



January 13, 2021

The Honourable Doug Ford, MPP
Premier of Ontario
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

RE: Provincial Emergency Order and Ethical Business Framework

Dear Premier Ford,

On behalf of the Whitby Chamber of Commerce membership, I am writing to you regarding the Provincial Emergency lockdown measures and the growing frustration expressed by our small business owners.

We understand these are challenging and urgent times. During this unprecedented period, our business community has stepped up and embraced mandated public health measures and invested their own resources to comply while adapting and pivoting to ensure they could remain open. Despite those efforts, they have seen numbers continue to rise through no fault of their own. Social gatherings both in public and in homes for holidays and events, unnecessary travel, and congregate business operations in the southwest have largely been the root cause for rising infections. The brunt of these cavalier behaviours falls upon our health care sector and small business community.

Like many of Ontarians who have been doing the right things, our member businesses are growing increasingly frustrated that public health measures continue to impact their lives and livelihoods while the real issues of growing infections remain unchecked. Our members have families and share concern for physical and mental health. But these latest measures will continue to be followed by those who have done the heavy lifting by adhering to the guidance, while others who have largely ignored these measures will continue to do so with no or minor consequences.

While there has been extensive work on the health side; data collection and factual information to inform ethical framework on items like vaccine distribution and access to care, there seems to be a more arbitrary approach for the business community. Businesses should be given a framework and decision making should not be arbitrary and instead data informed. We have not seen any data that suggests the rising numbers of COVID-19 are related to small businesses. Businesses that can function safely and where there is no data contrary to this should be allowed to open. Restrictions should be placed on those who break the rules not the collective. Our businesses want assurance that that numbers of cases will not just continue to spike because of social gatherings, and they will remain the victims of those who flaunt the rules.

Our members who operate businesses deemed non-essential but can operate are equally confused by messaging. While they can operate in limited ways, Ontario has told people to stay home unless it is for



essential services leaving these owners believing those patronizing their services are in violation of provincial guidance. The updates provided to the Provincewide Shutdown document leave much to interpretation.

We respectfully request more transparency and decision making with respect to public transmissions around workplaces. We understand the constraints of privacy legislation but believe that there is a way to understand where the hot spots are. If transmission is not attributed to the small businesses sector why must they close their doors, risking permanent closure. Conversely, if there is data that supports business restrictions, we ask that be made available so we can communicate those to our members. We ask the framework that determines which businesses can remain open and which face sanctions be reflective of transparent data. In the absence of evidence showing businesses are a significant risk of spreading the virus, we believe that all businesses should be allowed to be open, so long as they practice appropriate health protection guidelines. If any business statistics show a particular type of business is a risk, then only those businesses should be shut down.

Our business owners are community leaders, parents, spouses and caregivers. They share the same fears, anxieties and hopes as our government. They want to ensure the health and safety of their families but have the added anxiety of losing their income and the businesses they created. The Whitby Chamber of Commerce remains committed to working with this government to ensure we are doing what is right for our residents and our business community.

Regards,

Corette Miller

Corette Miller
President, Board of Directors
Whitby Chamber of Commerce
Cc:

Mr. Lorne Coe, MPP, Whitby
Mr. Ryan Turnbull, MP, Whitby
Mr. John Henry, Regional Chair & CEO
Mr. Don Mitchell, Mayor Town of Whitby