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Dear XXXXXX MP,

Ontario has reached an important milestone in our fight against the pandemic with many restrictions on business operations now lifted. This is thanks to the hard work and dedication of our healthcare professionals and the sacrifices of many Ontarians to defeat the pandemic. But whilst Ontario is starting to emerge from the pandemic, it's important to remember that reopening doesn't mean recovery for the tourism industry. The tourism industry - an industry founded on bringing people together to have new experiences and to travel to new destinations - has experienced devastating consequences since the beginning of the pandemic.

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) is the voice of the tourism industry in Ontario, representing over 200,000 businesses and over 400,000 jobs and we've seen and heard firsthand from businesses that have done all they can to get through this period. For those businesses in your riding that rely on the visitor economy, the past two years have been one of uncertainty, job losses, lost opportunities and debt. The impact of closures, restrictions on freedom of movement and limits on capacity have resulted in revenue losses of up to 93%, left six-figure debts on the books of successful businesses and at its peak meant that 141,000 Ontarians had lost their jobs.

If it was not for the combination of the resilience and innovation of our members and government support programs, we would not be in a position to welcome back visitors this summer. But whilst other sectors of the economy have started to recover, our members continue to face obstacles to recovery that are out of their control. Omicron continues to dampen consumer enthusiasm and booking numbers remain well below pre-pandemic levels. Ongoing border and travel restrictions in place for international visitors means that however successful we are in attracting domestic visitors, a significant portion of our most lucrative customer base remains absent. For the most part, our members tell us that they're trying to survive 2022, but are burdened by the economic scars of the pandemic.

It is therefore deeply concerning that current government economic support for the tourism industry is set to be cut in half in March, at a time when many of our members will be at their most vulnerable. Within the industry, we face a significant challenge to be ready to welcome back visitors. After two years of closures and restrictions our workforce is dislocated and, across the province, businesses are unable to rehire staff that have now joined different sectors.

During the pandemic, TIAO joined the Coalition of Hardest Hit Businesses, a group that speaks for our members on the national stage. Together, we've crafted a series of costed budget recommendations that will help ensure the tourism industry remains competitive and best prepared to rebound fully from the pandemic. We therefore ask you to support the budget recommendations put forward by the [Hardest Hit Coalition](#) that address critical flaws in the Tourism Hospitality Recovery Program as followed:



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- Reverse 50% wind down and maintain full subsidy rates until program is no longer needed.
- Extend program to September 2022
- Adjust eligibility for seasonal businesses
- Lower qualifying revenue loss threshold to 20%

We are also calling for:

- A clear and predictable plan to open the border
- A dedicated labour strategy for the tourism and hospitality sector
- remove barriers, like pre arrival testing for fully vaccinated travellers, at the border

Thanks to the support of government programs and the entrepreneurial spirit that exists in Ontario, we've managed to mitigate the very worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The members we represent are looking to the future, hoping to hire more Ontarians and help our economy to rebound as quickly as possible. If they do, they will provide billions of dollars in tax revenues and salaries that will be crucial to the recovery of our provincial and national economies.

That is why we're asking for your support in calling on the Minister of Finance to give Canada's hardest-hit businesses the support we need to survive and ensure our industry remains one of the most competitive and successful in the world.

Thank you for your consideration of the contents of this letter. If you have any questions or would like to support the campaign, please don't hesitate to get in contact with us.

Yours sincerely,

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