

August 28, 2020

Dear Prime Minister and Ministers Ng, Hussen, McKenna, Joly, Monsef and Freeland,

Re: Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) Program

Businesses on the main streets and in the downtowns of Canada continue to struggle through the impacts of COVID. Our communities are suffering as our streets do not ring with the usual joy and fellowship of summer. Our business owners plan and revise those plans of how they are going to survive and hopefully recover.

Some of these businesses have benefitted from the programs you have created, but many have not. We appreciate what you and your respective teams continue to do, but there is one program that we believe should be further fine-tuned or have the funds re-allocated in a more creative manner.

On April 29th, the International Downtown Association – IDA Canada wrote you to suggest some essential changes to the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) Program. We would like to reinforce the importance of a few points made in that letter:

- Many small businesses have wanted to take advantage of this program, but have not had the co-operation of their landlords. Also landlords must attest to the circumstances of the tenant, which reduces the chance of applying on their behalf. We suggest that the program be amended to allow businesses owners to apply.
- The 70% threshold of this program is making it difficult for many of our businesses to qualify. We request that this threshold be reduced to 55%.
- We urge you to raise the matter of eviction protection with provincial counterparts. It is a matter of great concern to many businesses across the country, but it is unequally dealt with by provincial jurisdictions. If you are within a province which has

not enacted emergency commercial eviction protection, we ask that you please reach out to your MLA to discuss this inequity.

Thank you for considering feedback about support programs and your flexibility on extensions. We understand that this program is open for recommendations to make it more attractive as well as for extension. If you do not believe this program should be altered, we suggest that you take some of the ample funds from it to be shared with BIA/BID/BIZ/SDCs across the country so they can support their local businesses more fully. As professionals who lead these organizations, we know our businesses well and regularly create an array of programs which help invigorate those businesses. As a result of COVID, we and our colleagues are already creating programs with our own funds to support space reconfigurations, marketing, training & education, and public space programming. We could use some help!

With the other five-hundred Business Improvement Associations and societies de development commercial, we represent over 250,000 business and property owners in districts which contain billions of dollars in assessment. More importantly, we represent those commercial neighbourhoods in every community which have employed literally millions of employees and which have been the very spark plug of community – economically, socially and culturally. We stand ready to work with all in the implementation of programs which address our current situation and those that will kick-start recovery.

Yours Sincerely,

Graziella Grbac

Graziella Grbac
Executive Director,
The Village On Main
(Main Street Dartmouth Business/Community Improvement District)

CC:
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