



April 09, 2020

RE: ENCOURAGING UNDERSTANDING AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OWNERS; MANAGERS AND TENANTS DURING COVID-19

Dear Commercial Property Owner, Property Manager and Tenant

I write to you on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Leslieville BIA, the body representing over 200 businesses and property owners along Queen Street East, from Empire to Vancouver Avenues. These businesses and property owners work together to enhance our business district, making it a viable place and destination to shop, dine, visit and enjoy. We are writing to encourage you as commercial property owners and managers to work together with commercial tenants on rent-related solutions during COVID-19. We also want to let you know we are here for you and have been relentlessly advocating to the 3 orders government for relief for both you as a property as well as for small businesses.

As you may be aware, almost all businesses in The BIA have been compelled to close for the foreseeable future due to COVID-19 and emergency orders by the City of Toronto, Province of Ontario. The remainder are operating as essential workplaces and only under significant restrictions. The majority are experiencing severely decreased revenues and will need your support to survive. As a result of COVID-19, commercial property owners/managers are facing the high probability of tenants who are unable to pay and rapidly increasing vacancy rates. As stated before, our BIA, along with others in Toronto, as well as the City of Toronto itself, businesses and many others have been calling on the provincial and federal governments for rent and mortgage abatement measures for commercial property owners and tenants. The City of Toronto has moved to institute a grace period for Municipal Property Taxes and Municipal Utility Bills, and the big 6 banks have announced 6-Month Payment Deferral for Mortgages on a case-by-case basis. There have been further government measures announced to help employers and employees. Of note is the recent announcement by the Federal Government that they will work with Provinces to implement the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program, which will, among other things, provide forgivable loans to eligible commercial property owners experiencing potential rent shortfalls because their small business tenants have been heavily impacted by COVID-19. This is encouraging, but we know that more support measures are needed.

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While we remain relentless in our advocacy, we are encouraging dialogue between property owners and tenants, so that you may identify amicable ways to assist each during this time, to the benefit of all. Many tenants are especially vulnerable in this situation because small businesses often turnover very small profits. Again, many are not able to operate as per government orders, or they are operating under constraints. As a property owner, you may be able to provide relief, or rework the terms of the Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program based on your tenants' financial situation. If you can, we encourage you to do so, as an act of solidarity.

Leslieville has transitioned into a culturally and economically-vibrant neighbourhood and much credit should go to our small businesses for this. They are an important ingredient in what creates a well-woven social fabric. It is our task to provide an environment that continues to celebrate and facilitate this. As we move to strengthen efforts to make Leslieville a preferred tourist destination, the existing businesses will continue to be key to this mission. Should we face more vacancies right now, we know that it will be a long time before new businesses come in and this mission would have been compromised. As property owners, please help us ensure success.

Feel free to reach out to our office at 647-550-8835 or leslievillebia@gmail.com if you have any questions or we can be of any support to you.

Sincerely

CT

Christiane Tetreault
Board Chair

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