreak," said Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. "Temporarily limiting noise bylaws to extend the hours for construction work will help make it possible to stagger shifts and have fewer workers on-site at any given time so they can practice physical distancing."

"As part of our plan to stop the spread of COVID-19, we are continuing to expand health care capacity in communities across the province," said Minister Elliott. "That includes building new assessment centres and field hospitals, both of which are critical to ensuring we are able to care for Ontarians as we contain this new virus. Extended hours will ensure that work on these facilities continues safely to the benefit of all Ontarians."

#### QUICK FACTS

- \* All Ontarians should stay home unless absolutely necessary for essential reasons, such as accessing health care services, shopping for groceries, picking up medication, walking pets when required, or supporting vulnerable community members with meeting essential needs. If you must leave your home, stay at least two (2) meters apart from others.
- \* If you think you may have COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has it, first self-isolate and then use Ontario's Self-Assessment Tool to see if you need to seek further care.
- \* Take these everyday steps to reduce exposure to the virus and protect your health: wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer; sneeze and cough into your sleeve; avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth; avoid contact with people who are sick; and stay home if you are sick.

#### LEARN MORE

- \* See a list of essential services in Ontario.
- \* See how your organization can help fight COVID-19.
- \* Learn more about Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19.
- \* Visit Ontario's website to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.

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