

April 8, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Thank you for your continued leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the situation evolves, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) is receiving concerns from the business community and communicating them to all levels of government.

The OCC would like to echo the concerns of companies like Uber regarding the inclusion of self-employed workers in the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). While we are supportive of this inclusion, the eligibility requirements have given cause for concern.

A recipient must be without any income for at least 14 consecutive days within the initial four-week period; for a subsequent period, they must also expect to have no employment income.

Many self-employed workers have seen a substantial decline in income due to COVID-19 but are still trying to keep their businesses afloat. This includes:

- Drivers providing transportation services through ridesharing platforms
- Hospitality workers preparing meals for people who cannot leave their homes
- Workers operating essential retail businesses
- Couriers delivering food and groceries to people who are practicing self-isolation
- Cleaning staff keeping healthcare facilities clean to prevent the further spread of COVID-19
- Emergency tradespeople ensuring homes and businesses continue to function

Unfortunately, under the current criteria, even if the income of any of these workers has declined by 99 percent due to COVID-19, they are not eligible for the CERB.

We need to ensure that essential services are able to continue with a sufficient supply of labour. The current CERB eligibility requirements threaten these vital services by making Canadians choose between staying home and helping their communities.

The OCC therefore recommends that the government extend CERB eligibility to self-employed workers who can attest they have seen a decline in income of at least 30 percent. By setting it at this threshold, the Government is aligning the CERB with the current Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy; however, we are also advocating that the wage subsidy threshold be converted to a sliding scale or a tax clawback.

Public health and safety during this pandemic are priorities for us all. We will continue to monitor and assess new developments pertaining to COVID-19 closely and work with our members, partners, and all levels of government to provide support to Ontario business.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rocco Rossi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rocco" being more prominent than the last name "Rossi".

Rocco Rossi  
*President and CEO*  
*Ontario Chamber of Commerce*