

OPEN LETTER: Swift Action Required to Reverse Devastating Impacts of Needless Restaurant Shutdowns

April 6, 2021

VIA E-MAIL

The Honourable Doug Ford, MPP
Premier of Ontario
Premier's Office
Room 281, Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Premier Ford:

Last week's abrupt move to shut down all dining so soon after easing restrictions has cost Ontario's restaurants more than \$100 million in reopening and closing costs alone. They are counting on your government to act quickly to save our industry, which typically employs more than 450,000 people.

When provincial and municipal health officials encouraged restaurants to reopen for patio dining in Grey-Lockdown areas, they did so in recognition of the lower risk of transmission in outdoor spaces and the need for options to support mental health and well-being. By turning around less than two weeks later to reverse this decision, while allowing other industries to continue indoor operations, your government has needlessly undercut confidence in the restaurant industry.

This is not an "emergency brake": as evidenced by the crowded retail stores and plentiful private gatherings over the weekend, scapegoating the restaurant sector is clearly not going to get the province's third wave under control.

On behalf of Ontario's hard-hit foodservice industry, **Restaurants Canada and the Ontario Restaurant Hotel Motel Association are calling on your government to take the following immediate actions:**

- For public health measures to be fair and effective, all industries must be impacted equally.
- Patio dining should remain available as an alternative to private gatherings, as safe options for enjoying outdoor activities are important for people's mental health.
- All restaurants should be supported financially to mitigate rising debt in the following ways:
 - Making further funding available through the Ontario Small Business Support Grant program and allowing all foodservice establishments to receive funding.

- Introducing a sector-specific program for covering reopening/closure costs such as wasted inventory, staffing costs, patio setup/takedown, etc.
- Extending the property tax and energy cost rebate programs to all foodservice businesses that have been impacted by Red-Control level restrictions.
- Immediately ending the 6% markup that restaurants pay for alcohol from the LCBO.

Unfortunately, we are not all in this together. In a year when so many others have continued to receive their full pay, and some industries thrived during the pandemic, those in the restaurant sector have never worked harder and lost so much through no fault of their own.

Premier, this does not have to continue. Restaurants provide a safe alternative to private gatherings and should be supported in their efforts to do so.

We are ready to work with you and your government to revive the economy and provide Ontario residents with safe spaces to spend time with each other outside of their homes.

We look forward to an opportunity to meet as soon as possible to ensure we are doing everything possible to help restaurants continue to contribute to the economic and social fabric of their communities.

Sincerely,



Todd Barclay
President and CEO
Restaurants Canada



Tony Elenis
President & CEO
**Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel
Association (ORHMA)**

c.c.: The Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier & Minister of Health
The Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance
The Hon. Victor Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
The Hon. Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries