

June 11, 2019

Mayor Fred Eisenberger and Members of Council
Mayor's Office City of Hamilton
71 Main Street West, 2nd Floor
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 4Y5
(Delivered by email)

Dear Mayor and Members of Council:

On behalf of the Hamilton Farmers' Market, please accept this letter and the attached motion as a request for Council's consideration as soon as possible.

During this unprecedented time of the global pandemic, the Hamilton Farmers' Market has continued to provide Hamiltonians with safe and affordable food that reflects the city's diversity. Since the provincial emergency order starting in March, the Market incurred additional costs while it experienced an 83% decrease in customers in late March. Customer counts in the first week of June are 75% below pre-pandemic levels.

The Market's shoppers were told to stay at home and pool essential purchases within each household. Many found it difficult to access the market since its southerly access through Jackson Square was blocked. Some regular shoppers feared using transit, and many have been intimidated by the gathering of street-people at York and Bay. Concurrently, the City of Hamilton's Emergency Operations Centre's Communications team initially locked down the Market's communication platforms which limited the Market's ability to notify the public that it remained open for business.

The provincial emergency order affected 54 businesses that regularly operate with the Market. Within the first two months, 7 were mandated to halt retailing while an additional 15 were mandated to limit their usual offerings, including two businesses that had originally planned to launch in the Market. On a precautionary basis, an additional 9 businesses did not operate. The remaining 23 businesses continued to provide essential food, but with reduced sales and smaller margins. The resulting hardship for all businesses continues to challenge their ability to pay rent and other costs.

The Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) provides relief for small businesses experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19. It offers unsecured, forgivable loans to eligible commercial property owners in order to reduce the rent owed by their small business tenants.

Unfortunately the CECRA program is not available to the Hamilton Farmers' Market because the Market Corporation operates within a municipal property.

We therefore request that Council support the Hamilton Farmers' Market with an equivalence of the CECRA program. This would amount to 75% of the regular monthly rent revenue for April and May and June 2020, which sums to about \$91,000. As we detail in the motion, the request would be anchored to signed contracts between the small businesses within the Market and the Market Corporation (City of Hamilton).

Thank you in advance for considering our request as a means of sustaining the Hamilton Farmers' Market throughout this extraordinary moment in its 183-year history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Miller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eric" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Miller".

Eric Miller
Chair, Hamilton Farmers' Market Board of Directors

HAMILTON FARMERS' MARKET motion carried at Board Meeting of June 8, 2020

Moved by Gordon Albini, Seconded by Eric Miller

Rent Reductions for Hamilton Farmers' Market Vendors During COVID-19 Pandemic

WHEREAS COVID-19 has had a profound negative affect on all retail businesses including the vendors at the Hamilton Farmers' Market;

WHEREAS the Federal and Provincial Governments have encouraged all landlords to negotiate rent reductions with their tenants;

WHEREAS the Federal Government launched the Canadian commercial Rent Assistance Program (CECRA) to provide support to qualified landlords to enable them to offer a rent reduction of at least 75% to impacted tenants for the months of April, May, and June;

WHEREAS Municipal owned properties are not eligible for the CECRA program but as with other landlords and have an obligation to support impacted business tenants; and

WHEREAS without financial relief there are vendors whose businesses may not survive, creating vacancies that will be difficult to fill in the next 12 – 18 months, causing additional financial pressures on the Market and the tax levy subsidy; and

WHEREAS the number of customers visiting the Farmers' Market have dropped by greater than 75% year-over-year since the Provincial Order;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

- (a) That the City of Hamilton extend a rent reduction agreement with the Hamilton Farmers' Market to provide the same level of assistance as the CECRA program of 75% of the rental revenue for the months of April, May, and June 2020, with calculations to be based on the monthly rent amounts documented in the signed 2020 contracts between the City of Hamilton and the Vendors of the Hamilton Farmers' Market.
- (b) That any future extension of the CECRA, or introduction of comparable Federal or Provincial government programs, also be applied to the Hamilton Farmers' Market.