

“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?

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?

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?

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.