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Sent: Tuesday, December 1, 2020 10:30 AM
To: CouncilMembers <CouncilMembers@essex.ca>
Subject: Fwd: Concerned Business Owner and Citizen

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From: **Kim Dennison** <kimdennison81@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Dec 1, 2020 at 10:05 AM
Subject: Concerned Business Owner and Citizen
To: <Christine.elliott@pc.ola.org>, <tnatyshak-co@ndp.on.ca>, <doug.fordco@pc.ola.org>

Greetings,

Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

Christine Elliott, Minister of Health & Deputy Premier

Taras Natyshak, MPP

RE: Concerned Business Owner and Citizen

November 26, 2020

I am writing this letter as a small business owner, hoping my words are read with the intention in which they are written. I will be mentioning thoughts, concerns, and some frustrations not only from myself, but also from numerous business owners, clients, and individuals in the community who have expressed what I am now relaying to you.

For the past month, I have been working tirelessly, reaching out to local politicians, lawyers, and seeking counsel from individuals that may offer some sort of logic to government decisions being made. I have reached out to a number of local businesses in the fitness industry as well as business owners in other industries and found we are all trying to sort our way through this ever changing and unprecedented situation.

During the first lockdown, Premier Ford stated that he would be making decisions based on fact, science, and evidence. There is lack of transparency and withholding of important

information rightly due to the public and because of that we are losing faith in decisions made by the authorities that be.

Local 444 Unifor President, David Cassidy sent an email to Dr. Ahmed requesting the **specific** breakdown of data within our region. Dr. Ahmed denied he has access to such information when he stated "All I can tell you *is* that these restrictions for gyms are coming from the province and we don't have any additional local restrictions". Premier Ford, however, is stating the province is relying on information from the medical officer. It has become a cat and mouse game. No one is willing to give a straight answer.

On Monday, November 23, 2020 Dr. Ahmed gave a presentation as to where the COVID transmissions were occurring. The answer: In households via close contacts with a confirmed case. Not at gyms, restaurants and local small businesses. Who is punished for this? The gyms, restaurants and local small businesses suffer. It is extremely concerning that verifiable numbers that state our defense are being ignored. On the contrary, we are being pointed out as the problem.

During the same presentation a number of charts were shown and among them was "COVID-19 in Canada, Table 6". Why is it that the Windsor-Essex area is the one to include footnotes explaining how data has been clustered together in broader categories? Further, fitness facilities are part of the "Other" category. As the footnote states, "Other" groups together outbreaks in settings not listed in the categories above, for example social gatherings, office workplaces, recreational facilities, etc." With restaurants and gyms required to contact trace, the data is available and should be separated for transparency and to *restore trust of the public*.

As an owner of the Onyx Fitness Solutions gym in Essex, I can speak on the part of fitness facilities. Real time data that is accessible through the FIC National Coalition (Fitness Industry Council of Canada) reports that since reopening mid-August, there have been over 20,000,000 workouts in Canada. Further, there were over 7,000,000 workouts in Ontario, and Windsor-Essex has had over 250,000 workouts. The transmission rate in all of Canada is only 0.001%" and the transmission rate locally is 0%!

The health and fitness industry IS essential. It is important for the public to know that during the last lockdown, we (and other club owners) were getting messages and phone calls from members on the verge of mental breakdowns. On more than one occasion a call needed to be placed for emergency services. Why is no one talking about this? It is not right, nor realistic to focus solely on getting the numbers to zero. There is a bigger picture and it need not be ignored.

When we have the LCBO open for the sake of mental health, yet we fail to see the proactive benefit of mental health through fitness... we have a problem. Being healthy remains the best way to fight off illness. When we label fitness facilities as non-essential yet know gyms and human movement are an excellent way to promote mental health and combat anxiety (among other things)... we have a problem. When we have commercials selling "happy pills" for "pandemic anxiety" yet ignore now published statistics of illnesses and deaths due to COVID measures... we have a problem.

On another note, there have been many measures put in place for small businesses. The cost to implement these measures continues to climb and the restrictions on how we run our places of business limits the potential revenue. In contrast, retail has zero restrictions being enforced on them - only the measures they decide to take themselves. These same big box retailers have unlimited people flocking to them daily. These same big box retailers just so happen to be lobbying the government and have the means to do so effectively.

Please understand, we are happy to do what we can to keep the public safe. In fact, we are doing exactly that. Our data shows this is true. However, a number of small businesses are now at a point where they have a difficult decision to make. a) follow restrictions and succumb to another potential lockdown which in turn will close many doors for good or b) civil disobedience. While they are not looking to cause trouble or implement the later of the two, without justifiable reasons, some will see no alternative. Businesses have been and continue to reach out in order to come up with reasonable solutions.

I am now directly addressing the Town of Essex staff and council members. We know and appreciate the hard work you've done to try and bring businesses into Essex. We are calling on you now to help those businesses stay in our community, not only for the sake of business, but for their employees, and customers. We want people to continue shopping in their own town. We need you. You have a voice. Please speak for us and seek the truth.

Respectfully,

Kim Dennison

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