

March 19, 2020

Hon. Prabmeet Sarkaria
Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction
7th Floor, 56 Wellesley St. W
Toronto, ON M7A 2E7

RE: Supports for small business during the COVID-19 pandemic

Dear Minister Sarkaria,

Thank you for your continued leadership to support both employers and employees as they experience economic disruption related to COVID-19. As the situation continues to evolve, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) is taking concerns from the business community and communicating them to all levels of government.

I am writing to you to request that the Ontario government consider a series of actions to support small businesses as they experience unprecedented revenue losses.

First, build upon previously announced measures to help impacted businesses access credit and capital swiftly, to cover the numerous expenses associated with keeping their lights on. Next, consider a fund to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) finance remote work options. While not all businesses have the capability of introducing remote working, those that do may be faced with considerable costs.

The OCC would also like to identify those small business owners that are perhaps the most important at this time: health care professionals. The Province, alone, or in coordination with the federal government, should create a tax credit for practitioners who must go into quarantine, imperiling their livelihoods and businesses. The sacrifice they make to their health should not also be a professional sacrifice.

Finally, government should do all it can to accelerate payments owed to private sector and non-profit vendors, to help get much-needed cash into the hands of SMEs as quickly as possible.

The OCC is also asking you and your colleagues to work with municipalities to delay or temporarily eliminate taxes and fees on business. We recommend that municipalities delay deadlines for payment of property taxes and waive all interest charges or late penalties charged on those payments. Furthermore, municipalities should be encouraged to postpone or cancel the collection of tourism marketing and/or accommodation taxes for the hospitality sector, which is among the hardest hit during the pandemic.

Public health and safety are priorities for all Ontario businesses. 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,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce