

To our OGA members:

COVID-19 UPDATE APRIL 9 2020

I hope that you and your families are staying safe during a difficult time.

The Ontario Geothermal Association (OGA) is working with the Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada (HRAI) to support the geothermal and construction industries by providing relevant up-to-date information. The situation seems to be ever-changing so it makes sense to continue re-checking our web site or the HRAI COVID-19 *resource portal* for the newest announcements.

One of the challenges for our industry is determining which projects and which activities in Ontario are permitted to move forward under Provincial rules. I have been consulting with the Board, the HRAI, government and industry contacts to attempt to interpret information that remains somewhat unclear. I have also written to the Premier requesting a specific clarification for geothermal construction work (see below).

INFORMATION FROM THE PROVINCE

Meanwhile, more information is being released by the government almost daily and, in some cases, this information is different from earlier releases.

Yesterday the province extended the permitted hours for construction for healthcare-related projects to 24 hours per day, and relaxed some noise ordinances. It announced more employment standards officers, guidance notes and a larger team in the Ontario Health and Safety Call Centre (1-888-444-3659). These measures are designed to support safety for construction workers, more clarity on permitted activities, and more enforcement of the rules.

Martin Luymes, Vice President, Government and Stakeholder Relations at HRAI, has cautioned that these inspections could lead to significant fines and that the province has also empowered municipalities to issue fines, and some are doing so. "The message we keep getting from the province is, if in

doubt, assume you should shut down.” Martin also notes that those who do maintenance/service are exempt but limited to emergency work, though the definitions are unclear, but business owners are encouraged to call the 1-888-444-3659 for clarification on specific situations.

Possible exceptions include:

- Maintenance and repairs of geothermal systems to ensure continued operation is considered essential and can continue.
- Geothermal drilling projects may fall under energy and therefore may be considered essential.
- Buildings with foundations in or with above ground structural permits can continue.
- Healthcare-related and provincial government projects can go forward.

PLEASE DON'T SEEK LOOPHOLES

In one of his updates Graeme Aitken, Executive Director of the Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario, noted that the rules are there to protect us, and that company owners should not review the list of essential services looking for loopholes. He said use the 1-888 number to seek clarification and protect your company by making notes on your conversations, including contact names, dates and times.

He also noted that there is a good deal of government support available to help businesses with financial difficulties, and directed people to a summary by Matthew Dinsdale that can be found *here*.

WSIB

WSIB announced in late March that they are allowing employers to defer paying until August 31, 2020. There are several other announcements from the WSIB that will interest OGA members. Please visit its COVID-19 page *here*.

STAY SAFE

I would encourage OGA members to take advantage of the supports being offered, and make good decisions about protecting your loved ones, following physical distancing rules, and managing any emergency services

you provide to customers. There's a good article about the safe provision of contractor services on the HRAI site ***here***.

These are not normal times, and business-as-usual may not be the best answer. Best wishes to everyone and stay safe.

Stanley Reitsma

President, OGA



April 7, 2020

Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Bldg. Rm 281, Queen's Park,
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

Premier Ford,

Re: Construction of Geothermal Energy Systems as an Essential Service

Your government is taking important steps to protect public health and safety in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for your leadership and decisive action under the challenging and unprecedented circumstances of these times. The Ontario Geothermal Association (OGA) applauds your efforts.

I have been asked by the membership of the OGA for clarification of the latest announcement concerning list of Essential Workplaces, published on April 3, 2020. Our sector wishes to comply with government directives but it is unclear at the moment where our industry fits in the definitions of "essential services."

We are specifically interested in the construction of energy loop fields needed to provide thermal energy for buildings, which falls within the following category of construction:

28. Construction projects and services required to ensure safe and reliable operations of, or to provide new capacity in, critical provincial infrastructure, including transit, transportation, energy and justice sectors beyond the day-to-day maintenance.

Projects of this nature are undertaken outdoors, with plenty of space between workers and all appropriate safety measures are being taken. We request clarification and re-assurance so that our sector can proceed safely and with recognized support.

Thank you taking the bold steps to protect the people of this province.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stanley Reitsma', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Stanley Reitsma
President, OGA

cc OGA Board of Directors

*OGA is an affiliate of the **Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada (HRAI)**
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