

VIA EMAIL

February 3, 2021

All Members of Provincial Parliament  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, Ontario

**Re: Reopen the Ontario economy now**

Dear Member of Provincial Parliament:

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) represents 110,000 small- and medium-sized businesses in all sectors across Canada, including 42,000 in Ontario.

We are writing to urge you to support reopening Ontario's small businesses as soon as the current lockdown ends on February 10.

In recent days and weeks, we have seen similarly locked down jurisdictions in Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec all move to safely reopen their doors while Ontario business owners remain in the dark. Meanwhile, Ontario remains the most locked down province in Canada, with no signs of restrictions being eased in the near term.

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	PEI	NS	NL
% of small firms fully open	64%	60%	76%	45%	37%	44%	64%	80%	65%	50%

Currently, only 37 per cent of Ontario's small businesses are fully open. Only 32 per cent are fully staffed, and, coming off what is normally the best season of the year, **only 18 per cent are at normal revenue levels.**

Many Ontario businesses have been shut down entirely for multiple stretches during the pandemic. For example, hair salons across the province have lost at least 117 days (37 per cent of the pandemic period) to government closures. Restaurants have been without indoor dining for at least 152 days (48 per cent of the pandemic period). In Toronto and Peel, where closures have been more frequent, gyms have been shut down for 200 days or more than 60 per cent of the time since the first lockdown in late March.

Even with help from government support programs, it is simply not possible for many businesses to hang on much longer. The only way to save small business is to reopen.

We are not calling on government to immediately end every business restriction. We believe there is a middle ground between a full lockdown of the economy and business as usual. We urge government to reopen **all Ontario businesses at 20 per cent capacity on February 10 when the current lockdown measures expire.**

While federal and provincial government programs have helped to keep thousands of small businesses afloat, even the very few businesses that have qualified for every single relief program are not breaking even, and their debt levels are rapidly mounting. The average small business debt in Ontario is over \$93,000 and increasing every day.

We have to move from subsidies to sales now.

### **Ontario Small Business Support Grant**

As the province gets set to reopen, it is crucial that government supports work for as many businesses as possible. Almost three-quarters (74.4 per cent) of our Ontario members report that government relief programs are essential to their survival in 2021.

While the Ontario Small Business Support Grant is working well for eligible businesses, we are hearing from far too many that have been excluded. Ontario's lockdown measures are affecting far more than just the businesses that have been ordered to close.

Essential businesses like dry cleaners and dentists in downtown cores have seen business vanish during the pandemic and further diminish with the stay-at-home order, yet they are ineligible. Bed-and-breakfasts aren't hosting domestic or foreign tourists, and catering companies have no events to service, yet they are ineligible. Contractors are not allowed to take on new work, and breweries are forced to close taprooms and bottle shops, yet they too are ineligible. These are just a few examples of businesses ineligible for Ontario's new grant.

We urge you to support expanding the new grant program immediately to include any businesses that:

- Witnessed a drop in sales due to the stay-at-home order
- Have been locked down since the beginning of the pandemic (e.g. amusement parks)
- Were locked down in the spring of 2020

It should be a priority of the Ontario government to immediately expand eligibility for this desperately needed grant to as many businesses as possible.

We need your immediate help. Your Main Street needs your immediate help.

We ask you to join us in urging the government to create a path to safe reopening now that leads to **all Ontario businesses reopening at 20 per cent capacity on February 10.**

Thank you for your attention to this important matter that affects the survival of thousands of small businesses in all sectors across the province.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by*

Dan Kelly  
President and CEO

*Original signed by*

Ryan Mallough  
Director of Provincial Affairs, Ontario

*Original signed by*

Julie Kwiecinski  
Director of Provincial Affairs, Ontario