

**Premier Doug Ford
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON.
M7A 1A1**

November 3, 2020.

cc

**Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health.
Hon. Christine Elliot, Minister of Health.
Hon. Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance.
Hon. Victor Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.**

Dear Premier Ford,

On behalf of the tourism and hospitality industry, we are writing to you to express concerns brought forward by those we represent in response to the recent decision to move Toronto, Ottawa, York and the Peel regions into a modified stage two.

Whilst we welcome your announcement on November 3rd, to allow these regions (except Toronto) to reopen on November 7th, we have questions regarding the process itself. Specifically, the processes in which these decisions were made, the rationale behind them and how future decisions could impose further restrictions in response to future outbreaks.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism and hospitality industry has recognized that first and foremost this is a health crisis and that the primary objective of government and health officials has been to protect lives.

Our industry has played its part in supporting these efforts. Tourism and hospitality businesses across Ontario have closed, reduced capacity and gone to great lengths to adopt the most stringent health and safety protocols.

As you are aware, tourism and hospitality has been the hardest hit industry in terms of unemployment due to COVID-19. Our diverse sector has endured a confluence of events not experienced by any other sector during this pandemic.

Employers and employees have experienced a perfect storm of rising fixed costs, crashing revenues, job losses, whilst at the same time being gouged by insurance companies and bank fees to stay in business. Eight months in, these regions have regressed into a modified stage two with no realistic end in sight. Many simply can't survive a prolonged lockdown.

We'd like to bring to your attention that the recent decision by the Province to place these regions into a modified stage two, without providing clear rationale or evidence, has raised concerns and questions.

It was recently reported through the data released by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. David Williams, that in Ottawa, just 2% of COVID-19 outbreaks were connected to restaurants and bars in the city and that in regions such as Peel, the data highlights that Ontarians were more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 through a retail outlet than from a restaurant or bar. This raises questions as to why the modified stage two restrictions didn't include a reassessment of which businesses should and shouldn't be permitted to open.

What evidence is there to suggest Ontarians are at a greater risk dining in a restaurant operating at limited capacity, attending a conference meeting in a hotel or staying overnight in a business which is following the highest levels of health and safety compared to a shopping mall with hundreds of patrons passing close to each other in enclosed spaces?

It is people, not businesses that spread COVID-19. We are both proud and confident in the difference that controlled and staffed environments in our hotels, attractions and restaurants are making to provide safe experiences for Ontarians.

The groups we represent emphatically believe that when a business fails to meet the standards required, they should be dealt with accordingly to ensure public safety. However, we strongly believe that all enterprises should be treated fairly and equally when deciding if they are required to close, instead of blanket closure orders on businesses that uphold the highest levels of health and safety, where there is no evidence of community spread.

A uniform and consistent approach is needed from government and public health units in recognizing and evidencing risk when making decisions on closures and reopening procedures.

In a period of sustained insecurity for businesses, we are receiving reports of inconsistent ruling on regulations and enforcement officers enforcing bylaws in some areas and not in others. Businesses are confused by the lack of clarity and communication from authorities. When many companies are fighting for their survival, these inconsistencies and fear of uneven enforcement put many at risk of permanent closure.

We are also fearful that if Ontarians are unnecessarily restricted for an extended period from socializing in safe spaces, this will inevitably lead to assemblies in private homes.

The tourism and hospitality industry in Ontario has worked with the World Tourism and Travel Council to implement the "Safe Travels Stamp." Businesses have invested in PPE, rigorously trained their staff and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to make their facilities safe.

Yet despite this, inconsistent messaging on the safety of travel is damaging the confidence levels of Ontarians. Travel in Ontario is not inherently more dangerous than any other activity, yet Ontarians are actively discouraged from

doing so through inconsistent messaging, or are being influenced by the decision to impose blanket closures.

This inconsistent and often incorrect messaging on travel safety is causing long-lasting damage and confidence in our sector. We fear that the damage caused by this could long outlast the harmful impact of the virus itself and result in our international competitors overtaking us on the road to recovery.

The tourism and hospitality industry is eager to work with you to understand the framework and rationale behind these decisions.

By opening a dialogue we can share evidence of the significant work being undertaken to address health and safety concerns and work together to address any misconceptions or concerns about our industry.

In that spirit, we would request the opportunity to meet with you urgently to discuss the concerns raised in this letter.

Our industry remains steadfast in our commitment to play a key role in defeating COVID-19 and helping to rebuild our economy. To achieve both, we must work together using the evidence available to us to make precise and targeted decisions that safeguard Ontarians' health and the health of our economy. It is imperative that businesses, at all stages, are included in these discussions,

It would be a tragedy if Ontarians were to defeat COVID-19 but the businesses and jobs that their livelihoods depended on were lost unnecessarily.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Troy Young".

Troy Young
Chief Executive Officer
Attractions Ontario



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Layzell".

Rick Layzell
President & CEO
Boating in Ontario



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory Crist".

Gregory G. Crist
CEO
Canadian Vacation
Ownership
Association



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Kennedy".

Bianca Kennedy
President- CAEM



Rebecca Mackenzie
President & CEO
Culinary Tourism
Alliance



Heather Lalonde
Chief Executive Officer
Economic Developers
Council of Ontario
(EDCO)



Martin Roy
President
Festivals and Major
Events (FAME)



Dave MacNeil
Chief Executive Officer
Festivals & Events
Ontario



Terry Mundell
President & CEO
Greater Toronto Hotel
Association



Kevin Eshkawkogan
Chief Executive Officer
Indigenous Tourism
Ontario



Krista Marie LeClair
Executive Director
Kingston
Accommodation
Partners



Laurie Marci
Executive Director
Nature and Outdoor
Tourism Ontario



Kay Matthews,
Executive Director
Ontario Business
Improvement Area
Association



Louisa Mursell
Executive Director
Ontario By Bike /
Transportation
Options



Landon French
Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Federation of
Snowmobile Clubs



Steve Ball
President
Ottawa Gatineau Hotel
Association



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin Nichol".

Kevin Nichol
President
Ontario Snow Resorts
Association (OSRA)



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Elenis".

Tony Elenis
President & CEO
The Ontario
Restaurant, Hotel and
Motel
Association (ORHMA)



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Grace Sammut".

Grace Sammut
Executive Director
Resorts of Ontario



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Beth Potter".

Beth Potter
President & CEO
Tourism Industry
Association of Ontario



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Morrison".

Adam Morrison
President & CEO
OTEC