

April 23, 2021

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

RE: Taking a nimble approach and immediate action to protect businesses and essential workers

Dear Premier Ford,

We heard your call for an all-hands on deck approach in responding to the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been and continue to be a partner with all levels of government working on behalf of Guelph's strong business sector, complete with cutting-edge innovators, large manufacturers, technology, construction, trades, and more. We're urging your government to take immediate and bold action to help businesses manage the current crisis and prepare for the economic recovery of this crisis.

We echo the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's [position](#) that prioritizing public health is our best long-term economic strategy. You cannot pave a path to recovery without first controlling the virus. However, there are long-term societal, economic, and health consequences to continuous distributions in both life and work.

The Guelph Chamber of Commerce has been working in collaboration with our public health unit and other key community stakeholders to ensure businesses have the resources they need to keep their employees safe, address vaccine hesitancy, and contribute to infection prevention and control efforts. We have heard from our members, and they need immediate access to:

- **Vaccinations for essential workers.** By definition of their job, essential workers who cannot work from home walk out of their front door everyday not knowing what risks lie ahead for them in the workplace, and more importantly, "locking down" does not protect these individuals. Essential workers need to be immediately prioritized for vaccinations. More so than ever before, individuals working in high-risk settings including manufacturing facilities, warehousing, grocery stores and pharmacies, daycare, construction, the trades, and more - need fast and immediate protection.
- **A nimble and adaptable vaccination rollout.** The response to the vaccination rollout must be modified to the current restrictions to ensure priority groups match with the current circumstances. Adapting the vaccination rollout to include new outreach

methods, including mobile vaccination units in the workplace is critical. The ability for local public health units to work directly with large manufacturers and warehousing facilities to vaccinate essential workers on-site is key to minimize workplace risks and ensure the supply chain can remain open. On-site mobile vaccination clinics would ensure equal and timely access to vaccines for all employees, regardless of the public health unit they live in.

- **Government funded paid sick leave.** Businesses cannot afford the additional financial responsibility to fund paid sick leave at this time. A temporary paid sick leave that is fully funded by the government for the duration of the pandemic is required, [as advocated for](#) by the Ontario Chamber network. We're happy to see the government preparing legislation and working collaboratively to find solutions that address the gaps between workers and the current federal program.
- **Continued government supports for businesses impacted by these necessary public health decisions.** Businesses continue to need timely and accessible supports to prevent further layoffs, closures, and bankruptcies. A third round of access to the Ontario Small Business Support grant would be welcomed.
- **Clear, accountable, and evidence-based decisions.** Businesses not only need to clearly understand the rules and how they will be enforced - but need to understand *why* rules are being implemented. Inconsistent and unclear public health guidelines cause confusion among businesses, employees, and consumers alike, and make it difficult for individuals to take appropriate action to protect themselves and their communities.

We will continue to represent and advocate for the businesses in our community, and we are committed to continuing to work in partnership with all levels of government to help businesses stay open safely while stimulating economic recovery. Thank you for your leadership during this extraordinarily challenging time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shakiba Shayani'.

Shakiba Shayani
President & CEO
Guelph Chamber of Commerce