

Less than half of businesses in compliance following inspection blitz

Written By **Sam Odrowski**

The provincial government's COVID-19 compliance blitz that took place in Orangeville and Shelburne from Feb. 25 to 28 saw compliance from less than half of all businesses.

In Orangeville the compliance rate was just 36 per cent among the 70 businesses that were visited and four tickets ranging from \$750 to \$1,000 were issued, along with 14 formal warnings/cautions. The most common violations observed were safety plan contraventions, inadequate/no screening, and capacity limit contraventions.

Shelburne saw a slightly higher rate of compliance with 49 per cent of the 43 businesses visited abiding by proper COVID-19 health and safety protocols. Zero tickets were issued but 18 orders were given to businesses, which don't have a financial penalty, but require modifications to be made to businesses such as plexiglass barriers. The Ministry of Labour then returns at a later date to ensure the orders have been fulfilled.

In Shelburne the most common violations were the same as in Orangeville.

Businesses throughout the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph region were included in the Feb. 25-28 inspection blitz and overall the region had a compliance rate of 45 per cent with 40 tickets and 69 orders issued.

Ontario's Minister of Labour, Monte McNaughton spoke with the Citizen on Monday and said the region's rate of compliance obviously isn't good enough but he's confident when inspectors return for follow-up inspections, that number will greatly improve.

The good news is that when we go into communities for the follow up visits, we're seeing a large improvement in compliance rates, small business owners and managers, they want to do the right thing, McNaughton explained.

He said it's just a matter of properly educating business owners on how to fully be in compliance.

The Ministry of Labour just hired and trained 100 new inspectors, bringing the total to the highest number in Ontario's history.

To date, 40,000 workplaces have been inspected across Ontario since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which resulted in 9,400 orders and 370 tickets being issued.

Overall, McNaughton said it's important to note that most businesses are in compliance and are cooperative in working with Public Health to ensure they're providing safe work environments.

I just know that overwhelmingly, the majority of businesses have done a good job and I want to emphasize that not only is health and safety important for workers, but it's also important for the business's bottom line because we need customers to feel safe and confident returning to shop at our small businesses, said McNaughton.

It's important that we all keep working together to get through this and everyone needs to up their game to defeat COVID-19.

While employers and customers may be exhausted from abiding by COVID-19 restrictions for the last year, McNaughton said now is more critical than ever before for people to exercise caution and follow Public Health's guidelines.

We just need everyone to step up. I understand the fatigue has set in, but there's light at the end of the tunnel, he said. We're making progress to transition businesses to reopening in every community across the province, we just need everybody to do a little bit more, continuing to follow the protocols, and at some point in the not too distant future, we're going to defeat COVID-19 once

and for all.?