



March 31, 2020

Hon. Mary Wilson
Minister of Economic Development and Small Business
Province of New Brunswick

Dear Mary,

We hope you and your family are coping well with the unprecedented times we are experiencing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As organizations representing close to 3,000 businesses in New Brunswick's three largest cities, we appreciate the steps your government has made to date to support business through this crisis. These are difficult days for all of us and we know we will get through this by working together.

This joint letter is to draw your government's attention to the urgent need for a program to offer commercial lease rent relief to the many small businesses impacted by the pandemic. The three signatories to this letter have all individually raised this issue with various elected officials. Without a response from government, we felt it necessary to send this joint letter today.

As I am sure you are aware, most businesses will face a monthly lease cost payment tomorrow (April 1) – the first since their ability to conduct business and maintain cash-flow has been reduced to little or nothing -- depending on their status under the province's State of Emergency order

We urge your government to follow the lead of both Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, who have already announced COVID-19 Small Business Rental Deferral Guarantee Programs. Under these programs, landlords have been encouraged to grant commercial tenants a three-month lease rent deferral, from April 1 to June 30, to help ease the cash-flow burden. Under each program, landlords are eligible for up to \$5,000 in government support per tenant per month, to a maximum of \$50,000 per landlord. We believe a similar New Brunswick program should cover landlords if tenants go out of business, default on their lease obligations, or otherwise are unable to pay their rent due to the pandemic.

Under both the Nova Scotia and P.E.I. programs, tenants will be expected to repay the three months of deferred lease costs over the remainder of the lease term. It is important to remember that commercial landlords are business people, too, so any program should provide relief to both landlords and their tenants.

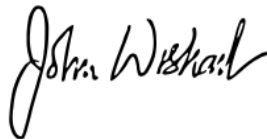
We believe these are sensible, workable solutions that would give our business owner/operators in New Brunswick the breathing room they need to survive this crisis. We strongly recommend your government enact a similar commercial rent deferral program as businesses across the province face a significant financial outlay starting April 1.

Each of us has heard from our members that -- aside from payroll support to help them keep their employees -- lease costs and operating capital are their other major needs. Without additional support, we fear some of our members will go out of business, robbing each of our communities of their economic foundation, stable employment and much-needed tax revenue to the province.

We remain ready to work with the government on this and other measures that we might jointly promote to help our business communities through the pandemic. We look forward to your prompt reply to this call for assistance.

Stay Safe.

Sincerely,



John Wishart
CEO
Chamber of Commerce
For Greater Moncton



Krista Ross
CEO
Fredericton
Chamber of Commerce

David Duplisea
CEO
Saint John Region
Chamber of Commerce

CC: Premier Blaine Higgs
Finance Minister Ernie Steeves
Service NB Minister Sherry Wilson
Liberal Leader Kevin Vickers
Green Party Leader David Coon
Peoples Alliance Party Leader Kris Austin