

June 2, 2020

Honourable Dwight Ball
Honourable Bernard Davis
Honourable Tom Osborne
Province of Newfoundland and Labrador
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL
A1B 4J6

VIA EMAIL

Dear Premier Ball, Minister Davis and Minister Osborne:

Re: Protection from Commercial Eviction

It is now past June 1st and pressure is once again mounting for our small and medium-sized business members to make their rent payments. Business operators have been telling us they are stressed about being evicted and urgently need government to continue to protect them from eviction. Most businesses have not yet returned to normal business volumes so they will have difficulty meeting their rent obligations.

We appreciate that your government is facing many unexpected challenges during this health and economic crisis of unprecedented proportions. Statistics Canada's April 2020 jobs report alone shows the extent of COVID-19's economic destruction in Newfoundland and Labrador to date on sectors such as accommodation, food services, wholesale and/or retail trade.

Businesses across the province were heartened by the announcement of a federal-provincial program to provide much-needed rent relief. However, since the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) program was announced, we have been hearing from numerous small and medium-sized businesses that many improvements are desperately needed to make it work.

Even though the program just officially started, we already know from our members that many landlords will not apply, meaning that their tenants will not be able to access the program and the commercial tenant eviction protection it includes. In addition, many businesses are fearing eviction from their landlord over unpaid rent.

Businesses that were forced to close entirely by government order to help stop the spread of COVID-19 are just now reopening. These businesses have endured almost three months generating zero revenues. Others operate at a mandated reduced capacity, which resulted in dramatically lower revenues. The businesses who will soon be allowed to open will take time to get to the new normal and in the case of restaurants operate at a maximum 50% capacity. In the meantime, bills like rent payments continue to pile up and evictions could become the norm.

We are urgently asking you to protect small and medium-sized businesses from evictions by introducing the protection for commercial tenants until business returns to normal volumes. This action has been introduced in several provinces, as recently as June 1 in British Columbia, and would protect small businesses without impacting government revenues.

Please help our business members make it to the other side of COVID-19. Without your continued assistance, more businesses will be forced to close. In the absence of sufficient support, a large portion of the economy and the jobs created by our hard-working members will disappear forever.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We appreciate your continued collaboration with Newfoundland and Labrador's business community and your leadership and efforts to fight COVID-19. We look forward to your timely response and remain ready to work with you and your government to ensure Newfoundland and Labrador's small and medium-sized businesses survive the prolonged health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

Sincerely



Vaughn Hammond
Canadian Federation of
Independent Business



Luc Erjavec
Restaurants Canada



Jim Cormier
Retail Council of Canada