



# Ontario casinos are once again closed on provincial orders, as omicron COVID-19 spread escalates.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford yesterday issued a dire warning to residents in Canada's most populous province. The Progressive Conservative advised of a "tsunami" of new COVID-19 cases.

Based on the current trends, our public health experts tell us we could see hundreds of thousands of new omicron cases every single day," Ford said. "With roughly one percent of cases ending up in the hospital, this surge could overwhelm our health care system.

"We cannot let this happen," Ford explained of his decision to reimpose restrictions on nonessential businesses, including the mandatory closure of casino operations. The premier's decision impacts 28 land-based casino venues. [홀짜게임](#)

Ontario reported more than 11,000 new COVID-19 cases today. The province says there are approximately 1,300 people currently hospitalized with the virus.

## Employees Furloughed

The 28 Ontario casinos required to suspend their operations because of the pandemic has resulted in thousands of hospitality and gaming workers being furloughed. The casino shutdown runs through at least January 26.

Ford says the decision to close casinos, indoor dining, movie theaters, and gyms was not made without careful consideration of the impact on workers and their families.

"I know this is very challenging for each and every one of us," Ford said in a social media message. "I can assure you we will get through this. We'll come out of this battle that we're facing with omicron stronger than ever before, and we'll get back to life as normal and as quickly as possible."

Gateway Casinos, Canada's largest gaming operator, said in a statement that it's working with local and provincial government authorities to collaboratively prevent COVID-19 spread. The company added that the "health and safety of all employees, customers, and the community" remains its highest priority.

Ontario closing its casinos could be a small win for the three Detroit casinos — MGM Grand, MotorCity, and Greektown. The commercial resorts are direct competitors of Caesars Windsor, which is just across the Detroit River in Canada.

### iGaming Arrival

Ontario casinos will soon be afforded online gaming operational rights.

Last July, just a month after the Canadian Parliament signed off on single-game sports wagering, the Ontario Legislative Assembly passed a statute authorizing iGaming with interactive slot machines and table games.

The legislative initiative formed iGaming Ontario, a government agency tasked with regulating online gaming firms and their operations. The gaming expansion online is a direct result of the pandemic. Government officials say online gambling allows traditional brick-and-mortar players to gamble in a safer environment.

iGaming Ontario released its operator guide in August. The regulatory agency is currently reviewing applications from interested iGaming operators.

Internet gaming amid the pandemic has proven critical to casinos in markets where such gambling is legal. In New Jersey, the US' richest iGaming market, gross gaming revenue from online operations surged 101 percent in 2020 from 2019.

2021 was another prosperous year for New Jersey interactive casino sites. Through November, iGaming GGR was up 41.7 percent year-over-year.