



The Honourable Doug Ford  
Office of the Premier  
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Dear Premier Ford,

For more than a year, Ontarians and their government at Queen's Park have been doing their part in a global war against the novel coronavirus. Under the leadership of your government, we have fought off two significant waves of infections with strategic and targeted emergency orders and public health measures.

Today we are battling the third wave, which is being driven by a far more infectious mutation of the original virus. I'm writing on behalf of Ontario's industrial, commercial and institutional construction industry to urge your government to continue taking a strategic and targeted approach in fighting this vicious adversary.

Specifically, we ask that you reconsider your recent emergency order which shut down much of the commercial component of the construction industry. To win against this virus, our province needs to take action where it will have the greatest impact, and not shutter part of an industry that produces an infinitesimal percentage of transmissions. We urge you in the strongest way possible to reconsider your decision and allow the construction activities that were prohibited by your recent order to safely re-open.

Throughout the pandemic, the construction industry has truly stepped up and outperformed to combat the spread of the virus on worksites. This comes as no surprise in an industry where health and safety is always a top priority. Here are some of the extraordinary and leading steps taken by the construction industry:

- At the outset of the pandemic, construction industry leaders immediately set to work alongside the Chief Prevention Officer in the Ministry of Labour Training and Skills Development and his staff. Together, we quickly developed the first industry-specific COVID-19 health and safety guidance to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus on construction



worksites. Those guidance materials were used as the template for the subsequent development of anti-COVID guidance for about 200 other industries.

- The collaboration between our industry leaders and the Prevention Office has continued and construction guidance information has been updated regularly and as recently as last week. We cannot say enough about the support employers have received from the MLTSD's Prevention Office.
- Because health and safety is Job #1 in the construction industry, construction employers, supervisors, workers and suppliers have embraced these new health and safety protocols enthusiastically.
- While there have been a number of outbreaks on construction worksites, they have been very minor in comparison with outbreaks in other workplace settings and usually involve less than a handful of workers who isolate and whose contacts are easily traced to contain the spread.

This hard work and determination has delivered impressive results. With more than half a million people working today in the construction industry, the incidence of workplace transmissions on construction sites has been extremely low. Here is what the data shows:

- As of April 16, 2021 the WSIB reports 21,133 approved claims relating to workplace transmissions of COVID-19, of which 289 or 1.37% are from the construction industry
- The total number of cases reported in Ontario on the Government of Ontario's website as of 10:29 am, April 24, 2021 is 441,404
- Workplace transmissions from construction sites account for just 0.065% of those cases

It is important to note that stepping up to combat the virus has come with significant unforeseen costs. This is an industry that is highly competitive. Projects are won to a significant degree on low bid and profit margins are paper thin. Over the past year, contractors have embraced the ever-more-stringent but necessary health and safety protocols, absorbed the increased costs of PPE and worksite sanitization, and accepted reduced worker productivity caused by the necessary health and safety measures. Going forward, contractors face the prospect of significant delay claims for not meeting their contract schedules, along with enormous increases in the prices of building materials including steel, lumber and petroleum products. None of this could have been anticipated



when contractors entered into their contracts. As a consequence of all these factors, many construction enterprises are on the brink of financial ruin.

Ontario will need a healthy and robust construction industry to help rebuild the economy once the virus has been defeated. The construction industry will be called upon to build our new transportation and social infrastructure, new and expanded manufacturing facilities and new homes, and to adapt office workplaces to the post-pandemic way of working. A construction industry littered with bankruptcies and reduced capacity will not be able to meet the call. Ontario's recovery will be delayed or stunted.

The construction industry has demonstrated that it is willing to make the required adaptations and investments to combat the novel coronavirus. With just 0.065% of workplace transmission attributed to construction sites, these strategies are working. We commit to continuing our leading efforts, and we ask for your government's support in allowing our industry to safely and responsibly operate.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ian Cunningham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ian Cunningham  
President

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