



## Statement on government-increased police authority

April 23, 2021

On Friday, April 16, 2021, the Ontario government announced a misguided and dangerous regulation to [increase police authority](#) to stop and question people regarding the purpose for leaving their homes. This decision was promptly denounced by law enforcement agencies and organizations across Ontario, including the [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#) who continues to call on the government to use a human-rights based framework to respond to the pandemic. While the provincial government has since [amended this regulation](#), it demonstrates that the Ford government continues to make ill-guided decisions during this pandemic that neglect the concerns and needs of our most vulnerable populations, decisions that ultimately ignore the needs of and disproportionately impact Indigenous, Black, racialized and other marginalized communities. Regulations like these have the potential to cause great harm, and negatively impact peoples' mental well-being as they fear for the safety of themselves, their loved ones and their communities.

It is important to acknowledge that the amendment of this regulation by the Ontario government does not guarantee that individual police officers will not continue to use this messaging to target communities who already have disproportionately higher and unwarranted interactions with law enforcement. We also recognize that for midwives, midwifery students and staff, particularly those who identify as Indigenous, Black and/or racialized, your work within the community may place you at a higher risk of being targeted by police following the government's messaging. As a result, we strongly encourage you to always have identification (e.g. hospital ID badge, CMO registration, service authorization letter from your Band Council/AHAC/employer) on you when travelling, and to ensure that you are informed about [your rights if ever stopped by police](#) (PDF, 2 MB). Practice groups could also consider providing a letter to their staff to indicate that they are required to present to perform essential work during the stay-at-home order. Clients, particularly Indigenous, Black and racialized individuals, may have concerns about leaving their home during this time. As such, consider ways to provide accommodation and understanding when possible - which may include providing a letter for your clients.

The AOM also recognizes that the provincial government must do more to protect its front-line workers through the provision of paid sick leave, access to vaccination for workers at their workplaces and enforcement of safe working conditions, including but not limited to access to PPE. Not committing to these measures will undoubtedly negatively impact the health and lives of front-line workers, their families and their communities. These are direct and avoidable consequences that the Ford government should not be willing to accept.

We would like to sincerely express our ever-growing gratitude and respect for the work that midwives, their staff and other front-line workers do to protect and improve public health. Your immeasurable contributions do not go unnoticed.

If AOM members have any risk management concerns, AOM staff are available 24/7 through the [AOM On Call line](#). For questions or concerns related to COVID-19 and Indigenous Midwifery, contact Ellen Blais, Director, Indigenous Midwifery at [ellen.blais@aom.on.ca](mailto:ellen.blais@aom.on.ca) or [416-425-9974](tel:416-425-9974) ext. 2270.