



FRONTLINE

We are pleased to present this issue of **FRONTLINE**, the Ontario Construction Consortium Newsletter – for March-April 2020.

This newsletter will be published every two months – to update you on OCC initiatives and events. We hope you find it informative.

Visit our website <https://www.ontarioconstructionconsortium.org/> - it showcases our publications and activities and is regularly updated.

Please contact Executive Director Phil Gillies should you have any questions about OCC. Email – phil@ontarioconstructionconsortium.org Phone - 416-479-1646



WORKING FOR A STRONGER ONTARIO

For the betterment of the construction industry and communities across the province.

In the construction industry, we can't afford to let the quality of work, professionalism and knowledge become lax. OCC will be diligent in supporting a workforce that sets the standard across Canada. By working with government, industry, media and the public – the Consortium will prepare briefs, whitepapers and other materials to inform government and stakeholders of issues within Ontario's construction sectors: industrial, commercial, institutional and residential.

The Ontario Construction Consortium – a new voice for quality work, a robust training sector and safe workplaces.

Formed in 2018, the Ontario Construction Consortium is an organization dedicated to strengthening the construction industry through Advocacy, Education, Networking and

Workforce Development. The OCC will be conducting research for dissemination to government, industry, media and the public. The Consortium will prepare briefs, position papers and other materials to inform government and stakeholders of issues within Ontario's construction sectors: industrial, commercial, institutional and residential. The Consortium will make presentations to inform stakeholders of issues and developments within the industry.

COVID 19 – OCC Speaks Out on Construction Worker Safety

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ontario Construction Consortium's primary concern became the safety of the province's construction workers on jobsites. We heard numerous reports of tradespeople working in unsafe conditions – on sites where proper social distancing was not being observed, where protective equipment was not in place and clean running water was not available. Workers reported instances of poor sanitary conditions where portable toilets were not being properly maintained.

Starting on March 24, the OCC called on the provincial government to shut down construction for two weeks until these unsafe conditions could be rectified. OCC put out a series of news releases that received wide media attention – we believe we made our case to the government and the public in a reasonable, forthright and forceful manner.

Here are summaries of those releases:

News Release – March 24, 2020

OCC calls on provincial government to shut down construction

TORONTO – The Ontario Construction Consortium (OCC) is calling on the provincial government to suspend work on construction sites across Ontario for 14 days to protect the safety of workers and employers amid the COVID-19 crisis.

OCC Executive Director Phil Gillies reacted to Premier Doug Ford's directive yesterday calling for non-essential businesses and services to shut down, saying the message to the construction industry was confusing and contradictory.

"It makes no sense that you can't have your neighbour over for a cup of coffee yet construction sites are expected to continue operations and they can have hundreds of employees working in close proximity to each other," said Gillies. "This is contrary to the best advice of public health officials to maintain social distancing."

Gillies said the OCC supports positions taken by both the Carpenters and Painters union, in calling on the government to shut down construction temporarily.

“As Premier Ford announced yesterday, the construction workers of this Province should not be expected to work on jobsites where the basic safety requirements for COVID-19 are not being met,” said Tony Iannuzzi, the Executive Secretary Treasurer of the Carpenters Union. “Those minimum standards simply to not exist on most of our jobsites.”

Bruno Mandic, the Business Manager and Secretary Treasurer of the Painters and Allied Trades District Council 46, echoed those sentiments, saying “it’s impossible to do our jobs (and maintain social distancing). If you’re on the 20th or 50th floor of a building working, the only way to get there is by elevator and there’s no social distancing.”

News Release – March 30, 2020

OCC renews call for construction shut down

OCC Executive Director Phil Gillies reacted to Labour Minister Monte McNaughton’s statement *Ontario Stepping Up Measures to Limit the Spread of COVID 19 on Construction Sites*.

“The Minister calls for better on-site sanitation, better communications on health and safety policies, enabling greater distances on jobsites and better tracking and monitoring of workers – all of which would be positive practices. But they are not always happening on the sites and are often impossible to monitor or enforce”.

Gillies went on: “It makes no sense to ban gatherings of five or more people in most circumstances, but still have hundreds of workers reporting to construction jobsites”.

There is no protection for subcontractors to refuse work when they are contractually bound to general contractors – who are often pressuring their suppliers to keep working.

“We are hearing from workers and their family members from throughout Ontario who are afraid to go to work, but also afraid not to report for fear of losing their jobs”, said Gillies.

News Release – April 3, 2020

OCC support’s Province’s shutdown of non-essential ICI construction sites, but remains concerned about residential construction

Toronto – The Ontario Construction Consortium (OCC) supports today’s move by the Ontario Government to shut down non-essential Industrial, Commercial and Institutional construction

sites to protect the safety of construction workers at risk with the spread of the COVID-19 virus, but remains concerned about the continuing designation of residential construction as “essential”.

OCC Executive Director Phil Gillies said, “So, suppose there are two thirty-storey buildings going up side-by-side, one an office tower and the other a condominium. The government is now deeming the health and safety risks to the workers require shutting down the office building, but work on the condo building can continue? When the risk factors on the two job sites may be identical? We find this puzzling, and remain concerned for the workers on residential sites”.

Follow- up

In early April, Labour Minister Monte McNaughton did order a halt to new residential construction, but allowed ongoing projects to continue. This went part way to addressing the OCC’s concerns, and commended the Minister for his action.

FRONTLINE is a publication of the the Ontario Construction Consortium - a think tank / lobby supported by unionized contractors and stakeholders from the province’s construction sector. We welcome your feedback. You can unsubscribe at any time by emailing phil@ontarioconstructionconsortium.org with the word Unsubscribe in the subject line.



Ontario Construction Consortium Executive Director Phil Gillies (left), with Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development Monte McNaughton (centre) and Bruno Mandic, Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, District Council 46, at the Empire Club of Canada.