



October 12, 2020

The Honourable Doug Ford, M.P.P.
Premier
Queen's Park
110 Wellesley St W,
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

The Honourable Christine Elliott, M.P.P.
Minister of Health
Queen's Park
110 Wellesley St W,
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

The Honourable Vic Fideli
Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
Queen's Park
110 Wellesley St W,
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

RE: Request to meet to discuss new business restrictions

Dear Premier et al:

The Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA) represents over 6,200 brick and mortar mainstreet businesses in Ottawa. Collectively, these businesses and property owners contribute over \$250 million annually in municipal property taxes.

The October 10, 2020 provincial government announcement that moved Ottawa, Toronto and Peel to revert to modified phase 2 protocols has highly impacted the ability of our member businesses to survive. We request an immediate meeting to discuss and justify the closure measures as they relate to the spread of Covid-19, the data points used to make this decision, the contact tracing results, the decision-making protocols, and plans for future measures should the number of new cases continue to grow. We will also request that messaging and fines for those who break quarantine rules and eschew

public health measures be severe and swift.

The health of the community is paramount; OCOBIA is in no way disputing the need to plank the rising number of infections and agrees certain measures must be imposed to limit the spread of Covid-19. Our issue is the approach to closures does not appear to correspond with known transmission vectors. To date, no known transmission of Covid-19 has been publicly ascribed to employee-to-customer or customer-to-customer transfer in Ottawa. Publicly-released information has consistently suggested that the recent increase of person-to-person transmission has occurred largely at social gatherings and other undistanced activities. This has been implicitly confirmed by the data showing the median age of new cases dropping to a much younger population.

OCOBIA strenuously objects to our member businesses shouldering the burden of the pandemic impacts, and requests that a more appropriate strategy be employed to stop the spread of this disease - one that targets the source of most known new cases. The modified Stage 2 restrictions will have no corresponding impact on the rising cases, and will only cause more economic hardship on the hardest hit segment of the local economy. These restrictions create a perception that businesses are unsafe and this will only further undermine efforts to instill customer confidence, even as our members follow public health recommended protocols with absolute compliance.

Premier Ford has stated publicly and forcefully on more than one occasion that the Province was prepared to enact different measures in different regions to control the spread of Covid 19, taking into account the recommendations coming from local health agencies and municipal authorities. Had these recommendations which reflect regional differences been followed, we believe that the Province would not have shut down restaurants and gyms in the Ottawa region.

By way of this letter, we are asking you, Premier Ford, to honour your commitment to allow differentiated Covid-19 control measures in Ottawa to reflect the local recommendations made by Ottawa Public Health to the Province of Ontario, recommendations which are entirely based on the data and risk assessment undertaken by our local health authorities.

We also ask that you undertake to review the latest decision to enact the same measures across all three deemed hot spot areas in the first week of the 28-day period announced by the Province, and that such review be based on the recommendations made for the Ottawa region to the Province of Ontario by Ottawa Public Health.

We expect that the consideration of this local data should give comfort to reinstate indoor dining (with the table-size limits and spacing restrictions prescribed by Dr. Vera Etches and Ottawa Public Health on October 2), and reopen gyms and personal training services (with the group class sizes and spacing restrictions prescribed by Dr. Vera Etches and Ottawa Public Health on October 2).



Ottawa businesses have been operating safely, following all public requirements, and have borne the majority of the financial impacts of the closures. Many have lost their livelihood, savings, and retirement plans to the closures and resulting financial loss engendered by this disease. None could have been prepared for such a significant and sudden loss of their business. Please do not compound their losses with a policy that does not address the local causes of the second wave of the pandemic.

Yours truly,



Mark Kaluski, Chair
Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA)
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