



Suze Morrison

MPP TORONTO CENTRE

June 3, 2020

Dear Honourable Minister Bill Morneau,

Small businesses in the Church and Wellesley Village, and across Ontario are struggling. The economic consequences of COVID-19 coupled with the lost revenue from Pride are substantial.

Queer and Trans-owned businesses in The Village are too important to the economic and mental health and well-being of 2SLGBTQ+ communities to be allowed to fail. And I am deeply concerned that the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) program is not working as intended.

As you know, CECRA requires that a landlord accept a 25% loss in their commercial rent in order for a business to benefit from federal commercial rent assistance. I continue to hear from commercial tenants that their landlords refuse to apply to this program, leaving them ineligible for federal assistance.

We cannot leave the survival of 2SLGBTQ+ communities' largest historic and economic district in Canada up to the charitable discretion of landlords. The Village cannot continue to serve as a positive space — as a beacon of acceptance and flourishing for 2LSGBTQ+ peoples across Canada — if most of its businesses fall into insurmountable debt as a direct result of COVID-19.

I am writing to encourage you to explore every available option to fix the CECRA program's short-comings including:

1. Make CECRA mandatory for landlords of small businesses
2. As the money in CECRA is already ear-marked for small businesses, release the 50% of commercial rent directly to small businesses in cases

where the landlord refuses to apply. This could reduce their arrears in commercial rent significantly.

This time is extraordinary, not just because of the unprecedented nature of the pandemic we are in, but because it is also Pride Month. Redressing historical wrongs against 2SLGBTQ+ peoples means ensuring that Queer and Trans businesses survive this pandemic. This is a responsibility that falls on both our shoulders as local representatives for our unique, historic, and culturally significant communities.

Provincially, I am continuing to advocate for the immediate implementation of a small business strategy that would include:

- A 75 per cent commercial rent subsidy up to \$10,000 a month for three months
- A utility payment freeze
- A remote-work set up fund for small businesses
- A designated emergency fund for small businesses and entrepreneurs who have faced historic barriers to accessing traditional capital, as proposed by the Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce.

As an opposition member, I am using every tool I have to fight for these important changes at a provincial level. As a Federal Cabinet Minister, the help our community needs is well within your reach to immediately and directly implement, and I hope you will join me in this fight.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suze Morrison', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Suze Morrison
Member of Provincial Parliament — Toronto Centre

CC: Terence Kernaghan, NDP Critic - LGBTQ Issues