

April 22, 2020

Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

RE: The need for industry consultation and a central body with decision-making authority for construction projects in Ontario

Dear Premier Ford,

Thank you for your continued leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the situation evolves, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) is receiving concerns from the business community and communicating them to all levels of government.

As the pandemic eventually subsides, and in light of a possible second and even third wave, we anticipate that the list of workplaces included in the province's list of essential workplaces will expand. This is an issue of importance to the construction industry and those businesses associated with that industry, as they are critical to the economic growth of this province. However, without comprehensive analysis of how the list should expand and an effective process in place for businesses to inquire about their specific construction projects, there is a risk that confusion will continue to abound, and critical projects will stall.

The analytical framework used by the province to determine which types of businesses are added to the list of essential workplaces should be developed in consultation with industry. Moreover, the framework should take into consideration factors, such as: the health and safety of workers and the public; whether a project is critical at this point in time; and/or projects that can be completed with a minimum risk to workers and the public.

Unfortunately, the 1-888 number put in place by the Province to provide clarity on the essential businesses list has instead provided, at times, inconsistent and conflicting advice – resulting in confusion, frustration, and even fines for our members.

As the province moves towards recovery, we urge the Government of Ontario to:

- Work with the construction industry to develop a framework to determine the projects, sectors, and types of work that are added to the list of essential workplaces; and
- Designate knowledgeable staff within a particular ministry/department to act as a central point of contact, with decision-making authority.

Public health and safety are priorities for all Ontario businesses. We will continue to monitor and assess new developments pertaining to COVID-19 closely and work with our members, partners, and all levels of government to provide support to Ontario business.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce

CC: The Honourable Laurie Scott, Minister of Infrastructure
The Honourable Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills
Development
The Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
David Corbett, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
Patrick Sackville, Director of Policy, Major Projects and Partnerships, Premier's Office