

Solicitor General

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**Ministry of Municipal Affairs
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March 27, 2020

Dear Head of Council:

On March 17, 2020, our government declared a provincial emergency through the authority granted under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (EMCPA). Since this declaration, several emergency orders have been made under the Act to contain the spread of COVID-19 and to ensure that essential services continue to be provided and Ontarians are supported. To view Emergency Orders made by the government in response to COVID-19, please visit our ministry's Emergency Information webpage at: ontario.ca/alert.

Previously, only police officers and constables who have been appointed under an Act have the ability to enforce orders made under the EMCPA. Due to COVID-19, police resources are being stretched and police services have made requests to have other enforcement personnel assist with enforcing the emergency orders being made by the province.

As a result, our government signed a ministerial designation under the *Provincial Offences Act* to authorize the following personnel to enforce EMCPA orders:

- All persons or classes of persons designated in writing by a minister of the Crown as provincial offences officers, notwithstanding the offence or class of offences of that designation;
- All municipal law enforcement officers referred to in subsection 101 (4) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, or in subsection 79 (1) of the *City of Toronto Act, 2006*;
- All by-law enforcement officers of any municipality, or of any local board of any municipality; and
- All officers, employees or agents of any municipality or of any local board of any municipality whose responsibilities include the enforcement of a by-law, an Act or a regulation under an Act.

No further provincial approvals or authorizations are needed for municipal law enforcement officers to enforce orders under the EMCPA. Municipalities are not required to, but may wish to consider whether, and how, to provide direction to their municipal law enforcement officers about the exercise of these powers (e.g., policies or by-laws regarding which officers are best positioned to exercise these powers given their existing training, knowledge and resources).

Municipalities should continue to consider the severity of each infraction in relation to the potential risk to public health and the spread of COVID-19 when taking enforcement action. Consistent with existing enforcement approaches, consideration should continue to be given to taking a graduated approach to compliance. This could include providing educational messaging or warnings to members of the public around the emergency orders and, if compliance is not obtained, the issuance of a ticket under the *Provincial Offences Act* or a summons under Part 3 of the Act.

To assist enforcement personnel, we are also establishing a dedicated 1-800 line to respond to questions related to enforcing these orders. This telephone number will be available to enforcement personnel and will not be for the general public. We will follow up with more information once the dedicated line is established.

Finally, to further support the implementation of this change, please see enclosed Frequently Asked Questions that can be shared with your enforcement staff. As specific operational questions arise please contact Zinzi De Silva, Standards Research Analyst with the Public Safety Division of the Ministry of the Solicitor General at 416-314-3079 or Zinzi.DeSilva@ontario.ca for guidance as necessary.

Thank you for your continued cooperation on this matter.

Sincerely,



Sylvia Jones
Solicitor General



Steve Clark
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Enclosure

c: Chief Administrative Officers

Municipal Clerks

Qs and As for Enforcement Personnel
March 27, 2020

General Questions

1. **Are provincial offences officers and municipal law enforcement officers required to enforce emergency orders?**

The changes we are making do not require the use of provincial offences or municipal law enforcement officers to enforce emergency orders. It does provide the flexibility should there be a ministry or local need to increase enforcement.

2. **What emergency orders are provincial offences officers and municipal law enforcement officers authorized to enforce?**

Provincial offences officers and municipal law enforcement officers are now authorized to enforce all emergency orders made under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (EMCPA).

3. **Who should officers contact for urgent matters?**

During the emergency declaration, if circumstances arise where a case under the EMCPA requires urgent attention, the prosecutor may work with the criminal court trial coordinator to bring the matter to the Local Administrative Judge or Regional Senior Judge for direction and potential scheduling.

Please contact Director of Crown Operations, Fred Braley, fred.braley@ontario.ca
416-553-1478.

Available Charges

4. **Is it an offence to fail to comply with an emergency order?**

Yes. It is an offence to fail to comply with an emergency order, or to obstruct any person acting pursuant to such an order.

The maximum punishment is one-year imprisonment or a fine of up to \$100,000 for an individual, \$500,000 for a director of a corporation, or \$10,000,000 for a corporation itself (EMCPA, s. 7.0.11(1)). If the defendant gained a financial benefit from their violation of an emergency order, the court may increase the maximum fine to match the benefit the defendant received (EMCPA, s. 7.0.11(3)).

Where violations occur on different dates, s.7.0.11(2) allows for a separate charge to be laid for each day an offence occurs or continues.

5. **What offences can be laid against persons and businesses who are found in violation of an order during a declared emergency?**

Officers have discretion to charge under Part I (Certificate of Offence) or Part III (Information). The following offences are available under the EMCPA for violations of Ontario's declaration of emergency.

- (1) Fail to comply with an order made during a declared emergency, contrary to section 7.0.11(1) of the EMCPA.
- (2) Obstruct any person exercising a power in accordance with an order made during a declared emergency, contrary to section 7.0.11(1) of the EMCPA.
- (3) Obstruct any person performing a duty in accordance with an order made during a declared emergency, contrary to section 7.0.11(1) of the EMCPA.

The limitation periods that normally apply under the *Provincial Offences Act* (POA) (whether Part I, II or III), have been suspended pursuant to an Order by the Ontario government under s. 7.1 of the EMCPA. The suspension is retroactive to Monday, March 16, 2020.

