



January 26, 2021

TO: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7H 1A1
premier@ontario.ca

And To: Taras Natyshak, M.P.P. (Hand delivered by Mayor Snively)

Chris Lewis, M.P. (Hand delivered by Mayor Snively)

Re: Impacts of COVID-19 Restrictions on Residents and Small Business Owners

Dear Premier Ford and Prime Minister Trudeau,

At its Special Meeting on Monday, January 18, Council for the Town of Essex received presentations from a number of local residents and small business owners who have been impacted by the current COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions. As directed by Town Council we are writing this letter to convey these concerns and to call on both levels of government to take immediate steps to mitigate the damage that COVID-19 continues to inflict on both our residents and our business community.

Like many small businesses, the presenters at this meeting indicated their frustration with the perceived unequal and inconsistent impacts of restrictions and lockdowns on small, locally-owned businesses. While local large box businesses such as the Costcos and WalMarts have remained opened as "essential services," these large, multinational chains, continue to be allowed to sell the same "non-essential" goods that small businesses cannot. While big box stores reap the benefits of increased traffic due to shuttered downtown stores, our small businesses, whose roots connect to the core of every community in Ontario, continue to suffer and/or fade away. This is a critical time for small business survival and it is absolutely



vital that our federal and provincial governments give small businesses the same opportunity to operate and survive that it has provided to those larger, multi-national corporations.

By way of example news recently came to our attention that five movies were being filmed in Hamilton, Ontario, which is less than a half-a-day's drive from our own community. These productions, which have apparently consisted of up to sixty people working in the same location, have been given the benefit of the doubt in their ability to conduct their work safely. Why has this benefit not been extended to small businesses, many of whom have proven time and time again that they are able to continue to operate safely and provide their so called "non-essential" services to our residents? It seems this may be yet another example of the higher levels of government applying inconsistent restrictions that favour large businesses as opposed to those with the deepest roots in their community: our small business owners.

As a municipality, we accordingly call on the Province of Ontario to provide these same considerations for small, locally-owned businesses. To not do so may very well mean the end of small businesses with dire economic and social consequences as a result.

Finally, our Council heard of the significant impacts these restrictions have had on our residents' and small business owners' mental health. On one hand, our small business owners have seen their livelihoods dry up while being asked to follow the unfair and unequal restrictions. They have been pushed to their mental breaking point, with no end in sight and no consideration for their well-being. This issue has been doubly impactful as residents have lost access to many of the facilities and services which contribute to positive mental health. Gyms, for example, help our residents maintain active lives, a proven strategy for good mental and physical health. Other non-medical health practitioners have had their doors closed even though they contribute to community well-being. Given the limited access and long wait times for mental health practitioners such as social workers and psychologists, we're calling on both levels of government to increase access to mental and physical health services across the country and provide an opportunity for small businesses who have contributed to our community's overall mental and physical health an opportunity to re-open their doors. We agree that the health and safety of all Ontarians is the number one priority but health is a state of physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease.

In summary the current restriction's during the pandemic are inconsistent in their application to large and small businesses and this needs to be changed immediately or else many small businesses will not survive and business owners, their employees and their families will lose





their livelihoods and suffer accordingly. The Town of Essex has every confidence that our small independent businesses, if allowed to open and compete similar to what is permitted for the large box businesses, will have every reason and ability to keep their customers safe by ensuring limited capacity, conduct customer contact tracing and maintain all appropriate distancing and sanitization measures. We ask both levels of government to extend that same confidence to all small businesses everywhere by immediately amending the current restriction's so as to allow small business in Ontario to open and survive by operating safely.

Yours truly,

Robert W. Auger, L.L.B.

Town Solicitor/Clerk, Legal and Legislative Services
519-776-7336 ext 1132
rauger@essex.ca

cc. The Windsor Essex County Health Unit
Attention: Dr. Wajid Ahmed

Medical Officer of Health, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit
Email: wahmed@wechu.org

