

**Ottawa Board of Trade, Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas and the
Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la Capitale nationale
Call for Changes**

For Immediate Release: March 18, 2021 While news of Ottawa's Red Zone status as a pre-emptive measure is particularly challenging for those who had invested in supplies for the weekend, the Ottawa Board of Trade (OBOt), the Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA) and the Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la Capitale nationale (RGA) have sent a joint letter to Premier Doug Ford asking for an immediate revision of the business safety framework around COVID-19.

They have been working on this plan for weeks and it was supposed to be released by the Government of Ontario soon. Changes to the framework would support small businesses and ensure equality.

Here is part of what they said to Premier Doug Ford: "We know that all businesses are essential to our overall community health. Therefore, **we are calling on you to revise the framework to address inconsistencies, provide equal opportunity to all businesses and ensure the elimination of unintended consequences. This is an urgent matter.**"

Also:

"Business and consumer confidence is depleting quickly. We need to maintain their trust and cooperation as they fight to keep their businesses open. **Our immediate ask as Ottawa enters the Red Zone in the framework is to change from hard caps to percentage of capacity in service areas for all businesses regardless of sector. This supports the physical distancing mandate. In addition, it ensures the percentage of capacity is equal for all businesses. The spread of the virus does not change depending on whether you are at a supermarket or hardware store.**

And:

"We have consistently called upon you to **give adequate notice to businesses when there is a status change** that affects them. Your agreement and adherence to this protocol demonstrates an appreciation for the operational challenges and financial impacts they face when forced to follow new regulations virtually overnight."

The letter comes immediately after another meeting with Dr. Vera Etches, Ottawa's Medical Officer of Health, to get the most recent facts and details. Even with vaccines rolling out we still need to get from here to there. Ottawa Public Health has been signalling a change for four weeks. Business protocols around employee-to-employee contact must be enforced

Here is more of what we learned from Dr. Etches:

- Half of our outbreaks are coming from workplaces
- Variants are growing exponentially
- Waste water numbers are the same as October and December 2020
- The Red Zone strategy is to **avoid another lockdown**
- Hospitals are over capacity

With warmer weather, we are anticipating the City of Ottawa's soon-to-be-released patio strategy to support businesses. Residents can continue to also order from local establishments to help those who are/were experiencing hardship.

This last year has taught us all that public health, the economy and mental wellness must be part of the same conversation as we deal with COVID-19 and as we plan for rebound.

Dozens of business leaders have been working with us for more than a year to provide valuable insight for our advocacy efforts by making us acutely aware of what is happening on the front line.

For More Information:

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