As a result of this suspension, Justices of the Peace are no longer receiving Part III Informations and municipal courts are no longer accepting the filing of Certificates of Offences.

Proceedings may be initiated once the declaration of provincial emergency is lifted by the provincial government. Once the declaration of provincial emergency is over, and normal court operations resume, these matters will be scheduled and heard in the POA courts in the ordinary course.

Bars and Other Public Establishments in Violation of the Declaration of Provincial Emergency

6. What can we do if a bar is open in contravention of Ontario Regulation 51/20?

The following potential charges are available:

1. An individual patron could be charged either under Part I or Part III of the POA, with the offence of Fail to Comply with an order made during a declared emergency contrary to section 7.0.11(1)(a) of the EMCPA:

- If charged under Part I of the POA, a \$750.00 set fine applies
- If charged under Part III of the POA, a fine of not more than \$100,000 and a term of imprisonment of not more than one year could be imposed

2. An individual who is a director or officer of the corporate entity could be charged under Part I or Part III of the POA, with the offence of Fail to Comply with an order made during a declared emergency contrary to section 7.0.11(1)(b) of the EMCPA:

- If charged under Part I of the POA, a \$750.00 set fine applies
- If charged under Part III of the POA, a fine of not more than \$500,000 and a term of imprisonment of not more than one year could be imposed

3. The corporate entity could be charged under Part I or Part III of the POA, with the offence of Fail to Comply with an order made during a declared emergency contrary to section 7.0.11(c) of the EMCPA:

- If charged under Part I of the POA, a \$750.00 set fine applies

- If charged under Part III of the POA, a fine of not more than \$10,000,000 applies

Under this scenario, an officer could proceed under Part I of the POA in respect of the “individual” (the patron) and Part III in respect of the “individual who is a director or officer of the corporate entity” and the corporate entity.

Powers of Arrest

7. Can provincial offences officers or municipal law enforcement officers arrest individuals for violations of the EMCPA?

No. The EMCPA does not include any arrest provisions for provincial offences officers or municipal law enforcement officers.

8. When can officers rely on the Criminal Code for individuals who refuse to comply with an emergency order?

Officers should first seek voluntary compliance with emergency orders. Officers should make it clear that people are required to comply with the orders and that failure to comply is an offence under s. 7.0.11 of the EMCPA.

If people refuse to comply and follow the officer’s commands, officers can rely on s. 129 of the *Criminal Code*, which makes it any offence to resist or wilfully obstruct a public officer or peace officer in the execution of their duty. The *Criminal Code* sets out the powers of arrest and abilities to identify people.

9. What if a business that has been ordered to close, refuses to close and people continue to gather inside?

Officers may rely on ancillary powers to order that people leave a business and prevent others from entering. The basis is that the people are committing an offence by violating the emergency order. The intrusions on liberty are acceptable as reasonably necessary for the police to fulfill their duties. The police focus must be on removing people to the extent necessary for public health reasons, such as the need for people to maintain 6 feet of distance. For example, if the owner of a business is inside, and is committing an offence of failing to comply with an order during a declared emergency, but through police intervention, no customers or workers are allowed to enter, then recourse to ancillary powers would likely not be available to justify further intervention.

Officers have ancillary powers under the common law that are available where: (1) the officer’s conduct falls within their general duties; and (2) the officer’s conduct is reasonably necessary.

As the province has declared an emergency and has made certain orders as a result, the police are acting in the course of their duties to preserve the peace, protect the public, and save lives. These are the “principal duties” of the police at common law. As for the officer’s conduct being reasonably necessary, this depends on what the officer seeks to do. The goal of the emergency orders is to keep people apart to combat the spread of COVID-19. The police duty is extremely important; interference of liberty will be necessary.

10. How can individuals be removed from locations they are not allowed to be in?

If people are congregating in public areas or businesses in violation of emergency orders, they may be trespassing. The common law arguably permits officers to use force to remove individuals illegally congregating in public areas or in businesses in violation of emergency orders. This same power may be used to remove trespassers provided that the trespasser has first been asked to leave and was afforded a reasonable opportunity to do so before they were removed. In addition, the officer must ensure that they have authority from the occupier to remove the trespasser, unless the occupier is also in breach of the emergency order.

11. What search powers are available for violations of the EMCPA?

If a business is operating in contravention of the emergency orders issued, there is no statutory authority to search the premises or forcibly enter absent a warrant.

Police can rely on their common law ancillary powers to enter premises if the entry is necessary as an emergency response to a pressing and clear health concern (e.g., extreme violations of the emergency order such as a COVID-19 party of a hundred people). This is akin to the police authority to enter residences when responding to 911 calls in order to locate the person under distress and offer aid as necessary. Officers also can search the home in the name of responding to that same imminent threat to public safety and seize illegal items found in plain view (e.g. guns, drugs). Caution must be exercised to ensure that the entry is for public safety purposes under the EMCPA, and not some other purpose such as a criminal investigation.

12. Who will prosecute EMCPA charges?

The prosecution of all charges laid alleging violations of the EMCPA will fall to the Criminal Law Division of the Ministry of the Attorney General. Any questions regarding prosecutions of these offences should be directed to Director of Crown Operations, Fred Braley, fred.braley@ontario.ca 416-553-1478.