

Ontario power companies donating PPE to frontline workers

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

On Monday (April 6), Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliot, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, alongside Minister of Education Stephen Lecce, announced the financial support they will be offering to families due to the closure of schools and daycares across the province.

The Ontario government have extended the closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools are expected to remain closed until early May. The decision to keep the schools closed beyond that, or to re-open them will be discussed as May creeps closer.

“We will do whatever it takes to keep students safe from COVID-19 - which is why we have extended the school closure period and why we have unveiled a teacher-led program that keeps students learning while at home,” said Minister Lecce. “By providing clarity for parents, enhancing support for students and enabling the teacher-student relationship, we are ensuring our children continue to safely learn - providing some sense of stability and hope for them amid this difficulty.”

The Support for Families initiative will offer a single payment of \$200 per child up to the age of 12 in the household, \$250 for those with special needs up to the age of 21.

Families can access the Support for Families initiative online, where they can complete an application to gain this one-time payment. Through the Support for Families initiative, \$3 million is being provided to parents and families across Ontario as part of the Ontario's Action Plan.

“During this extraordinary time, we're doing everything we can to support parents to keep everyone safe and ensure our children continue to learn and stay mentally active,” said Premier Ford. “This one-time funding will allow parents to access additional tools for our kids to use while at home and studying remotely. I want to remind everyone to stay at home and only go out if absolutely necessary. It's the only way we are going to defeat this terrible virus.”

The pandemic continues to grow every week, to every day, to every hour. Businesses continue to close down as the spread of the virus travels through the community. Frontline workers continue to put themselves at risk by keeping everyone safe and healthy.

On Sunday (April 5), a Peel Region paramedic tested positive for COVID-19 after being exposed on the job. The paramedic and their partner responded to a motor vehicle accident, where only one of the paramedics has tested positive and is showing symptoms. Both are in isolation.

“Thankfully, our paramedic is okay right now,” said Peter Dundas, Chief of Peel Paramedics. “At the time of the call, the medical direction was to only use PPE on calls dispatched with a positive COVID-19 screen. Last week, we took extra steps to protect our teams and they now wear masks and eye protection, in addition to gloves, for all calls.”

Only one day after this case, the Ontario government put through an emergency order for frontline workers including, police, firefighters and paramedics to gather COVID-19 positive status information about people before they make contact.

Enforcement of more strict protocols will take place to ensure the safety of those who are the first to make contact with positive cases of COVID-19.

“First responders put their lives on the line every day to protect Ontarians and they are at great risk of being directly exposed to COVID-19 as they fulfill their frontline duties. We must do everything in our power to ensure the health and well-being of those working on the frontlines and provide them with the tools they need to do their jobs and keep Ontarians safe,” said a statement made by Solicitor General Sylvia Jones and Christine Elliot.

The Peel Public Health have been consistently on top of providing updates, and protocols for residents and communities to keep them informed and aware of the spread in their area. But one error led to 16 residents within the Peel Region receiving a letter stating that their COVID-19 tests came back negative, only to later find out the tests were positive.

Peel Medical Officer of Health Lawrence C. Loh extended an apology to those 16 residents and explained the error that several positive test results were mixed in with the negatives from the labs. They only found their error after the letters were mailed.

I know the relief those residents felt for a few moments has sadly been transformed into feelings of fear and uncertainty, announced Loh in a news release. We have made changes to our process to ensure that this situation does not occur again in the future. On behalf of the Region of Peel, I extend apologies to those residents impacted by this error.

Frontline workers have faced constant struggles with taking specific precautions for themselves, but to also keep medical traffic in check. One key issue they have run into is running low on medical supplies; masks specifically.

Several developers have reached out to help.

Ontario Power Generation (OPG) released a statement that they will be donating 500,000 surgical masks and 75,000 N95 masks to the Province of Ontario to address the issue.

The world is facing an unprecedented health and economic crisis that requires the mobilization and participation of every individual and every business in this country, said Ken Hartwick, OPG President and CEO in a statement. As the provinces' largest electricity generator, OPG has a responsibility to not only keep the lights on for families, hospitals and essential businesses during this critical time, but also a social responsibility to do everything we can to help meet our communities' most vital health care needs. Together we will power on.

A delivery of these masks is being coordinated with the Ministry of Health for distribution to hospitals, long-term care homes and other health providers for communities' who are in dire need.

Alongside OPG, Bruce Power, also an electricity company based in Bruce County, also announced on April 1, that they will be providing 600,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) to support front line workers during this crisis.

President and CEO of Bruce Power, Mike Rencheck, made the announcement during a conversation with Premier Doug Ford on a local radio show, in which Ford praised the company for their generous contribution and their hard work in the industry. Ford stated, I want to thank all of Ontario's power workers, including the 4,000 hard-working employees at Bruce Power, who are keeping the lights on for Ontario families and businesses. I also want to thank Bruce Power for doing its part to fight COVID-19 by donating 600,000 pieces of PPE and producing the isotopes needed to sterilize medical equipment for our front-line workers. By working together, we can beat this virus and keep all Ontarians safe and healthy.

For more information about COVID-19, please visit [Ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://ontario.ca/coronavirus).