



April 13, 2020

Minister Mary NG
**Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion
and International Trade**
Government of Canada

Minister Melanie Joly
**Minister of Economic Development and Official
Languages**
Government of Canada

Bill Morneau
Minister of Finance
Government of Canada

Minister Vic Fedeli
**Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation
and Trade**
Government of Ontario

Minister Prabmeet Sarkaria
Associate Minister for Small Business and Red Tape
Reduction
**Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation
and Trade**
Government of Ontario

Minister MacLeod
**Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture
Industries**
Government of Ontario

Minister Ernie Hardeman
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Government of Ontario

Rod Philips
Minister of Finance
Government of Ontario

Dear Ministers,

We are writing on behalf of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO), the Ontario Businesses Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) and the Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO).

In these unprecedented times, we have partnered to speak on behalf of our members and the industries that we represent, to speak up for Main Street and for small and medium sized enterprises in every corner of our province

Collectively, we represent hundreds of thousands of businesses, millions of jobs and the economic engines that drive the Ontario and Canadian economy. See below.

We find ourselves at a critical crossroads, when the previous need for urgent implementation of financial aid has been superseded by a genuine threat to lose the industries that make up our main streets, our tourism and economic development sectors and the economic stability and future of our province.

Temporary closures are steadily turning permanent, capital reserves are being depleted, credit card payments are being missed and many are at the mercy of their landlords whilst they wait for the fine detail of government support to eventually emerge.

This is a large group of resilient and resourceful industries that are looking to their governments for hope and a hand up. Those that can survive the immediacy will find themselves in insurmountable debt that will act as a permanent anchor on growth and prevent hiring's during any economic recovery.

The window of opportunity to provide meaningful help is now. We have identified three practical steps that provincial and federal governments can take to counter these unparalleled threats to businesses and jobs.



(1) Commercial Rent Relief

We ask the Government of Ontario to work with all levels of government, landlords and tenants towards commercial rent relief framework for Small, Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that are closed due to COVID 19.

The necessary requirements placed on all non-essential businesses to close during COVID 19 mean that many SMEs are unable to pay their commercial rents. Ontario will rely heavily on the economic drive of these businesses to restart the economy, once sanctions have been lifted.

Commercial rent relief solution is enacted. It would ensure SME's are not saddled with unmanageable debts. Understanding that many property owners are also small businesses, perhaps the Government can provide funding to cover a percentage of rent.

(2) Interest Relief on Debt

We ask the Government of Canada to mandate that banks, credit card companies and credit unions to implement an interest relief on mortgage deferrals, credit card payments and loans. Whilst we recognize the steps that have been taken by the banks to cut interest rates on credit cards, we strongly believe more comprehensive action must be taken to give SME's a fighting chance of reopening and rehiring employees free of overwhelming debt.

Currently, Section 28 of the Ontario's Planning Act provides powers to municipalities to develop financial incentives (grants and loans) to private property owners to undertake improvement projects. If the guidelines were to be enhanced to allow municipalities to have discretion to assist local property owners with expenses (ie rent relief to tenants), it would provide direct assistance at a municipal level.

Similarly, Community Development Funds could be expanded to allow for "online" façade development vs the traditional projects.

Both of these initiatives would allow alternative assistance methods for our communities to assist local businesses who have approached local governments for help.

(3) Financial Aid, Not Debt Deferral

We ask that all levels of government, prioritize access to financial aid including grants rather than debt deferral measures to ensure that capital expenditures, and all incurred costs during COVID 19 closures, are covered. This will ensure SMEs do not take on insurmountable debt to cover operational and capital costs, which would render businesses unable to re-open. By reviewing and enhancing these programs it may save some businesses and put them on a firm footing as we build towards recovery.

EDCO, OBIAA and TIAO understand that recovery will not happen overnight. We feel we would have value at the tables where recovery is being discussed.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Heather Lalonde in black ink.

Heather Lalonde
Economic Developers Council
of Ontario

Handwritten signature of Kay Matthews in black ink.

Kay Matthews
Ontario BIA Association

Handwritten signature of Beth Potter in black ink.

Beth Potter
Tourism Industry Association
of Ontario



About EDCO

The **Economic Developers Council of Ontario** is Canada's largest professional economic development association. EDCO supports its members through increasing the capacity of economic development professionals through its strategic partnerships, professional development and events that results in vibrant, prosperous communities in the Province of Ontario. (www.edco.on.ca)

About OBIAA

The **Ontario Business Improvement Area Association** is the network that represents unique and vibrant BIAs across Ontario. The Association, incorporated in 2001, supports and advocates on behalf of its members through the building and nurturing of strong relationships and partnerships. OBIAA is a leader in the development and sharing of information, tools, resources and best practices, and is the ONE voice on common issues. (www.obiaa.com)

About TIAO

The **Tourism Industry Association of Ontario** works on behalf of their membership, collectively representing 188,000 businesses and 391,000 employees, to take on pressing policy issues that impact the Ontario tourism industry. TIAO leads the way in government relations on behalf of the Ontario tourism industry, including tourism businesses and operators, destination marketing organizations, regional tourism organizations, and educators. We provide evidenced-based policy recommendations to ensure the provincial government understands and addresses the multifaceted needs of the tourism industry. (www.tiaontario.ca)