



Submitted electronically by:
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Amarjot Sandhu, MPP, Chair
Julia Douglas, Clerk
Room 1405, Whitney Block
Queen's Park, Toronto, ON M7A 1A2

Attn: Clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs,

Written Submission from the Riverside Business Improvement Area (BIA)

Re: Economic and Fiscal Update Act, 2020 and the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on certain sectors of the economy - Tourism Sector

We are writing on behalf of the Riverside Business Improvement Area (BIA) to provide comments toward the Economic and Fiscal Update Act, 2020 and the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on certain sectors of the economy, specifically the Tourism Sector.

Who we Are:

The Riverside BIA is a local Board of the City of Toronto under the *City of Toronto Act, 2006*. For 40 years, the Riverside BIA has been a community-oriented not-for-profit association of local business people and property owners who work in partnership with the City of Toronto to enhance the Riverside business district, located along Queen Street East from Davies Avenue to Empire Avenue in Toronto.

The BIA's mandate is to improve, beautify and promote Riverside as a business, shopping and tourism district through marketing, public programming and streetscape improvements. Our members include over 100 business and property owners, employing about 1,000 individuals (pre-COVID-19) and a combined commercial property value of over \$150 million dollars. A large proportion of our members are independent businesses, many family run - with about 40% being Accommodation and Food Services/Hospitality and 30% being Retail Trade. To name just a few examples, our members

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include a 900-person capacity music venue (The Opera House), the newly revitalized Broadview Hotel, and popular Toronto brewery Eastbound Brewing Co, to name just a few of our local landmarks - many of which have been shut down for business by COVID-19 since mid-March.

An important part of what we support and depend on as a BIA is local, regional and provincial tourism to bring clients, customers, and visitors to stay, shop, work in and experience our business district.

Pre-COVID-19, to drive tourism in our business district, the Riverside BIA organized annual street festivals such as the Riverside Eats & Beats Streetfest, and partnered with the Riverdale ArtWalk and the Sounds of Leslieville & Riverside (a part of the Beaches Jazz Festival). The BIA hosted monthly guided walking tours from May to October, and our Wine & Craft beer Festival brought together Ontario wineries and local breweries and restaurants each spring - all of which helped drive local tourism dollars to Toronto's downtown east.

Additionally, many of our BIA members in the entertainment and hospitality industries have depended on local tourism partners year round such food tour operators (e.g. Toronto Food Tours), as well as partnerships with the film/TV industry for additional revenues. Along with much of our members' regular business, these additional local tourism-based activities have all been effectively shut down by COVID-19, cutting off multiple revenue streams that supported the viability of our business district.

Issues Riverside BIA would like to raise to the Standing Committee:

- There are nearly 90 BIAs like ours in Toronto, with hundreds more throughout Ontario, which collectively invest millions of dollars in marketing and public programming to directly promote and drive local tourism. BIAs are key partners in fostering local economic development and revitalization in their areas thereby stimulating new impetus for tourism and investment in the wider community.

In the Standing Committee's discussions, we would ask that you look at how the strength and



networks of Ontario's BIAs as specialists and experts in local tourism can be further utilized and enabled.

- Local tourism businesses such as tour operators, the film/TV industry and others are critical and complimentary to supporting the viability of local tourism and business success. Please consider how these businesses can be supported through COVID-19 to continue to play their important roles as part of local, regional and provincial tourism.
- Local entertainment/music and event venues, as well as hotels/accommodations, which are an important regional and provincial tourism draw, are in particular financial need right now due to their complete shut down and the need to transform the way they do business, and will require significant support to get through COVID-19 and remain viable beyond this pandemic.

In summary, Riverside BIA, like hundreds of other BIAs in the province of Ontario, have invested and will continue to invest heavily in initiatives to build up our local economies and make our areas destination for local, regional and provincial tourism. **We ask that the Standing Committee include BIAs as important tourism partners in re-building local economics in the new normal of COVID-19 and beyond.**

Please contact us directly at 416-466-8167 or office@riverside-to.com should you require further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosemary Jeffares".

Rosemary Jeffares
Riverside BIA Board of Directors Co-Chair

On behalf of the Riverside BIA:

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Rosie Little Jeffares, Board of Directors Co-Chair (Owner of Quince Flowers)

Mitchell Korman, Board of Directors Co-Chair (Owner of Korman & Co. Real Estate Lawyers)

David Watson, Board of Directors (Owner of Eastbound Brewing Co)

Athena Ellinas Towers, Board of Directors (Owner of The Opera House)

Dianna Kennedy, Board of Directors (Re/MAX Hallmark Brokerage)

Jamie Zeldin, Board of Directors, Treasurer (Hullmark)

Adrienne McRuvie, Board of Directors (Owner of Oma Chiropractic)

Natasha Varjadic, Board of Directors (Owner of Nell & Natasha's Real Estate Homeward)

Councillor Paula Fletcher, Board of Directors (Ward 14-Toronto Danforth)

c.c. Toronto Association of BIAs (TABIA)

MPP Peter Tabuns, Toronto Danforth