

January 6, 2022

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

Re: Consideration for support for Windsor-Essex Workers

Dear Minister,

I would like to begin by thanking you for everything you and your government have done and are doing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These are challenging, unprecedented times. I know you have had to make difficult decisions based on ever-changing circumstances and I know you have made them in the best interests of the people you were elected to serve.

As you know, decisions that have rightly been made in the best interest of public health can have negative economic consequences, particularly in regions like Windsor-Essex that are heavily reliant on cross-border commerce and the tourism and hospitality sector. Your government has addressed these issues with now-expired support programs for individuals and small business, but the need for additional assistance in our hard-hit region is urgent and growing.

In particular, pandemic-related disruptions and restrictions are severely impacting the thousands of residents who work for two of the region's largest employers: Caesars Windsor and the Stellantis Windsor Assembly Plant. The economic hardships endured by these workers are felt by their spouses and their children and the community at large. The diminishment of so much collective spending power has a cascading impact on our local economy, negatively affecting retail shops and the service industry.

The 1,400 employees at Caesars Windsor have essentially been off work since the beginning of this pandemic and have relied on programs like the Canada Recovery Benefit to feed their families and pay their mortgages. That program has ended but the pandemic has not and now the casino has been closed again.

It is absolutely essential these workers are not left behind as new restrictions are implemented in response to the Omicron variant. I implore your government to ensure the gaming industry is included in the new Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program and that it covers workers who are on furlough. I would encourage you to provide other supports as well to ensure the wellbeing of these workers and their families and to ensure they are available to work when our economy fully reopens.

Workers at Windsor Assembly Plant have likewise been severely impacted by the pandemic and its associated supply-chain issues, with the plant frequently idled for weeks at a time. This plant and its feeder plants have lost an entire shift, affecting thousands of workers. Even at two shifts, pandemic-related disruptions mean the plants have actually been down three times more than they've been operating.

There were 600 auto workers on layoff in the autumn and that number will explode to 2,400 when another shift is cancelled in April. Those numbers are sobering and a clear indicator that the auto-industry in Windsor-Essex should qualify under your government's Hardest-Hit Business Recovery Program.

Your government's Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy Program helped these workers through difficult times, but these hard times persist and the new HHBR program offers a significantly lower wage subsidy. Failing to include the auto industry and failing to boost the subsidy to the same 75 per cent level as the CEWS program will have a devastating impact on these workers and our local economy.

In closing, I would again like to thank you for everything your government has done to protect Canadians and support our economy in the face of this generational health crisis. The workers of Windsor-Essex are committed to winning the fight against COVID-19 and in need of additional supports from your government to see them safely through this storm.

Sincerely yours,



Gary McNamara
Warden, County of Essex

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