

June 2, 2021

Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of the Province of Ontario
Assembly of Ontario, Office of the Premier
Legislative Building, Queen's Park – Room 281
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1A1
doug.fordco@pc.ola.org

Dear Premier Ford,

Re: Request for Discretionary Regional Reopening Strategy

I am writing to you on behalf of business owners in Essex County who are struggling to keep their doors open in the face of protracted pandemic restrictions, many of whom might not be able to survive given the extended timelines of your government's reopening plan.

Assuming the Province enters Step 1 on or around June 14, it will be another 21 days before local businesses can benefit from the relaxed restrictions of Step 2 and a further 21 days, in the best-case scenario, before they can benefit from the relaxed restrictions of Step 3.

This delay, quite frankly, may be too much to bear for many Essex County businesses, particularly those in the tourism and hospitality sectors. These businesses, the backbone of our local economy, need a full summer to at least partially recover from what has been an absolutely devastating winter and spring.

The Council of the County of Essex, at its June 2 meeting, unanimously passed the following resolution calling on your government to reconsider the criteria used in your COVID-19 reopening strategy and allow for discretionary decisions based on real-time regional data in Ontario's unique regions:

131-2021

Moved By Nelson Santos

Seconded By Marc Bondy

WHEREAS the Windsor-Essex County region has achieved a 70 per cent vaccination rate by the date of June 2, 2021, and in recognition of the approved provincial stepped plan to reopening;

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THEREFORE, be it resolved that the County of Essex send a letter to the Premier of Ontario, requesting that there be a reconsideration of the criteria used in the COVID-19 safe reopening strategy for businesses, and that discretionary decisions in accordance with the multi-step criteria be advanced by region based on regional data available at the present time; and

THAT the letter be forwarded to local lower tier municipalities, the City of Windsor, local MPPs, WECHU and to the Ontario Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, the Hon. Vic Fedeli, requesting further support.

The mayors and deputy mayors sitting around that Council table unanimously supported that resolution because they have heard loudly and clearly from residents frustrated with the pace of reopening given the low number of COVID-19 cases in Windsor-Essex.

As you are no doubt aware, there is a precedent for allowing local conditions to dictate the level of pandemic restrictions. Last June, for example, your government allowed every region in Ontario except for Windsor-Essex to move into Stage 2, even though our regional cases were largely confined to the agri-food sector in Leamington and Kingsville.

The people of Windsor-Essex have done an incredible job curbing the spread of COVID-19. Our health unit reported only two new cases of COVID-19 Thursday morning and there are only 165 active cases out of a population of more than 400,000 spread out over a wide, geographic area. More than 70 per cent of residents 18 and over have received at least one dose of the vaccine. That number is climbing every day.

Our residents and businesses have done what was asked of them to keep our community safe and now they are asking you to acknowledge that tremendous sacrifice by allowing our local economy to reopen as soon as our local circumstances and our local health unit dictate it is safe to do so.

This sort of flexibility is prudent given the vastness of Ontario, the variance in regional case numbers and the precarious state in which scores of small businesses find themselves.

I recognize your government has an incredible responsibility to balance public health needs against economic ones. I believe you can best serve both by embracing a discretionary reopening plan governed by the circumstances in each region and the recommendations of local health units.

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 countyofessex.ca

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Sincerely yours,



Gary McNamara
Warden, County of Essex

CC: Hon. Victor Fedeli, Ontario Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
MEDJCT.Minister@ontario.ca

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All County of Essex Municipal Councils

City of Windsor Council

Mike Galloway, Chief Administrative Officer, County of Essex

Jason Reynar, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Windsor