

VIA EMAIL

May 16, 2021

Hon. Monte McNaughton, MPP
Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development
14th Floor, 400 University Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1T7

Re: Request to Extend Temporary Layoff Periods and Constructive Dismissal Provisions

Dear Minister:

We are writing to you at this difficult time for the tourism and hospitality industry to ask for your support in safeguarding the future of the businesses and jobs that our provinces' economic recovery depends on. As you know, our industry has been one of the hardest hit sectors throughout the pandemic, with 170,000 tourism workers laid off and businesses facing severe financial losses and taking on significant debt to survive.

Specifically, we are writing to request that you extend the COVID-19 period under Ontario Regulation 228/20 beyond July 3, 2021 and into 2022 to help small businesses avoid huge termination/severance payouts for the 15- and 35-week temporary layoff periods. We also ask you to consider extending the constructive dismissal claim protections at the Ministry level into 2022, with a view to extending these protections to the courts.

In addition, we ask that your ministry work with the tourism and hospitality industry to start a dialogue for a long-term solution specific to our industry that recognizes the devastating and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on our industry.

On June 1, you rightly said, *"...take the necessary steps to safely and gradually restart the economy, we need to make sure business owners can reopen their doors and workers have jobs to go back to."*

The financial situation for many of our members has worsened severely since June 2020. TIAO's own research shows the average revenue loss for our members is at 69%, with one-third of members losing up to 90% of revenues. Furthermore, 71% of businesses say they would have closed permanently without government support (*including protection from severance costs*), and 32% of business owners now list debt as the biggest threat to their business. **Most concerning is that one in five businesses say that in the current circumstances, they can only survive for the next 90 days.**

While we are reassured by the increasing availability of the first vaccination shot, most Ontario residents will not receive their second shot until late summer or early fall. This means that public demand will not start to return until at least late 2021 or early 2022.

This is the worst time to put businesses and jobs at risk from the associated costs of terminating employees. The consequences for our industry could be catastrophic and could put at risk the good work undertaken over the past 14 months to protect the livelihoods of Ontarians.

Thank you again for your determination throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to help businesses. Now more than ever, it is vital to continue to provide businesses with the tools they need to stay open and keep hundreds of thousands of Ontarians employed.

We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss this issue with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Chris Bloore
President & CEO
Tourism Industry
Association of Ontario



Julie Kwiecinski
Director of Provincial
Affairs, Ontario
Canadian Federation of
Independent Business



Tony Elenis
President & CEO
The Ontario
Restaurant, Hotel and
Motel Association
(ORHMA)



Steve Ball
President
Ottawa Gatineau Hotel
Association



Terry Mundell
President & CEO
Greater Toronto Hotel
Association



Krista Marie LeClair
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Rebecca Mackenzie
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Grace Sammut
Executive Director
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Minto Schneider
 CEO
 Explore Waterloo Region



Laurie Marcil
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 Nature and Outdoor
 Tourism Ontario



Rick Layzell
 President & CEO
 Boating in Ontario



Troy Young
 Chief Executive Officer
 Attractions Ontario



James Rilett
 Vice President, Central
 Canada
 Restaurants Canada

cc: Hon. Doug Downey, Attorney General
 Hon. Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
 Hon. Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction