

Toronto and Peel Order Workplaces with 5+ COVID-19 Cases to Close

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On April 20, 2021, the City of Toronto and Region of Peel announced that all businesses with five or more recent cases of COVID-19 will be ordered to close for a minimum of 10 days.

In Peel, the closure order will apply where a workplace has had five or more laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases within a 14-day period and where those infected "could reasonably have acquired their infection in the workplace" or where "no obvious source of infection has been identified outside of the workplace premises." Similarly, Toronto Public Health may order a business to close if there have been five or more confirmed or probable cases relating to "individuals who have attended a workplace" within a 14-day period.

Peel Public Health announced that the names of all businesses ordered to close will be published on its website. Although Toronto Public Health has not announced whether it will do the same, it has been publicly posting on its website the names of workplaces in active outbreak with 20 or more employees since January 2021.

Certain essential businesses are exempt from the closure orders in both public health regions, including first responder emergency services, shelters, critical infrastructure, and services required to maintain the health of animals. The closure orders will not preclude a business from operating remotely, without workers attending at the workplace impacted by the closure order.

Asymptomatic workers affected by the closure orders are required to self-isolate for the 10-day closure period (or for such time as the workplace has been ordered to remain closed), while those who test positive for COVID-19 must self-isolate in accordance with public health directives.

In a news release issued in connection with the announcement of the closure orders, Dr. Lawrence Loh, Medical Officer of Health for Peel Region, noted that "workplaces that remain open continue to be a major driver of COVID-19 cases in Peel," particularly in the absence of legislated paid sick days. Dr. Loh called upon all employers impacted by these expedited closure orders to provide paid leave to affected employees and to "consider moving as many operations as possible virtually to reduce risk." Toronto Mayor John Tory announced in a statement that the order "is meant to help slam the brakes on workplace outbreaks that we know are moving much faster due to the variants of concern."

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