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June 11, 2021

Sean Casey, MP for Charlottetown
75 Fitzroy Street, Suite #201
Charlottetown, PE
C1A 1R6

Re: Concerns with Amendments to the Canada Emergency Wage and Rent Subsidies

Dear Mr. Casey;

On behalf of the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce, I am writing you to thank you for participating in two recent roundtable discussions with the Chamber on the 2021 federal budget. Your participation with both Minister Ahmed Hussen and MP Sean Fraser was greatly appreciated and provided opportunities for our board and members to ask questions on the recent budget and what it will mean for their businesses.

As a follow up to these discussions, the Chamber wishes to reiterate its concerns regarding the extensions and proposed changes to both the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS), announced in the 2021 federal budget.

As you are aware, these relief programs have been crucial for many Island businesses, particularly in the hardest-hit sectors of tourism and hospitality. Without these subsidies, many of these businesses would not have been able to sustain their operations through the pandemic. Moreover, with uncertain tourism visitation on the horizon again this summer, these subsidies are needed more than ever so that our seasonal businesses can remain viable.

The extension of both CEWS and CERS until September 25, 2021, was encouraging to the Chamber, however, the amendments to these programs, which result in their value gradually being decreased over the period from July to September was most disappointing. For hard-hit businesses, severely impacted by COVID-19, these declining rates create further financial uncertainty.

It is our opinion, given where the province presently is as it relates to travel by others to the Island, that the move to decrease levels of support are being undertaken too quickly, and otherwise are being removed too early. The current model set out in the budget will result in the hardest-hit businesses receiving significantly reduced financial support under the wage and rent relief programs compared to that received during the 2020 tourism season. While new programs such as the Canada Recovery Hiring Program may help, they do not provide the necessary level of security and assurance that operators who are still considering whether they should open need.

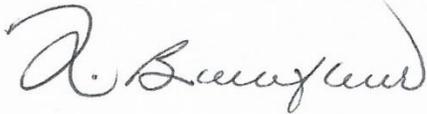
The Chamber is committed to encouraging Islanders to get vaccinated to reach the targets outlined in PEI's re-opening plan so we can welcome tourists to our province; however, even if such targets are met, the current plan does not contemplate visitors from outside Atlantic Canada being permitted to come until September 2021. It goes without saying what an impact this has on the 2021 tourism season.

We are writing to request that you work towards ensuring that your government maintains in place the same levels of wage and rent subsidy supports as it did in 2020, until at least the end of September, 2021. At that time our business owners and operators will have a better sense of the economic climate and the support programs can be re-evaluated.

Businesses need this lifeline to continue weathering COVID-19 so that they can remain operating during this period, something that we, as a business community require, in order to recover and eventually build back our economy when this is over.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. Bellefleur". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light-colored background.

Nicole Bellefleur

Interim-CEO

CC: Hon. Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development;

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Veteran's Affairs and MP for Cardigan;

Wayne Easter, MP for Malpeque;

Bobby Morrissey, MP for Egmont;

Sean Fraser, MP for Central Nova