



GREATER CHARLOTTETOWN AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

PO Box 67, 134 Kent Street, Suite 230, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada C1A 7K2

Tel: 902.628.2000 • Fax: 902.368.3570 • E-mail: chamber@charlottetownchamber.com • www.charlottetownchamber.com

February 18, 2020

Hon. Chrystia Freeland
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Re: 2021 Federal Pre-Budget Consultations

Dear Deputy Prime Minister Freeland;

On behalf of the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce and its more than 1000 members, I write to you in addressing our recommendations to the federal government as part of your 2021 pre-budget consultations. The past year has been extremely challenging for many businesses in the greater Charlottetown area and across our province. The uncertainty ahead continues to cause stress on the business community, particular those in the hardest hit sectors such as tourism and hospitality. We would like to thank you for the recent opportunity to meet with you along with our Atlantic Canadian Chamber of Commerce Colleagues, to present some of these recommendations.

Extension of COVID-19 support programs for businesses

The Chamber recognizes and appreciates the federal government's implementation of critical COVID-19 support programs for businesses throughout the pandemic. Programs such as the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and the Canadian Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS) have been lifelines for many businesses over the past 10 months. With these programs set to end in June 2021, and so much uncertainty around travel restrictions, vaccine rollouts and the 2021 summer tourism season, we believe that these supports will still be critical for many of our hardest hit sectors well into the fall. We recommend that CEWS and CERS be extended through September 2021 to provide businesses and their employees with continued security as they continue to navigate the pandemic.

Enhanced Vaccine Rollout

Vaccination rollout continues to be an area of concern for Canadians and business owners and will be critical for our province's health and economic recovery. With Canada now behind other G7 countries in percentage of population being vaccinated, the need for an enhanced vaccine rollout is urgent. By ramping up vaccination numbers and enhancing the rollout, business owners are able to see a pathway for when we can once again welcome visitors and a sense of normalcy.

Airline and airport supports

Consistent and reliable air travel will be crucial for PEI and Atlantic Canada's recovery post-pandemic. Without air routes servicing our region, there is minimal opportunity for tourism, immigration, or economic growth. We are asking your government to provide support and leadership to ensure Islanders are not severed from the rest of Canada due to the significantly impaired operations of airlines and our Island's only airport.

Federal employee return-to-work transition

Veteran's Affairs Canada (VAC) headquarters in Charlottetown, PEI has a total workforce of approximately 1,800 employees across various office spaces. This daily commuter and foot traffic contributes greatly to the economic wellbeing and vibrancy of our business community. Many VAC employees dine, shop, and access services in our capital region. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, most federal government employees in PEI have been working from home as part of a federal government directed policy. We certainly recognize the importance of these safety protocols, particularly early in the pandemic, however due to low COVID-19 case numbers in PEI, we believe there is an opportunity to create a return-to-work transition strategy so that employees may safely return to their offices sooner.

Immigration supports

Immigration growth continues to spark both cultural and economic growth within our province. The Chamber welcomes your government's commitment to bring 1.2 million newcomers to Canada over the next three years. Prince Edward Island has been leading the country in terms of population growth per capita and we look forward to welcoming many more new Islanders to our province in the coming years. With such aggressive immigration targets, we ask that the federal government provide financial assistance for program and service delivery supports to ensure PEI has the adequate settlement services and infrastructure necessary for newcomers starting their lives in PEI.

We thank you for your consideration of our recommendations ahead of the federal government's budgeting process. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the future as we begin the road towards economic recovery.

Sincerely,



Penny Walsh-McGuire

Chief Executive Officer

CC: Sean Casey, Member of Parliament for Charlottetown;

Colin Younker, Board President 2020-21

