

April 3, 2020

Ontario Building Trades Support Government Decision to Keep Industry Partially Open

(Toronto, ON) “Today’s decision by the government of Ontario to largely shut down private sector Industrial and Commercial construction in the province is a difficult but necessary one, given the growing threat of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Patrick Dillon, Business Manager of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario. Public sector infrastructure projects, together with the residential sector will largely remain open.

“In addition to construction workers having been declared ‘essential’ themselves, in continuing to build the infrastructure we rely on, Building Trades workers recognize and salute the contributions made by Ontario’s frontline workers. These are extraordinary times, and we all need to adapt responsibly,” he said, adding that “most importantly, we need to pull together as Ontarians, to get through this crisis. Our hearts go out to all Ontarians who have lost loved ones to COVID-19,” said Dillon.

“Based on Building Trades surveys, to-date, there have been no confirmed reports of construction workers being infected with COVID-19 in the workplace, which speaks to a pretty responsible contractor base, a diligent workforce, and added enforcement” explained Dillon. “There have been some improvements to workplace hygiene and sanitary conditions, but a lot more work needs to be done, to bring existing jobsites to a standard that would be acceptable. Stronger enforcement is key in that regard, and we welcome the recent increased enforcement measures by the Ministry of Labour including the 60 added safety inspectors, as announced by Premier Ford today,” he said.

Since the Premier declared a state of emergency for Ontario, the construction industry has largely remained open, with the exception of individual contractors choosing to shut down operations, and individual workers choosing to self-isolate and be with their families, which is totally understandable.

“Prevention lies at the heart of today’s decision. We recognize that the partial shut-down was made in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, driven by the number of potential infections and deaths that this province could face by April 30, if no immediate action is taken,” noted Dillon. “We therefore reiterate our Council’s support for the government’s decision to reduce construction activities, and we call on continued enforcement and sanitary improvements to construction jobsites that will remain open, moving forward,” he concluded.

-30-

The Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario represents 150,000 trades workers throughout the province. For more information, please contact Patrick Dillon:

Cell: (416) 347-8245

E-mail: patrick@ontariobuildingtrades.com