



June 22, 2020

Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier,

As we watch businesses pack their U-Hauls and close their businesses permanently we fear their perspective has been overshadowed. We acknowledge the complexities of dealing with COVID-19, but we need to realize that every job is essential. As much as we celebrate Phase 2 coming to Durham, we ask that the recommendations below be actioned as quickly as possible.

Businesses that haven't closed permanently find themselves at an impossible economic precipice, and we fear the results over the next 6-12 months will be economic devastation. In March, the Whitby Chamber of Commerce represented over 720 members in the Durham Region with an estimated 27,000 employees, in fact it was the largest chamber in the Region. We now have less than 670 with a significant number of others in arrears.

Those in our membership who have been staunch supporters of your government vent their anger regularly. Many simply can't understand why the business community wasn't engaged, as they are trying to open their businesses under impossible restrictions. They communicate the concern that our government no longer believes small business is the backbone of our economy. Physical touching of expanded social circles was announced, yet a small coffee shops on the brink of ruin cannot host customers safely in their place of business without a patio. In phase 2, those with patios can host customers, but in the case of rain can go inside their place of business? Those without patios remain without an approval to open, yet they can meet all of the requirements for social distancing, cleanliness and customer service.

We continue to meet with our business community, and those given permission to open are now looking at the immense costs to even start-up their services. One member in our Industry Insights round tables identified a \$12,500 expense incurred to date as a result of social distancing measures, new policies and PPE. Many are already concerned that although they're pleased they can open, another month will go by with an inability to make their rent because the requirements, costs and consumer fear prevents them to generating sufficient revenue. Not to mention their landlord does not want to leverage any support to help subsidize rent. What are they to do?

The engine of the Province, our Greater Toronto Horseshoe Area is the most sizeable business tax base. Small business creates communities, vibrant downtowns, jobs, and prosperity. Please consider the following:

1. The Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program (OCECRA) has yet to benefit small business and we are only a few short weeks from the first of July. We ask that you revise to accommodate the business community (i.e. those paying rent versus those collecting).
2. We ask that the Provincial government provide business grants to help support the reconfiguration of these businesses and purchase PPE to meet the specific guidance that has been released; OR consider significant tax rebates for PPE expenses.
3. Employees and businesses have had to incur increased costs (hydro, internet, data) to work from home or operate home based businesses. We ask that the Province review these expenses and consider immediate decreases and significant tax rebates.
4. As a result of the original closures and lack of business input into identifying essential businesses, we are now facing impacts in various supply chains – creating an increase in costs or an inability to service customers.
5. We request the Provincial government immediately review the requirements to open, recognizing many are unreasonable and ineffective – both from a cost/value proposition and an inability to service their customers.

Ensure the needs of businesses are considered and further changes to programs and the recovery plan are actioned immediately. They have complied with emergency orders and have done everything they can to protect their customers, staff and their families from Covid-19. They desperately need the province to recognize the economic crisis we're facing and the long-term implications on generations to come.

Regards,



Corette Miller
President, Board of Directors
Whitby Chamber of Commerce

c.c.

The Rt. Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Mr. Bill Morneau, Canada's Minister of Finance
Mr. Rod Phillips, Ontario's Minister of Finance

Mrs. Christine Elliot, Ontario's Minister of Health
Mr. Lorne Coe, MPP Whitby
Mr. Ryan Turnbull, M.P., Whitby
Mr. John Henry, Regional Chair & CEO
Mr. Don Mitchell, Mayor Town of Whitby