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January 5, 2022

To our provincial leaders,

Re: Urgent Ask from BIAs for Business Supports

The Bloorcourt BIA, Chinatown BIA, Corktown Business & Residents Association, Little Portugal on Dundas BIA, Queen Street West, Riverside BIA, and West Queen West BIA, collectively represent approximately 1800 small & medium sized businesses and property owners in Toronto. The views expressed in this letter come from our direct consultations with many of our members.

On Monday, January 3rd, we learned that significant restrictions for many business industries were being put in place with less than 48 hours notice.

Small and medium sized businesses remain the 'engine of the Canadian economy' and while they are instrumental, they remain equally as vulnerable and fragile during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

As one of our local businesses put it: *"At this stage, we need financial measures more than ever to help us through the next 6 months as we have all been weathering through this pandemic for so long with little respite."*

What we've heard:

- **A third round of the Small Business Support Grant up to \$20,000** - Businesses were reduced/hit hard over the last two weeks of December (often the most profitable weeks of the year) is it critical to ensure they can access up to \$20,000 **per location** owned by a business;
- **Businesses need immediate access to Rapid Antigen Tests** - They are having staffing issues due to illness and close contacts, and continue to operate under a requirement to report COVID cases; however, adequate supplies of Rapid Antigen Tests are not accessible to businesses easily;

- **Access to timely COVID-19 Booster vaccines are needed now** - Businesses are trying to help advise their staff on where to get Boosters but having trouble getting information and appointments locally in a timely manner;
- **Expand the moratorium on commercial rent evictions** - Rent remains one of the highest expenses that businesses incur month-to-month and the current criteria for the ban is not supporting enough small-medium sized businesses.

The BIAs have following main asks of our provincial government, in summary - what is needed:

- Provide additional financial grant support for affected industries as they are still continuing to suffer under significant growing debt and costs due to pandemic restrictions;
- Financial Supports are needed in a timely manner (e.g. in a matter of days vs. weeks/months) when businesses are required to reduce hours or shut down, to ensure they are able to remain solvent and re-open;
- Advanced notice of measures affecting businesses is needed when orders are mandated to allow business operators, local and provincial enforcement agencies to sufficiently and responsibly react and avoid incurring additional closure costs.
- Clear, data-driven and evidence-based rationale for closures of business industries should be made public so that it makes sense for ALL businesses.

We appreciate your ongoing support of businesses and would welcome and appreciate any further dialogue.

On behalf all of the BIAs mentioned above,

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