

NEWS RELEASE

Ontario Expands Workplace Enforcement Campaigns

Provincewide inspection blitzes will ensure essential businesses are operating safely

January 20, 2021

[Labour, Training and Skills Development](#)

TORONTO — The Ontario government is expanding the current workplace inspection campaign to further protect workers and customers at essential businesses. Following last week's [big-box store blitz](#), provincial offences officers will now be visiting an expanded range of workplaces across Ontario to educate and ticket businesses that are not complying with COVID-19 health and safety requirements.

Starting today, more than 300 officers will be supporting these blitzes, and will be visiting a variety of workplaces that are allowed to be open during the provincial shutdown such as:

- Retail establishments, including big-box stores
- Restaurants providing take-out meals
- Essential service-sector establishments (such as gas stations); and
- Farming operations

Over this past weekend a team of approximately 50 ministry inspectors, as well as local bylaw and police officers, visited 240 big-box stores across the GTHA. Enforcement officials found 76 contraventions, and that 69 per cent of these businesses were in compliance with public health requirements.

These efforts also build on the province's recently announced "Stay Safe All Day" campaign, which focuses workplace inspections in areas of high transmission such as break rooms. The campaign provides resource materials to employers and workers to promote safe behaviour before, during and after work.

"We know, from inspecting over 23,000 workplaces during 34,000 field visits, that the vast majority of Ontario businesses are following COVID-19 requirements to protect the health and safety of their workers," said Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. "However, if we find any employers are putting the safety of workers and customers at risk, we will not hesitate to take immediate action."

The campaigns were developed in consultation with local health units and support Ontario's COVID-19 provincewide shutdown. The length of the safety campaigns can range from a few days to several weeks, depending on local circumstances.

Inspectors are also visiting farming operations across the province, focusing on locations that employ temporary foreign workers to ensure that health and safety laws are followed and that measures are in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Ontario is expected to welcome thousands of foreign agricultural workers, mostly from Mexico and the Caribbean, under the federally administered [Temporary Foreign Worker Programs](#) this growing season.

"Our farmers, agri-food workers, greenhouse operators and food processors are working hard to protect the health and safety of our agri-food workers while continuing to provide us with a steady and reliable food supply," said Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. "Since last spring, we have taken several measures to support them, including reinforcing public health protocols, making investments to increase operational capacity and helping to address labour challenges. Agri-food workplace inspections are part of our continued efforts to raise awareness, prevent and control COVID-19 outbreaks to protect workers' health and safety and maintain our strong food supply."

Corporations can now be fined \$1,000 for failing to comply with the orders under the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act* and the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*. All individuals, including employees and patrons, can also be fined \$750 for failing to comply with orders under the acts.

If a violation is more serious, a person can be charged with failing to comply with an order under the acts. If convicted, the court can impose fines as high as \$100,000 for individuals, and directors and officers of a corporation can be fined up to \$500,000. Both could also receive terms of imprisonment of up to one year. The maximum fine for a corporation on conviction of an offence is up to \$10,000,000.

Quick Facts

- The first campaign of 2021 will be held in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties. Additional campaigns are being planned for 10 other communities including Durham, Niagara, Halton, Huron Perth, Peterborough, Toronto and Leeds Grenville Lanark.
 - Results from COVID-19 workplace safety campaigns held in December in seven communities across the province showed that approximately 67 per cent of workplaces were in compliance with the requirements. The most common issues were not wearing masks, not having a safety plan and not screening people in the workplace.
 - In collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, the Ministry of the Solicitor General is continuing to encourage local police services and municipal bylaw enforcement officers to focus on COVID-19-related enforcement.
 - The inspection campaign builds on Ontario's efforts to protect workers and customers at essential businesses. Last year, 13 education and enforcement campaigns were carried out, with almost 4,000 workplace visits.
 - To help businesses comply with the public health measures, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development has developed more than 200 business guideline documents.
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Additional Resources

- [Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace](#)
 - [Guidance for employers during breaks](#)
 - [Break poster](#)
 - [Lunch poster](#)
 - [Keep it to yourself poster](#)
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