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April 23, 2021

To our provincial leaders,

**Follow up Re: Urgent Ask for Additional Supports and Clarity for Main Street Businesses**

The Riverside District, Queen Street West, Bloorcourt, Leslieville and West Queen West BIAs are five of Toronto's 80+ BIAs. We collectively represent approximately 1300 small and medium sized businesses and property owners. The views expressed in this letter come from our direct consultations with our members.

We are following up on our letter from April 9th (copy attached) where we requested:

- Clear lines of communication
- More sustained financial support for Toronto area businesses who have been on the longest lockdown in North America - with geographic considerations toward fixed costs
- Scientific and evidence-based decision-making for policies and regulations

**We have not had an official response from the Premier nor Ministers that this letter was originally addressed to. We want to reiterate the continued need for support and with special emphasis on:**

- **Immediately and permanently ceasing the 6% markup that restaurants pay for alcohol from the LCBO.**

Hospitality businesses are one of the most impacted business segments during this pandemic and we are facing a volume of such drastic business closures, we are risking losing the culinary culture and identity of entire cities due to lack of support for this industry.

**We would also urgently request a liaison from the Province to listen to the hardest hit business segments in Toronto which have been under the longest lockdown in North America, such as hospitality, fitness and wellness, and beauty industries.**

Here are some messages directly from a cross-section of affected businesses:

*“My wife and I have been working 12-14 hour days since the onset pandemic just to keep our business afloat. Allowing favourable pricing for licensees would be a welcome lifeline, helping us wean off subsidies while joining the ranks of rest of the world where bulk purchasers find economic viability.” -Shamez Amlani, Owner & Operator of La Palette Restaurant @ 492 Queen St West, Toronto*

*“Our family owned and run business has been on Queen Street East since 2013. Running a local restaurant during a global pandemic has reinforced just how much the local community really wanted us to be here. Locals have sent flowers and their children’s drawings to thank the restaurant for staying open during such a challenging time. During tough times, it really gives you the courage to keep on going. But our business is suffering major losses with every week that passes and we can’t keep our doors opened without stronger government support. Ceasing the 6% markup would be a most welcome step.” -Diana Sideris, Owner & Operator of Tabule Middle Eastern Cuisine @ 810 Queen St East, Toronto*

*“We were caught in the storm of COVID two months after opening and all our original hires left. But I decided that we would not shut down...not even for a day. I kept the doors open through deliveries and takeouts. However, we can’t sustain this business model, we need more hospitality support now to survive to make it through to the return of outdoor and indoor dining.” -Rohit Wadhawan, Owner & Operator of Indian Spice Room @ 717 Queen St East, Toronto*

*“We are a yoga studio since 2014 in the neighbourhood. We’ve qualified for all the government support available, it’s good, but to be completely honest, it’s not enough. There is a lot of red tape around it, and you have to wait quite a while to receive a lot of the funding. Any money that I have received goes right into paying bills. We are pulling out all the stops with live-stream classes, online merchandise and marketing, but with our in-class business shut down the majority of the past year, it is a dire situation and unsustainable at current levels of support.” -Rachelle Wintzen, Owner & Founder of Chi Junky Yoga & Wellness Studio @ 70 McGee Street, Toronto*

*“As the mother and wife of high-risk people, I understand and support all public health measures to reduce the spread of COVID 19 that are backed by scientific evidence. As a spa owner who has not been able to operate since November 23rd, 2020, I am also feeling the devastating impact of these closures on my business, my personal financial health, and the mental health and well-being of myself, my team, and my clients. The toll a year’s worth of half-measures and last-minute decisions has taken on small business owners in Bloorcourt (and across Ontario) is immeasurable and we simply cannot continue on this path.” -Michelle Palmer, Owner & Founder of Pause Beauty @ 993 Bloor St West, Toronto*

Once again, while we recognize that efforts have been made to support our businesses during the ongoing pandemic, not enough has been done. Due to the financial devastation that has been produced by the actions provincial government measures have been enacted to date, some businesses are taking risks under the strain they are experiencing. The only way to navigate past

this reality is to directly address their concerns transparently on a financial, mental and emotional level.

The measures we have outlined are what business leaders need to see now to prevent decimation of our main streets.

On behalf all of the BIAs mentioned above,

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*April 9, 2021*

To our provincial leaders,

**Re: Urgent Ask for Additional Supports and Clarity for Main Street Businesses**

The Riverside District, Queen Street West, Bloorcourt, Leslieville and West Queen West BIAs are five of Toronto's 80+ BIAs. We collectively represent approximately 1300 small and medium sized businesses and property owners. The views expressed in this letter come from our direct consultations with our members.

While we recognize that efforts have been made to support our businesses during the ongoing pandemic, not enough has been done. Our members are looking for outcomes including **more financial support for Toronto-based businesses, policy that is driven by transparent statistics, and clear lines of communication.**

In summary, what is needed:

- **More sustained financial support for Toronto area** businesses who have been on the longest lockdown in North America - with geographic considerations toward fixed costs:
  - Remuneration for sectors that were publicly informed of reopening timeframes and then ordered to abandon reopening plans (including but not limited to health, fitness, beauty, wellness, retail, restaurants, and hospitality)
  - Introducing a sector-specific program for covering reopening and closure costs, such as wasted inventory, staffing costs, etc.
  - Inclusive financial support programs that ensure **all** types of businesses in need are able to participate (i.e. new businesses that have opened during the pandemic, single person businesses).
  - Immediately and permanently cease the 6% markup that restaurants pay for alcohol from the LCBO.
- **Scientific and evidence-based decision-making for policies and regulations:**
  - Transparency is needed with credible facts and sources to identify the reasoning for strong and major business closure actions taken by the provincial government
  - A clear path is needed now for how businesses can plan for re-opening for the remainder of 2021, following the current stay-at-home/ lockdown order, aligned with statistics, clearly associated KPIs (e.g. based on case counts, vaccination rates)

- **Clear lines of communication**

- Outline a clear plan for how lockdown measures will be eased to avoid any further unnecessary costs for reopening and closing of businesses. News releases must immediately come with updated detailed regulations and orders.
- Create a reasonable and clear set of rules for vaccinated people to remove uncertainty for our public-facing main street businesses

Due to the financial devastation that has been produced by the actions provincial government measures have been enacted to date, some businesses are taking risks under the strain they are experiencing. The only way to navigate past this reality is to directly address their concerns transparently on a financial, mental and emotional level.

We are already losing the character of our neighbourhoods and the social and economic diversity in all sectors of industry. The measures we have outlined are what business leaders need to see now to prevent decimation of our main streets.

On behalf all of the BIAs mentioned above,

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