

# Disobeying the COVID-19 emergency law could cost you \$100,000 and one year in jail

*Robert Benzie*

Stay home or pay up.

Scofflaws who ignore the Ontario government's order to stay out of recreational facilities, such as playgrounds, basketball courts, and dog parks, risk fines of up to \$100,000 and one year in jail.

That's according to the strict legislation used by Premier Doug Ford in a bid to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, invoked during the pandemic, the penalties for disobeying an emergency order can be severe.

"In the case of an individual ... a fine of not more than \$100,000 and for a term of imprisonment of not more than one year," the law states.

"In the case of an individual who is a director or officer of a corporation ... a fine of not more than \$500,000 and for a term of imprisonment of not more than one year; and in the case of a corporation ... a fine of not more than \$10 million."

While the latter two penalties would not apply to most Ontarians — those provisions are aimed at non-essential businesses who open during an emergency or crisis profiteers — the government is serious about curbing the coronavirus by any means necessary.

Ford, who has extended the declaration of emergency for another two weeks, said Tuesday that he is very serious about clamping down on social interactions that help spread the virus.

"This includes extending closures of non-essential workplaces, restricting public gatherings of more than five people," the premier told reporters at a Queen's Park teleconference.

"The situation continues to change day by day, hour by hour," he said.

## YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN...

"Every week, every day, every hour we can push back the surge on our hospitals is another week, day, hour of precious time to prepare. The more time we have the more lives we can save."

Ford pointed out that he has "closed all outdoor recreational amenities, including beaches, sports fields, playgrounds, and picnic areas."

"Everyone needs to stay home. This is absolutely critical. We can't stop COVID-19

without your full support. Please, stay at home. Only go out for what you need. Don't gather in groups. Practice physical distancing. Stay in touch with loved ones by phone and wash your hands."

The premier — who has warned a mandatory "stay home" order is looming if public-health officials recommend that — expressed sympathy with parents and children cooped up at home.

"I know these extended closures will make things difficult for families. We're doing everything we can to support parents during this difficult time," he said, noting there are \$200 per child payouts for each kid under 12 in a household and \$250 for families with special needs children.

Also Tuesday, Ford blasted private business owners who have not been letting truckers use bathroom facilities as they perform the vital work of keeping supply chains moving.

"Have a heart. Open up the washrooms for these truckers. It's not right, it's not fair. This is absolutely essential," he said.

"We're all in this together."



HEADLINES NEWSLETTER

TOP STORIES, delivered to your inbox.