

Premier Doug Ford

December 2020

Dear Premier Ford,

RE: COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open

We understand that times are unprecedented, and we are very grateful for how the government has stepped up to protect the safety of Canadians along with creating programs to assist and support business, especially Digital Main Street. The decisions you are making each day are challenging and we are sure you are being pulled in many different directions, with no rule book on which to follow. We appreciate you regularly mentioning supporting the small business owners.

We are writing with regards to the restrictions imposed on small businesses in the COVID-19 Response Framework and more specific to Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) that pay an extra tax levy so they can have proper collective cohesion and representation, especially important during times like this. As you know, in Hamilton, we are now in the red stage because of the changing formula and the rising numbers. This means increased restrictions to our small businesses, while the large corporately owned big box stores, malls and casinos are still able to operate, seemingly without impact.

We were concerned at the shocking way Hamilton moved from yellow to red stage, apparently catching even our public health officials off guard. We are concerned that we may soon too go into lockdown stage, with similar notice. Virtually all of our small businesses are complying and following all of the guidelines, while spending and borrowing to cover required PPE expenses and other necessities to operate with restrictions. We simply ask to consider the value of our small businesses when deciding next steps. We appreciate having a premier who understands and supports small business.

We urge you to please create a level playing field so that our small independent Canadian businesses and BIAs, who reinvest their profits back into the local economy, survive. Malls, big box stores and casinos should see the same restrictions imposed on them. If a local retailer is unable to sell books in person, why should a big box store be allowed to?

We appreciate your support for our home-grown businesses who are not only rooted in this community, but also nourish it and add greatly to the tax foundation of this economy. If small business does not survive COVID-19 then the hearts of our cities will be severely impacted, and it will not be the Canada that has historically encouraged entrepreneurship and investment in small business.

Please keep our small businesses, the heart of the Ontario economy, in your heart and mind when making these decisions. We appreciate your consideration and compassion.

Warm Regards.

BIAAC

Cc Mayor Eisenberger, City of Hamilton

Kay Matthews, ED Ontario Business Improvement Area Association