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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor & Members of City Council
Chambers of Commerce
Media

Date: April 17, 2020

Subject: COVID-19 – Update

SUMMARY

We've been busy over the last week ensuring that we close the gaps of some of our programs. We passed the emergency wage subsidy in the House of Commons, we loosened the eligibility rules for the Canada Emergency Response benefit and the Canada Emergency Bank Account, we introduced the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program, we introduced support for businesses that do not qualify for the other measures, we provided more support for employers of temporary foreign workers, and we updated the Quarantine Act.

UPDATES

Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy:

On a rare Saturday Session of Parliament, the House of Commons and the Senate passed the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and it received Royal Assent. This means that businesses can now tap into the program.

Canada Emergency Response Benefit:

To help more Canadians benefit from the CERB, the Government will be changing the eligibility rules to:

- Allow people to earn up to \$1,000 per month while collecting the CERB.
- Extend the CERB to seasonal workers who have exhausted their EI regular benefits and are unable to undertake their usual seasonal work as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Extend the CERB to workers who recently exhausted their EI benefits and are unable to find a job or return to work because of COVID-19.
- We are also working with provinces and territories to help provide a temporary top-up to the salaries of workers deemed essential in the fight against COVID-19, that make less than \$2,500 a month.
- The top-up is in recognition that these essential workers' salaries are often less or similar than what they would receive from the CERB.

We will continue to look for ways to better help all Canadians during this difficult time.

Canada Emergency Bank Account (CEBA) Adjustments:

- We know that many small businesses are worried about paying the rent, paying suppliers, and keeping people employed.
- Last week, we launched the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA), which is offering interest-free, partially forgivable loans of up to \$40,000.
- To date, more than 195,000 loans have been approved.
- To support even more small businesses, we are expanding the eligibility requirements of CEBA to allow businesses with between \$20,000 and \$1.5 million in annual payroll to apply.
- Our Government is taking decisive action to keep our businesses strong, so that when this is over they can continue to create jobs, and support their communities.

Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA):

As Canadians take action in the fight against COVID-19, we know that many businesses are worried about being able to pay rent. Landlords across the country have stepped up to the plate, offering relief to their tenants, and helping them get through this challenging time. Our Government commends their leadership.

In recognition of the challenges facing Canadian businesses and property owners, our Government intends to introduce Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) for small businesses. This program will seek to provide loans and/or forgivable loans to commercial property owners who provide businesses with rent reductions in April, May and June. To do this, we require partnership with provincial and territorial governments, who govern owner-tenant relationships, and we hope to have more to say soon.

Support for Businesses Who Don't Qualify for Other Measures:

Through Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, we are providing immediate help to businesses in need through programs such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and Canada Emergency Business Account. However, it has become clear that certain sectors of our economy, and their workers, may not qualify for existing measures. That's why we are taking additional action to provide immediate relief to:

- Innovators and young entrepreneurs;
- Businesses in rural communities;
- Businesses not eligible for other emergency support measures;
- And organizations in the cultural, heritage, and sports sector.

We will continue to ensure that workers in every sector are protected, and that families have the help they need to put food on the table and pay the bills.

Innovation

- Canada is a nation of innovators who drive our economy forward and create new opportunities for all Canadians.
- In the face of COVID-19, our Government recognizes that many innovative, early-stage companies are unable to access existing emergency support measures.

- To better support these organizations, we are investing \$250 million through the National Research Council of Canada's Industrial Research Assistance Program.
- We're supporting our innovators today, so that they can help us emerge from this challenge stronger than ever.

Regional Support

- Our Government recognizes that businesses in different parts of the country may face unique realities and challenges in the face of COVID-19.
- As a result, many businesses may be unable to access our Government's existing emergency support programs.
- In order to give equivalent financing support to these small and medium-sized businesses, our Government is investing \$675 M in Canada's Regional Development Agencies.
- At the same time, we will ensure that rural businesses and communities have access to much-needed capital by investing \$287M in the Community Futures Network to support small businesses in rural communities.
- This new financing will help support the businesses that will help keep our communities strong through this crisis.

Sports, Events, Arts and Culture

- With stages dark, sports events cancelled, and summer festivals postponed, many of the organizations that keep our communities strong are struggling to make ends meet.
- Through a new \$500 M COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund for Cultural, Heritage, and Sport Organizations, we will make sure that our artistic and athletic organizations are supported during this challenging time.

