
April 29, 2020

Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister, Government of Canada
Doug Ford, Premier, Government of Ontario
François Legault, Premier, Government of Quebec
Jim Watson, Mayor, City of Ottawa
Maxime Pedneaud-Jobin, City of Gatineau
Perrin Beatty, President & CEO, Canadian Chamber of Commerce
Rocco Rossi, President & CEO, Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Charles Milliard, President & CEO, Quebec Chamber of Commerce

Dear Federal, Provincial and Municipal Political Leaders,

RE: COVID-19 – Recommendations to Revive the National Capital Region

We are reaching out on behalf of the business communities served by the Gatineau Chamber of Commerce, Ottawa Board of Trade and Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la Capitale nationale (RGA). Our organizations have formed a collaboration called the 'GO Alliance' with a mandate to support businesses and increase economic growth in the Ottawa-Gatineau region.

We are strong advocates of the measures created by our government and health officials to flatten the curve and expedite our economic recovery. We promote these measures widely in our respective communities. We also work closely with our local stakeholders and political representatives as well as our Chamber colleagues at the provincial and federal level to support effective and informed decision making.

To that end, we are compelled to share that as we begin week seven of this pandemic, many of our businesses continue to have issues with access and implementation of the programs intended to ease the burden of the current economic environment. In addition, key measures can be taken now to ignite economic activity now and in the future. The primary goal remains to be **rapid approval and deployment of funds to avoid further permanent closures and loss of jobs**. In addition, please consider the following measures;

- Eliminate the income criteria for the wage subsidy and allow all businesses and organizations to benefit including start ups and high growth SMEs. Rapid approval and deployment of this grant is critical to the survival of these businesses.
- Re-evaluate the payroll criteria for the Canada Emergency Business Account to recognize various business models including entrepreneurs who pay themselves through dividends and use consultants and contract workers.
- Accelerate the process of awarding government contracts and funding requests to increase cash flow for businesses and organizations to support new and existing projects.

- Strengthen support for municipalities by providing broad economic support as they mitigate the loss of tax revenues and income generating services, including the ongoing investment of infrastructure projects.
- Review ongoing issues to access funding through BDC and EDC to ensure the practical roll out of the program is meeting the intending objectives. Issues related to clarity regarding eligibility, the guidelines for various financial institutions and the use of personal guarantees are among our top concerns.
- Promote local purchasing policies across the economy to maximize cash flow, supply chains and local business sustainability.
- Re-evaluate impact of the emergency student benefit, as many businesses depend on student labour including essential services and student are being incentivized to not work or work less to qualify.
- Implement long-term support for workforce retention in all sectors of our economy to ensure rapid recovery, productivity and economic stimulation.
- Establish financial assistance measures for businesses with costs arising from the emergency management such as accounting support and legal issues related to Covid-19 as well as training programs required to redeploy staff.
- Reactivate issuing certificates of residence status for businesses by CRA as these documents are required by international customers in order to make a payment for the purchase of goods or for services rendered.
- Re-open construction and launch major projects related to transportation, infrastructure and programming including but not limited to, widening of Hwy 50, new hospital construction, funding for universities, etc.

Again, you have our full support as we work together to minimize the impact of COVID-19 and prepare for rapid recovery. Thank you for your ongoing support and collaboration.

Sincerely,

Anne-Marie Proulx
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Gatineau Chamber of Commerce

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C.c. :

Gatineau City Councillors, Gatineau Members of Provincial Parliament, Gatineau Members of Parliament
Ottawa City Councillors, Ottawa Members of Provincial Parliament, Ottawa Members of Parliament