

May 19, 2020

AMO COVID-19 Update – Municipal Fiscal Request, Emergency Orders, Pandemic Pay, LTC Homes Commission, Extended School and Child Care Closures, and Summer Camps

Municipal Fiscal Request

AMO today signed a [joint letter](#) with CUPE Ontario calling on the Province and the federal government to work together to provide much needed financial assistance to Ontario municipalities to assist with the COVID-19 emergency and recovery. The letter echoes AMO's [May 14th letter](#) to Premier Ford and Prime Minister Trudeau.

Extension of Emergency Orders

Today the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, has [extended](#) all emergency orders currently in force until May 29, 2020. This includes the closure of bars and restaurants except for takeout and delivery only, restrictions on social gatherings of more than five people, and staff redeployment rules for long-term care homes and congregate settings like retirement homes and women's shelters.

The Province has officially entered the first stage of its [Framework for Reopening the Province](#). Effective today, the government is permitting the reopening of some [outdoor recreational amenities](#), including outdoor sports facilities and multi-use fields, off-leash dog areas, and outdoor picnic sites, benches and shelters in park and recreational areas. The government is also allowing drive-in [religious gatherings](#), and [public libraries](#) to provide curbside pickup.

Note that outdoor playgrounds, play structures and equipment, fitness equipment, public swimming pools, splash pads and similar outdoor water facilities will remain closed until later stages of the Province's reopening plan. The full list of businesses that can open is listed [here](#). Further details will be shared as they become available.

Pandemic Pay Update

Late on Friday, May 15th, the Province updated its [Pandemic Pay website](#) to say that “As of May 15, ministries have contacted all eligible employers, service delivery partners or employer associations”.

This raised confusion with many of our members as they, as municipal employers of public health, paramedic services and housing/shelter staff, had not yet been contacted by the Province on this program. We believe that the Province may have been referencing some very initial discussions on the pandemic pay program they have had with AMO staff, the Ontario Municipal Human Resources Association, and the City of Toronto as the above-mentioned contact with municipal employers.

We are awaiting further information on the program design and the eligibility criteria – which, of course, will form the crux of the program. At this point, the AMO update of May 7th is still our best understanding of the program, “Under this temporary program, municipal governments have eligible full and part-time front-line staff who work in the following program areas: public health, paramedic services, long-term care homes, and housing and shelters. This will involve three ministries and four program areas”.

That said, we are aware of a [May 15th letter](#) from the Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care, Richard Steele, to Long-Term Care Home Licensees regarding their temporary pandemic pay programs. This letter indicates that the Ministry’s funding will be through the Licensees’ Direct Funding Agreements. Further program policy will outline the specific funding program requirements, and the funding will be subject to accountability and reporting requirements. Deputy Minister Steele noted that additional details regarding direct funding allocations and the detailed program policy will be communicated at the beginning of June and that it anticipated that the money would begin flowing as soon as possible.

As noted, we are not aware of any similar program details available yet for public health, paramedic services, long-term care homes, and housing and shelters employers. As this information becomes available, either by program area, ministry, or in an integrated municipal approach, we will update members immediately.

Independent Commission into Long-Term Care

Today the Minister of Long-Term Care, Dr. Fullerton, announced that the Province will be launching an independent non-partisan commission into Ontario’s long-term care system to begin in September. Over the next few months, the government will be finalizing details of the commission including terms of reference, membership, leadership of the commission, and reporting timelines.

The Commission is expected to examine the impact of and the response to COVID-19 in long-term care. Specifically, the government has asked for guidance on how to

improve the long-term care system and better protect residents and staff from any future outbreaks. We will provide more information as it becomes available.

Updates on Schools, Child Care, and Summer Camps

The Province announced that [publicly funded schools](#) are closed for the rest of this 2019/20 school year. The government stated that it is planning for the reopening of public schools for the 2020-21 school year, the gradual reopening of child care when the Province is ready to move to Stage 2 of the *Framework for Reopening the Province*, and the opening of summer day camps subject to the continuing progress of key public health indicators. Overnight camps will not be permitted to operate in the summer of 2020.

AMO's [COVID-19 Resources](#) page is being updated continually so you can find critical information in one place. Please send any of your municipally related pandemic questions to covid19@amo.on.ca.