

Oct. 1, 2020

VIA E-MAIL

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Premier's Office
Room 281, Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford:

We wanted to take this opportunity to express our thanks to you and your government for your ongoing commitment to support Ontario's hardworking restaurant operators and employees.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario's restaurants have made major investments in health and safety equipment and training so that they could continue serving their communities, contributing to jobs, domestic tourism and local charitable causes. They have proven that they can be trusted to continue providing safe spaces to enjoy meals throughout the ongoing crisis and should be allowed to do so in communities where risk remains low. Eighty-seven per cent of Canadians responding to a recent Restaurants Canada [survey](#) agreed that restaurants are doing a good job keeping their customers safe.

Restaurants Canada commends the Government of Ontario for maintaining an evidence-based approach to COVID-19 dining restrictions

In large part thanks to actions that your government has taken since the start of the crisis, the vast majority of the province's restaurants have been able to remain operational and continue contributing to their communities throughout the pandemic. But without continued and additional support, Restaurants Canada estimates that another 40 per cent of the province's independent restaurants might not survive beyond March 2021, on top of the roughly 10 per cent of independent establishments already lost over the first six months of the pandemic.

Restaurants Canada commends the Government of Ontario for remaining committed to an evidence-based approach to imposing restrictions on our industry. Because of the unique impacts that COVID-19 has had on restaurants, and the implications for other industries that largely rely on a thriving foodservice sector for their survival, it's imperative that restrictions continue to be applied only where and when absolutely necessary, to minimize the devastating consequences for our vital sector as much as possible.

While it's frustrating and disappointing to see a few rogue bar operators undermining the painstaking efforts of the rest of the industry to keep staff and customers safe, let's continue to ensure these outliers remain the target of shutdowns so that the vast majority of responsible restaurant operators can continue to keep their doors open.

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A thriving foodservice sector is critical to Ontario's recovery from COVID-19

Restaurants and the many small and medium sized businesses that make up Ontario's foodservice sector are a critical pillar of our culture, economy and local communities. Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, our industry comprised approximately 38,000 establishments across the province, contributing 4 per cent to Ontario's GDP and serving more than 9 million customers every day.

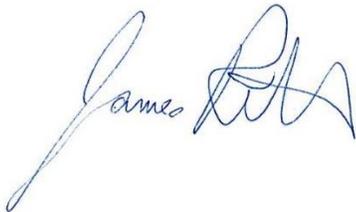
Unfortunately, the impacts of COVID-19 have left much of our industry fighting to survive. By the height of the crisis in April, more than 215,000 restaurant workers had lost their jobs in Ontario. The latest Labour Force Survey from Statistics Canada reveals that Ontario's foodservice sector still remains more than 118,000 jobs short of where it was in February. No other industry continues to suffer this level of shortfall.

Our industry also supports a wide variety of other businesses across the province, indirectly supporting more than 110,000 jobs and typically spending more than \$13 billion per year on food and beverage purchases, playing a critical role for Ontario farmers and the agri-food sector.

Restaurants Canada looks forward to continuing our work with the Government of Ontario to ensure the needs of our sector are addressed during these extraordinarily challenging times

We thank you for continuing to provide reassurance to our members that they will receive the support they need to continue contributing to Ontario's recovery.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Rilett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" written in a larger, more legible script than the last name "Rilett".

James Rilett
Vice President, Central Canada
Restaurants Canada