



Ottawa's Business Leaders Issue Open Letter to Governments Calling for More Action to Help Companies Survive COVID-19 and Help Drive Economic Recovery

Ottawa, Ontario – April 15, 2020: In close collaboration with Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson, economic leaders across the Ottawa Region issued an open letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Premier Doug Ford to recommend additional action to help more companies survive the pandemic and help drive economic recovery.

The group, representing more than 28,000 entrepreneurs, business owners, and companies in Canada's Capital, extended thanks to the provincial and federal governments for all steps to date, and emphasized increased and targeted business support is required to help firms overcome this crisis. In 2019 alone, Ottawa-Gatineau contributed more than \$80 Billion to Canada's GDP. The proposed measures aim to ensure that Ottawa continues to fuel the economic growth of our province and nation.

Signatories include Invest Ottawa, the Ottawa Board of Trade, the Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA), the Ottawa Festival Network, Ottawa Tourism, and Le Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la capitale nationale. Among the recommendations, the group calls for the governments to:

- Eliminate the revenue criteria for the 75% wage subsidy established by the Government of Canada enabling any high-growth domestic tech company, small-to-medium-sized business, and not-for-profit that filed taxes in 2019 to apply for this benefit.
- Provide targeted support to marginalized entrepreneurs and business owners at significant risk across key equity seeking groups identified by the Government of Canada to propel critical progress and economic growth: Women; Francophone entrepreneurs; 2SLGBTQ+ community; Indigenous communities; persons with disabilities; and racialized people.
- Provide rent support programs with flexible terms and conditions that offer equivalent and mutually beneficial support for both property owners and tenants that help to preserve the long-term economic stability and viability of both parties during the crisis and recovery.
- Increase provincial coordination and collaboration on fundamental policies, health measures and socio-economic actions during the COVID-19 crisis and recovery to preserve and further strengthen the critical business partnership and supply chains between Ottawa and Gatineau.
- Bolster support for the City of Ottawa and fellow municipalities providing vast economic support to companies and communities, while grappling with an unprecedented loss of tax revenue, jobs, and revenue-generating programs and services. This includes continued investment for strategic infrastructure projects including LRT Stage 2 and 3.
- Establish emergency support and aid packages for tourism and related industries with strong, sustained investment in tourism marketing; support for conventions, festivals, sports and cultural events; and incentives for Canadians to travel domestically.

Read the full letter [here](#).

“Our provincial and federal governments have taken critical steps to help preserve the health of our citizens and economy and slow the spread of COVID-19. By taking further action to address key needs and gaps in critical sectors that advance Canada as an innovative, global technology leader, we can preserve more jobs, top talent, supply chains, high-growth firms and future market opportunity. This is critical to help companies that anchor our main street, technology and innovation economy overcome this crisis, and fuel job creation and economic growth during recovery.”

Eli Fathi, Serial Entrepreneur and CEO, MindBridge Ai

“Entrepreneurs, self-employed workers, and small businesses such as restaurants, retailers, trades and service providers are devastated by the current loss of customers and revenue. Greater support is urgently needed to help these at-risk firms manage fixed costs, support cash flow and maintain jobs. This includes womxn founders, marginalized entrepreneurs and business owners who often face even greater challenges to acquire financing, manage greater responsibility at home, and continue operating.”

Karla Briones, Founder of Freshii (Westboro) and Global Pet Foods; Invest Ottawa Advisor; and 2018 Ottawa Immigrant Entrepreneur Award Winner

“The actions and investment recommended for our region are critical to the long-term success and sustainability of our local ecosystem and national economy. This collective support will help to ensure we are well positioned to drive innovation and growth in strategic global sectors during the recovery. It will allow Ottawa to harness key strengths in disruptive technologies such as CAVs, intelligent transportation, and connected communities as we emerge from the pandemic. These global market opportunities will demand the expertise of many innovators, companies and organizations across the Ottawa Region.”

