

March 19, 2020

Queen's Park Update: New Provincial Legislation to Allow Virtual Municipal Council Meetings

During today's emergency legislative session at Queen's Park, the Province introduced the *Municipal Emergency Act, 2020* to assist municipal governments and local boards during the COVID-19 emergency ([Ontario News Release](#)). This legislation, and the *Employment Standards Amendment Act (Infectious Disease Emergencies), 2020*, have now received unanimous consent in the Legislature.

Top of mind for municipal governments has been the ability to ensure councils, council committees, and municipal boards can meet virtually to make key decisions without needing to meet physically – given societal necessity for social distancing and isolation.

The *Municipal Act, 2001* and the *City of Toronto Act, 2006*, have been amended to provide that, during municipal or provincial emergencies, members of councils, local boards and committees who participate electronically in open and closed meetings, may be counted for the purposes of quorum. Use of this emergency provision will be at each municipal council's discretion. At this point, today's legislation has not been publicly posted. The House is now recessed until March 25th at 4pm when the Finance Minister will deliver an economic update.

"Municipalities have a key role to play in COVID-19 response, management, and recovery. If passed, this legislation will ensure municipal councils can continue to conduct the important business of municipal government and maintain the local and regional services Ontarians rely on most".

Jamie McGarvey, AMO President, and Mayor, Parry Sound

AMO would like to thank the Province and all parties for their support of today's legislation

Also, under the *Municipal Emergency Act, 2020* is an amendment to allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council (i.e., Cabinet) to make regulations imposing limits and conditions on the powers of a municipality with respect to s. 129 of the *Municipal Act*. This will allow the Province to make a regulation overriding noise by-laws enabling 24-hour delivery of critical goods throughout Ontario for up to 18 months. This will support the supply chains of grocery stores and pharmacies and other key services.

We also understand that previously stated deadlines for current provincial consultations are being reconsidered in light of the COVID-19 emergency, such as an extension of the DC/CBC consultation. As AMO learns of consultation extensions of municipal interest, we will update members.

AMO will continue to work closely with the provincial government to make sure municipal governments have the ability to respond effectively to the COVID-19 and keep their communities safe and healthy. The Province today has dealt with the priority municipal concern, and they are aware of other municipal concerns such as the need to pause the statutory clocks under some provincial legislation at this time. Please continue to make us aware of any provincial legislative or regulatory barriers municipalities may be encountering that inhibit your ability during this emergency.