



December 16, 2020

The Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria
Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction
Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
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Dear Minister Sarkaria,

Thank you very much for joining entrepreneurs and business owners from Guelph's restaurant and food service sector for a roundtable meeting on Thursday, December 10. We appreciated you taking the time to listen to local business concerns, and to keep lines of communication open with business and local government.

As local leaders, we understand that it's essential to work collaboratively with all orders of government and public health experts as we navigate the second wave of COVID-19 and the recovery period.

During the roundtable discussion, it was striking to hear from our local restaurant sector that they would be better off under lockdown regulations, where they can access increased government supports, rather than being under 'control' rules where they simultaneously experience impacts of the pandemic on their business, and significant gaps in provincial and federal supports.

To address this, we urge you and your federal counterparts to fill gaps in existing supports by:

- Enabling businesses in the red zone, particularly the hardest-hit sectors including restaurants, retail, and entertainment, to access the same level of property tax and energy bill rebates as businesses in lockdown zones;
- Ensuring new businesses, including those that launched during the pandemic, can access the full range of federal and provincial supports;
- Working collaboratively with the federal government to increase supports for restaurants and businesses that own their own building and are therefore ineligible for the rent subsidy program;
- Enhancing eligibility requirements so that hotels and conference facilities with restaurants and banquet halls on the premises are eligible for provincial and federal supports related to this portion of their business; and
- Ensuring small businesses and restaurant representatives have a seat at the table in discussions about supports for the sector.

The City of Guelph and the Guelph Chamber of Commerce respect the hard work of our public health experts to keep our community safe throughout the pandemic, and we fully support that the Province is continuing to make decisions based on the best available public health advice. The pandemic has demonstrated the need to adapt as new evidence emerges. To that end, we urge the Province to explore the benefits of linking restaurant capacity limitations to square footage, and to continue to improve contact tracing efforts so that contact tracing occurs quickly, effectively, and consistently across all sectors.

While the end of this public health crisis is in sight, it is more imperative than ever that provincial and federal governments support local businesses so that they may survive and recover. We must also take the lessons and approaches that worked so well during the response period, such as the expansion of patios, and carry them forward to support economic recovery. In cities like Guelph, restaurants and food service businesses are critical employers and economic engines that we rely on for jobs and investment. They are also at the heart and soul of community life, culture and vitality.

This is an urgent request, Minister. We plead with you, on behalf of our local businesses, to act quickly to save them and the jobs they provide. We will be happy to support you in this effort in any way we can.

Once again, thank you for your time on Thursday, and thank you for all your government's efforts and leadership during this challenging time. We look forward to continuing to work with you to support local businesses during the pandemic and through the recovery period.

Sincerely,



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cc: The Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
The Hon. Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
The Hon. Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance
Mike Schreiner, MPP Guelph
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