Mr. John Wall, Senior Vice President and Co-Head of BlackBerry Technology Solutions

“We need to make sure to put all tourism businesses, especially small local businesses, in the spotlight or else there is not much left for tourists when they come back.”

Dr. Maria Rasouli, Owner, Escape Bicycle Tours & Rentals, and 2015 Ottawa Immigrant Entrepreneur Award Winner

Ottawa Quick Facts

- Ottawa has the second-highest concentration of tech talent in North America with 9.9% of its workforce employed in this sector, just behind San Francisco at 10%
- 68,000 skilled people are employed by more than 1,750 companies in the technology and knowledge-based industries
 - Ottawa is a bedrock of disruptive technology expertise, infrastructure and world-leading companies in telecommunications, cybersecurity, Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAV), AI and machine learning
 - Ottawa’s West End is home Kanata North Tech Park, the largest of its kind in Canada, which generated \$13 billion to GDP in 2018
- 6,200 small businesses and property owners generate \$250 million property tax revenue
- Ottawa’s visitor economy contributes over \$3 billion to Ottawa’s GDP, with tourism-related sectors and festivals generating \$755 million in taxes each year

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Backgrounders

About Invest Ottawa

Invest Ottawa is the lead economic development agency for knowledge-based industries in Canada's Capital, facilitating economic growth and job creation in the City of Ottawa. Guided by a vision to help realize Ottawa's full potential as a globally recognized, innovative and future-ready city, and the best place to learn, work, live, and play. Invest Ottawa delivers venture development, global expansion and talent programs and services that catalyze the growth and success of entrepreneurs and firms. These include: small business training; mentorship; acceleration for technology firms; foreign business and investment attraction; local business retention and expansion in targeted sectors; commercialization; and marketing Ottawa's diversified economy and high quality of life. Since 2012, Invest Ottawa has worked with thousands of entrepreneurs and companies; helped firms attract more than \$602M in capital; contributed to the creation of more than 8,450 jobs; and attracted \$575M in domestic and foreign investment: www.investottawa.ca

About the Ottawa Board of Trade

The Ottawa Board of Trade is the single largest independent Voice of Business in Ottawa, representing over 1000 members and 20,000 employees from multiple industries for the past 163 years. The Board of Trade advocates for the economic prosperity of its community through Advocacy, Dialogue and Connections. We help Ottawa companies of all sizes increase their visibility, raise their profile, and create new business opportunities through business partnerships, networking & educational events, award recognitions, publications, and innovative business practices. For additional information, please visit: www.ottawabot.ca

Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA)

The Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA) has been formed to engage, organize, and advocate for the 19 BIAs across Ottawa. Collectively, these BIAs represent thousands of businesses and property owners in urban, suburban, and rural areas in the City of Ottawa. For additional information, please visit: www.ocobia.org

About the Ottawa Festival Network

The Ottawa Festival Network advances a dynamic industry through research, advocacy and education. We create an effective networking environment for festivals, special events and fairs in Canada's Capital Region. A not-for-profit service organization, we work cooperatively with members and partners towards a vibrant, inspired and prosperous festival capital. For additional information, please visit: <https://www.ottawafestivals.ca/>

About Ottawa Tourism

Ottawa Tourism provides destination development and marketing, strategic direction, and leadership in cooperation with its members and partners, welcoming leisure travellers, business travellers, group tours,

and conventions to Ottawa and Canada's Capital Region. Its goal is to support the local tourism economy, fueled by an estimated 11 million visitors per year and with \$3 billion in economic output for Ottawa, generating community wealth through tourism. Ottawa Tourism's vision is to offer the complete capital experience, tell the story of Canada, and get people talking. For additional information, please visit: <https://www.ottawatourism.ca/>

About le Regroupement des gens d'affaires de la capitale nationale (RGA)

The RGA is a must for french-speaking business owners and francophiles. Our organization is one that brings together businesses, entrepreneurs, young entrepreneurs, ethnocultural entrepreneurs as well as the self-employed. For additional information, please visit: www.rga.ca/