

# Premier's office attempts to address confusion around stay-at-home order

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January 13, 2021

## FAQ document states government can't define what is 'essential' for all Ontarians

By [kawarthaNOW](#) -  
Published



In an acknowledgement of the confusion resulting from Tuesday's announcement about the stay-at-home order, Premier Doug Ford's office released a statement and a summary of frequently asked questions on Wednesday morning (January 13).

However, the answers to the questions may raise even more questions about the stay-at-home order, which takes effect just after midnight on Thursday.

"As you'll see, a common theme is recognizing government's inability to implement a single set of restrictions that are perfectly responsive to the unique circumstances of every single Ontarian," writes Travis Khan, Ford's executive director of communications.

“How someone in downtown Toronto adheres to the stay-at-home order, where there is easy and immediate access to online shopping or a big-box retailer, will look very different than someone in a rural or remote area who relies on smaller, independent retailers, many of which are limited to curbside pickup or delivery,” Khan writes.

“As such, and as we have from the very outset of this pandemic, we will continue to rely on the best judgment of Ontarians as they stay at home as much as possible and only leave their homes for essential purposes.”

More clarity may be available later today, as the Ontario government has promised to release the “legal parameters” for the order, which so far is only described in the following way: “All Ontarians must stay at home and only go out for essential purposes, such as going to the grocery store or pharmacy, accessing health care services, for exercise, or for essential work.”

Below is the full text of the frequently asked questions document issued by the Premier’s Office.

## **Why is the province issuing a stay-at-home order while also permitting curbside pickup?**

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This question assumes every single person in Ontario has easy access to online shopping or that there is a big-box retailer in their community. This isn’t the case for many Ontarians who live in rural and remote areas.

We’ve learned a lot over the past year responding to this pandemic, including the fact that what may be essential to someone in Timmins and how they buy that item may not be essential to someone in downtown Toronto, who can easily buy items online for delivery. The Government of Ontario determining what retailers may be considered essential risks cutting off many Ontarians who don’t live in Toronto or an urban centre from access to necessary goods.

## **What is an essential item?**

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The Government of Ontario cannot determine what is essential for every person in this province, each with their own unique circumstances and regional considerations. Legally defining what is essential risks cutting people off from goods that may legitimately be necessary for their health, well-being and safety.

## **What is an essential trip?**

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The Government of Ontario cannot determine what is essential for every person in this province, each with their own unique circumstances and regional considerations. That said, we have provided broad categories that people should consider before leaving their home: food, health-care services, including medication, exercise or work, where someone’s job cannot be done at home.

## **What is essential work?**

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The stay-at-home order does not define what work or jobs are essential. Rather, it now mandates that anyone who can work from home must now do so. For example, someone working in retail obviously can't do their job from home and would be permitted to go to work.

## **Why hasn't the province defined who can or should work from home?**

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The Government of Ontario cannot review tens of millions of job descriptions to determine who can work from home. As such, we are relying on the best judgment and common sense of employers to determine who can do so. If an employee believes they should be working from home, they can contact the Ministry of Labour to file a health and safety complaint.

## **Why can people still gather in groups of five outdoors?**

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The outdoor gathering limit of five is in recognition of the fact that some people live alone and may require the company or support of others for their mental and physical well-being. Anyone gathering outside is expected to adhere to physical distancing measures and are now strongly urged to wear a mask.

## **Can people leave home to exercise? Can I go to my local playground or basketball court?**

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Yes, exercise is considered an essential reason for leaving your home. What that means will be unique to each individual Ontarian: some may wish to go for a walk around the block, while others may wish to go to a local basketball court with their household to shoot some hoops.

We recommend that Ontarians consult their local public health unit or municipality to understand what recreational amenities are open in their community.

## **Can someone living alone still join up with another household?**

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Yes, they can exclusively join one other household. This is to support their mental health and well-being, as well as to ensure those requiring support continue to have access to essential caregivers.

## **Is there a time limit for how long people can leave their homes?**

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No. That said, we're asking Ontarians to use their best judgement when leaving their home for essential reasons. They should limit the number of stores they go to and spend as little time outside of their home as possible.

## **Is there a limit on the number of times someone can leave their home in a day?**

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No. That said, we're asking Ontarians to use their best judgement when leaving their home for essential reasons. They should limit the number of stores they go to and spend as little time outside of their home as possible.

### **Can people travel to their cottages or secondary residences?**

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Right now, we are asking people to stay home and only leave their home for essential purposes, which could include emergency maintenance of a secondary residence. In the spirit of the stay-at-home order, at this time we are not recommending intra-provincial travel.

### **Comments**

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