



April 7, 2021

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1A2

Dear Premier Ford,

Re: COVID-19 Support for Business

We are reaching out today with an urgent request for additional support for small businesses and those in the hardest hit sectors as we face the third wave of the virus and a delay in the supply and distribution of the vaccine. Our business owners are fatigued from operating in this environment, frustrated with the continuous changes and fearful for their future. Many of them have assumed copious amounts of debt, put their mental and physical health at risk and given up their personal finances which they need to support their families. Some are forced to use business support funds to cover personal costs in a never ending balancing act. Many businesses had used debt to create or expand their business before COVID, many have continued to accumulate debt to survive during COVID. Servicing this accumulated debt for the next two months given that the cost of debt service, both personal and professional, represents a significant cost to all and has yet to be addressed in any meaningful manner. There is a serious risk to insolvency for many of Ottawa's small and medium sized businesses. We fear many are getting ready to give up and do not feel supported or heard. High levels of bankruptcies and business closures will significantly impact our recovery, ultimately cost our taxpayers more and nullify the investments we have already made to keep the economy going this long. The next ninety days are critical.

Our immediate request is as follows;

- Inspire business confidence with clear and immediate communications that signal **our government intends to continue to support the hardest hit businesses with targeted funds** until the end of the year or until the full roll out of the vaccinations, whichever comes first.
- Address the immediate impact of the shutdowns by providing **additional small business grants** to take eligible businesses through the next thirty, sixty, ninety days, depending on how long the shutdown lasts.
- Ensure the **current granting program is rolling out effectively by addressing the limiting guidelines for approvals.**
- Expand or **advocate federal expansion of programs** for rent, wages and utilities.
- Provide support for **living costs of entrepreneurs**, similar to displaced employees so they may provide for their families and focus their efforts on transforming their businesses.

- **Advocate for a 90 day, or until herd immunity is achieved, extension and expansion of the payment deferral programs currently offered by financial institutions for personal and business debts.** Coordination and quick standardization of protocols is required between all financial institutions operating in our Province.

In addition, for the near future we request the following:

- Advocate for **more vaccine supply** from the federal government.
- Set policies to **reduce transmission in the known settings including social environments** and workplaces; that do not have protocols to address employee to employee transmission.
- **Refine the COVID-19 framework and protocols** to allow responsible businesses to operate and generate revenue.

We will continue to work with your government and support our businesses as we act together to get from here to there by providing information for decision making and encouraging the use of safety protocols. We welcome an opportunity to discuss this matter further in a brief meeting at your earliest convenience. We remain in your service.

Sincerely,



Mark Kaluski
Chair
Ottawa Coalition of BIAs



Sueling Ching
President & CEO
Ottawa Board of Trade



Dean Karakasis
Executive Director
BOMA Ottawa

Cc:

Mayor Jim Watson, City of Ottawa
Ottawa City Councillors
Dr. Vera Etches, Ottawa Public Health
Ottawa Members of Provincial Parliament
Ottawa Members of Parliament
Rocco Rossi, President & CEO, Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Hon. Christine Elliot, Minister of Health
Hon. Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development
Hon. Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction
Hon. Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance
Hon. Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ontario