Energy Sector

- Canada's energy sector, which provides more than 170,000 good, well-paying jobs across the country, is dealing with unprecedented challenges due to COVID-19, and a global surge in crude oil supply.
- To support the hard-working men and women in our energy sector, our Government is taking targeted action to create and protect approximately 10,000 jobs, while also moving us closer to our environmental targets.
- We will:
 - Provide up to \$1.72 billion to clean up orphan and inactive oil and gas wells;
 - Provide up to \$750 million to create a new Emissions Reduction Fund;
 - And expand eligibility for the new BCAP program to help medium-sized businesses including those in the energy sector.
- These actions will help keep Canadians working, and support the sector through these significant challenges.

Temporary Foreign Workers:

We will be providing employers with \$1,500 per temporary foreign worker to help cover the costs of meeting regulations and to ensure temporary foreign workers quarantine for at least 14 days when they arrive, as mandated by our government.

Quarantine Act:

Today, in an effort to continue minimizing the impacts of the pandemic on Canadians and stopping the spread of COVID-19, regulatory amendments under the Contraventions Act came into force. These changes provide increased flexibility for law enforcement agencies, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, local and provincial police forces, to issue tickets to individuals who do not comply with orders under the Federal Quarantine Act.

Under this ticketing regime, when a ticket is issued, an individual can pay the ticket voluntarily, avoiding a trial and a criminal record. This will help save valuable court and enforcement agency resources, which is particularly important during this ongoing pandemic.

These amendments do not prevent law enforcement from pursuing a matter through the summary conviction procedure set out in the Criminal Code, should they deem that more serious action is warranted.

These enforcement measures are in addition to provincial and municipal orders that have already been enacted in some jurisdictions, which allow for ticketing. These changes provide law enforcement with an additional tool to enforce public health rules and help keep all Canadians safe.

Infection Protection and Control for COVID-19:

On Sunday, the Public Health Agency of Canada released the *Infection Prevention and Control for COVID-19: Interim Guidance for Long-Term Care Homes*, a guide to help long-term care homes prevent and fight the spread of COVID-19 in their facilities.

Municipalities:

This past week, I have impressed upon the appropriate members of Cabinet, the need to concentrate resources to Municipalities. With respect to the Gas Tax Fund, acknowledging that this fund provides a mechanism for municipalities to adhere to PSAB (Public Sector Accounting Board), FRAS Canada (Financial Reporting and Assurance Standards) and their Asset Management Plans attached to same – relevant more so now as a result of COVID. Finances (Operational & Capital) have been redeployed by residents, businesses and municipalities. This redeployment(s) will result in deferrals of capital projects and/or added pressure on (property) taxpayers and water/wastewater ratepayers (capital fixed rates and usage rates). Report 2020-02 – Re-Branding the Gas Tax Fund, forwarded to Budget 2020 and to Niagara Centre municipalities, addresses that relief. A re-branded program aligning with local and national past, existing economic strategies, will contribute to post COVID “sustainable” economic recovery.

- Recommendations include:
 - That the federal government double the current “Gas Tax” funding arrangement as was contained within the 2019 budget and Report 2020-02 – Re-Branding the Gas Tax Fund submitted to Budget 2020.
 - Accelerate approvals of existing capital project applications.
 - Expand the eligibility criteria of the 75% Canada Emergency Response Benefit - Wage Subsidy to all municipal employers.

- Working with you:
 - Weekly, sometimes daily, communication/updates with local mayors and staff.
 - Established a process with local municipalities and private sector partners to prepare a post COVID Economic Recovery Plan.
 - Working with the appropriate federal government departments to accelerate capital project applications.
 - Impressing upon the appropriate federal government departments the importance to move forward with Budget 2020 submitted reports, previously forwarded to Niagara Centre municipalities.
 - Suggest that Mayors and Members of City Council distribute reports and resolutions amongst each other, supporting local recommendations and forward to myself and the appropriate levels of government.

Once again, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all residents, our front-line workers, essential service providers, government partners at all levels, businesses and students, for your ongoing efforts to help in this time of crisis. We are in this together! Your daily efforts are ensuring that we will get through this together. If you require any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact our office.