

March 3, 2022

The Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Re: Supporting a Safe and Sustainable Reopening

Dear Premier Ford,

The COVID 19 pandemic has demonstrated that Ontario cannot have a strong business community and economy without a strong health-care system. We are writing on behalf of our organizations to provide recommendations to support a safe and sustainable reopening.

Short-term measures:

- **Continue to use every tool in the toolbox.** Boosters, testing, and therapeutics are all needed to help keep us safe, bolster consumer and business confidence and protect against further labour shortages.
- **Develop and communicate an actionable plan on how the Province intends to respond to the next stages of the pandemic.** We need a comprehensive plan that clearly outlines how Ontario can safely sustain its reopening plan. The current plan provides predictability and a line of sight around key dates for lifting restrictions. Missing still is how the government would respond to a new, potentially more virulent, variant or another wave without implementing blunt instruments like lockdowns.
- **Boost consumer and business confidence.** After two years of uncertainty, government messaging needs to shift to encouraging the safe return to activities like dining in restaurants, shopping in retail stores, going to the gym or the movies, attending events, and travelling. This must be accompanied by clear guidelines and standards for promoting safety in businesses and public places to help reinforce to the public, and particularly the most vulnerable people, the necessary steps are being taken to protect against the transmission of COVID-19.

Long-term measures:

- **Develop sector-specific strategies to address labour market shortages.** A longstanding labour shortage and skills mismatches, exacerbated by the pandemic, are undermining a robust and inclusive recovery in Ontario. Boosting immigration and recognizing sector-specific labour issues through a wider list of national occupation codes recognized on the Labour Market Impact Assessment will support Ontario's economic recovery. Further, removing interprovincial barriers to labour mobility, reaching an agreement on childcare, promoting and funding training and retraining programs for in-demand jobs and building public confidence about the safety of jobs requiring face-to-face contact will all be critical to alleviating labour shortages.
 - **Ontario needs to rebuild its health care system to better withstand future threats.** The Government of Ontario should work with stakeholders to develop a coordinated, evidence-based Health Human Resources (HHR) strategy for Ontario that includes short- and long-term objectives. Doing so will ensure the province has qualified HHR professionals to meet current and future needs, and patients continue to have access to timely and quality care – when and where they need it.
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- **Tackle Ontario's supply chain vulnerabilities.** While amplified by the public health crisis, and ensuing labour shortages, our weak supply chains have hampered economic and business competitiveness as well as our healthcare system. The provincial and federal governments have a responsibility to work collaboratively with stakeholders to investigate pain points along supply chains and make necessary infrastructure investments to ensure their reliability over the long term.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Rocco Rossi
President and CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce



Dan Kelly
President and CEO
Canadian Federation of Independent Business



Diane J. Brisebois
President and CEO
Retail Council of Canada

Cc:

Hon. Christine Elliot, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance
Hon. Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development
Hon. Nina Tangri, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction
Hon. Victor Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade