

**Ministry of Municipal Affairs
and Housing**

Office of the Minister

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234-2020-2680

July 8, 2020

Dear Head of Council:

The COVID-19 outbreak has touched everyone in the province, creating personal and financial hardship, and resulting in losses far greater than anyone could have imagined. We are making steady progress in the safe reopening of the province, and we acknowledge and celebrate those who went above and beyond through this crisis.

I am writing to inform you that on July 8, 2020, our government introduced the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020, to help get Ontario back on track. Our proposed bill will address three critical needs Ontario faces: restarting jobs and development; strengthening communities; and creating opportunity for people.

Our government recognizes the key role that municipalities play in restarting the economy, and that their efficient functioning and economic sustainability is critical to Ontario's future success. We are also continuing to negotiate with our federal partners to ensure communities across Ontario receive the urgent financial support they need. We know that municipalities require fair and flexible investment to protect front line services and help restart the economy.

This bill includes proposals that will enable municipal councils and local boards to meet electronically on a permanent basis and allow municipal councils to decide if they wish to have proxy voting for their members. Our government also proposes to finalize the community benefits charges framework; enhance the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing's existing zoning order authority to provide more certainty when fast tracking the development of transit oriented communities; make it faster to update and harmonize the Building Code so that we can break down interprovincial trade barriers, and permanently establish the office of the Provincial Land and Development Facilitator to help solve complex land use issues. We are also working on optimizing provincial lands and other key provincial strategic development projects that will help facilitate economic recovery efforts.

My ministry will be hosting a technical information briefing on the proposed community benefits charges framework, including proposed changes to development charges and parkland dedication, so that municipal staff can gain a better understanding of the proposal. The technical briefing will take place in the near future and invitations from the Assistant Deputy Minister of Local Government and Planning Policy Division to municipal Chief Administrative Officers, Treasurers and Chief Planners will be forthcoming.

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In addition to initiatives that I have outlined above from my ministry, there are several other proposals included in our proposed legislation that will support your communities. Changes proposed will modernize our outdated environmental assessment framework, provide more local say on future landfill sites, and ensure strong environmental oversight, while supporting faster build-out of vital transport and transit infrastructure projects to support our economy. Municipally-run courts will be able to use technology to deliver services remotely and we are also moving to fill justice of the peace vacancies faster and more transparently.

We will be extending the validity period of unused marriage licences and protecting the province's most vulnerable consumers who rely on payday loans, by proposing limits on related interest rates and fees.

Also proposed is the reduction of regulatory burdens on farming while preserving the environmental rules that will support this vital part of our economy. Businesses will be able to count on clear, focused and effective rules that do not compromise people's health, safety or the environment through our changes that continue to focus on cutting red tape. At the same time, our changes will allow health and safety standards to be updated more quickly to ensure worker safety in a changing economy.

As the province continues to reopen and the economy recovers, it's more critical than ever to position Ontario as a top-tier destination for investment, domestic growth, and job creation. A key measure to support this objective is the creation of a new investment attraction agency, Invest Ontario, that will promote the province as a key investment destination and work closely with regional partners to coordinate business development activities.

Our proposed changes will also help our communities respond in part to the challenges that this outbreak has brought to our education system. Changes proposed would allow school boards to select the best candidates for director of education for their respective communities. We will also reduce red tape that is preventing access to school for some First Nation students and by limiting unproductive suspensions for our very youngest students. Students with severe learning disabilities will have an opportunity to complete their studies in the upcoming school year and by broadening the mandates of TVO and TFO, our broadcasters will be able to support students' learning needs better during these challenging times.

Through this proposed legislation, we will take the first step towards a strong restart and recovery. More information on our proposals can be found on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario's [website](#).

Our greatest challenges lie ahead of us, and we know we cannot overcome them alone. It's time for everyone to play a role in rebuilding Ontario together. We will ensure no community or region is left behind. Every community must recover if all of Ontario is to grow and prosper again.

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Municipalities are encouraged to continue to review our Government's Emergency Information webpage at: [Ontario.ca/alert](https://ontario.ca/alert). I thank you for your continued support and collaboration in these challenging times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Clark" clearly distinguishable.

Steve Clark
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

c: Chief Administrative Officers
Municipal Clerks
Kate Manson-Smith, Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Brian Rosborough, Executive Director, Association of Municipalities of Ontario