

Tuesday, March 24, 2020

Dear Minister McKenna,

On behalf of the Wellington West BIA and my colleagues in the Ottawa Council Of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA), we thank you very much for your staff's assistance over the last few days and this clear summary of the relief measures provided thus far. We've reviewed this information and will share it with our members and we appreciate your government's efforts to date.

But after speaking to my OCOBIA colleagues and more than a dozen business and small commercial property owners yesterday, we ask that you please consider this feedback and share our insights with your cabinet colleagues.

Our small member businesses in the restaurant, retail, and service sectors have been pleased with some of the measures announced - in particular the program to extend Employment Insurance eligibility to a wider range of employees and self-employed individuals. This provides a cushion for their staff members who may have already lost hours, tips, and job security. And the tax payment deferrals will also provide a way to postpone one set of future costs.

Thank you for those measures. They are a start.

But please be aware that our smallest and most vulnerable members are expressing widespread dismay that there was no **direct** financial relief program provided in the very short term to offset the massive losses in revenue that have already occurred - to say nothing of the looming market vacuum that we are told to expect will continue for many weeks or months to come.

Our members feel that the offer of easier BDC credit at market rates would only increase their debt loads at the worst possible time. And we have not heard of a single closed business that would benefit from the program offering to cover only 10% of the salaries of retained employees. This isn't a realistic or helpful option for owner operated shops with 5 or fewer employees that need to drastically cut their costs immediately in order to make their end of month lease or mortgage payments in just 10 days.

Other jurisdictions have been recognizing the vital need to rapidly shore up small businesses to avert a collapse of their retail sectors and vital mainstreet districts. Just a few hours ago, we note that [the UK announced **grants** of £10,000 for all designated small businesses and £25,000 for small retail, hospitality, and tourism businesses](#) on

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top of other tax measures and loans. And that is only one example.

Please let us know if additional direct relief measures such as the UK example above are being considered, or ideally about to be announced. Our members are making existential decisions now that will deeply affect our community and the economy of Canada, and such assurance could help them stay positive and hopeful a bit longer.

Thank you again for your hard work in these trying times.

Dennis Van Staalduinen,

In consultation with the WWBIA Advocacy Committee and the Ottawa Council of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA)

WELLINGTON WEST BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA

Dennis Van Staalduinen, Executive Director