



**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 23, 2020

Town of Smiths Falls committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of construction workers on Beckwith Street

Smiths Falls – The Town of Smiths Falls is committed to the timely and safe completion of the Beckwith Street Revitalization Project, and to the health and well-being of contractors on the job site. The Town has been made aware that workers from Tomlinson are being unnecessarily distracted by a few individuals. For that reason, Tomlinson has had to resort to installing privacy screens on the worksite security fencing to keep the work environment safe and free from distraction.

“Tomlinson was hired to do critical infrastructure upgrades to our water and sewer systems,” said Shawn Pankow, Mayor of Smiths Falls. “These hardworking individuals have been in our community working through the cold of winter, and now through the added stress of COVID-19. Their job is complex and requires that workers remain focused to ensure a safe workplace. I am confident in the measures Tomlinson is taking during these difficult times to ensure their safety and the safety of those around them. The behaviour and actions of a few individuals does not represent the support our community has for these essential workers.”

Workers are being subjected to unwelcome comments, are being photographed and videotaped without consent, and images are being shared on social media. The Ministry of Labour has investigated the work site twice as a result of anonymous complaints and found that all work was being completed appropriately and all required safety measures and protocols were being followed.

“The police service has been working to educate businesses and individuals on the safety guidelines laid out by the Province to help reduce the spread of COVID-19,” said Mark MacGillivray, Chief of the Smiths Falls Police Service. “We have met with the management team at Tomlinson and are confident that they are taking all reasonable safety precautions on the work site. The surreptitious videotaping and photographing of

workers only creates distractions that take away from the tasks the workers are performing.”

In addition to this behaviour being distracting to workers, it also has the potential to drive up costs on construction projects and delay their completion.

“The Downtown Business Association is shocked to hear that contractors are being disturbed on the job site,” said Michele Baitley, owner of Michele's Doorway To Splendour and Chair of the DBA. “These workers are doing their best in unusual times and I have witnessed nothing but respect and professionalism from them. I think I can speak for all downtown businesses in saying that we are eager to see this project move forward without distraction and delay so that we can get back to running our businesses on a renovated and re-opened Beckwith Street.”

“Safety is at the core of our operations and we implemented new Health and Safety protocols to protect our workers and the public very early in March. We have an amazing team dedicated to this project and are very proud of the progress made”, said Ron Tomlinson, CEO of the Tomlinson Group.

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