



GREATER CHARLOTTETOWN AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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November 5, 2020

Dear Minister MacKay:

On behalf of the Greater Charlottetown Area of Commerce, I would like to thank you for meeting to review several issues of importance to our members. As discussed, the Chamber is concerned about the negative impact that a work from home transition is having on businesses in the greater Charlottetown area. We wish to outline our proposal of a new support program for businesses that have seen a reduction in business revenues due to the unintended consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Your government recently announced the *Telework Adaptation Fund* to enable Island organizations to allow their employees to work from home efficiently. The fund would include a maximum of a \$2500 non-repayable grant per organization to cover equipment and operational costs associated with employees working from home at least sixty percent of each pay period. While this is a welcomed incentive for some businesses, we believe it leaves others who rely on foot and commuter traffic in a critical situation. These businesses include retail, food and beverage, and other service industries in the downtown core and along traditional commuter routes. Many of these businesses would have also been impacted by reduced tourism visitation due to travel restrictions. The combination of these issues is creating a "perfect storm."

Our suggestion is simple: offer at a minimum the same value of support to the businesses who have been negatively impacted by the unintended consequences of the work-from-home transition. This funding would include support of equal or greater value to the businesses that require foot or commuter traffic, up to \$2500 per organization. The funding could allow impacted businesses to implement adaptation strategies, including e-commerce, delivery service, and other innovative solutions to this real problem. We see this as an interim solution given the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic and return to office plans for many large employers in the greater Charlottetown area.

We believe that this would be a fair approach to ensure all businesses have equal opportunity to respond amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Chamber thanks you in advance for your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

Penny Walsh-McGuire
Chief Executive Officer

CC: Colin Younker, President of the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce; Erin McGrath-Gaudet, Deputy Minister, Department of Economic Growth, Tourism, and Culture