

# **OPEN LETTER: Data Transparency and Industry Consultation Needed to Save Ontario Restaurants**

October 29, 2020

**VIA E-MAIL**

The Honourable Doug Ford, MPP  
Premier of Ontario  
Premier's Office  
Room 281, Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford:

As Ontario continues to endure a second wave of COVID-19, restaurants are being singled out and deserve to understand why. An increasing number of jurisdictions are being targeted with heightened restrictions, including indoor dining closures. Yet no data has been provided that points to restaurants being the source of transmission.

Since the start of the pandemic, restaurants across the country have invested more than \$750 million in new procedures and training, personal protective equipment, sanitizer stations, air purification systems and other means to ensure the highest levels of safety for staff and patrons. National research indicates that 87 per cent of Canadians agree that restaurants are doing a good job of keeping us all safe.

Despite these investments, restaurants are being forced to shut down indoor dining without data that clearly justifies how this will curb community spread. Restaurants provide a safe alternative to private gatherings and government should be supporting their efforts to do so as much as possible.

Restaurants Canada estimates that the indoor dining closures mandated in Ontario's COVID-19 hot spots have so far resulted in:

- Sales losses of as much as 80 per cent for full-service restaurants and more than 40 per cent for quick-service restaurants.
- Tens of thousands of jobs lost across the province:
  - 12,000 in Ottawa
  - 33,000 in Toronto
  - 14,900 in Peel Region
  - 8,800 in York Region

Indoor dining closures in Halton and Durham regions could mean another 8,500 job losses.

Our local restaurants want to be able to pull through the pandemic and continue serving our communities. However, without transparent transmission data and further government support, half of all independent restaurants are at risk of closing within a year.

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Restaurants and the many small and medium-sized businesses that make up Ontario's foodservice sector are a critical load-bearing pillar of the province's economy. Before the pandemic struck, our industry comprised approximately 38,000 establishments, contributing 4 per cent to Ontario's GDP and serving more than 9 million customers every day.

Our industry also supports a wide variety of other businesses across the province, indirectly supporting more than 110,000 jobs and typically spending more than \$13 billion per year on food and beverage purchases, playing a critical role for Ontario farmers and the agri-food sector.

On behalf of Ontario's vital foodservice sector, we are calling for:

- Clear and transparent data to understand what is driving government decisions related to dining restrictions.
- Consultation with industry to address any concerns identified by the data.

Restaurants are key to the province's COVID-19 recovery. Let's ensure we are doing everything possible to help them avoid the devastating consequences of indoor dining closures so they can continue contributing to the economic and social fabric of their communities.

c.c.: The Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier & Minister of Health  
The Hon. Rod Phillips, 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

Sincerely,

Luke Chapman  
Interim President  
**Beer Canada**

Jordan Holm  
President  
**Boston Pizza International**

Jeff Newton  
President  
**Canada's National Brewers**

Scott Hart  
Chief Operating Officer  
**Drake Hotel Properties**

Glenn Brown  
President & CEO  
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**Gordon Food Service Canada**

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Nivera Wallani  
President and General Manager  
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Mark Findlay  
Chief Executive Officer  
**Lone Star Texas Grill**

Sean Bell  
Chief Financial Officer  
**Mary Brown's Chicken and Taters**

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**McDonald's Restaurants of Canada**

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**The CFW Group**

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President  
**The Pickle Barrel**

Bruce Miller  
President  
**The WORKS Craft Burgers & Beer, South  
St. Burger, Big Smoke Burger, TOSTO  
Quickfire Pizza & Pasta**

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**Tim Hortons**

George Croft  
President and CEO  
**Waterloo Brewing**