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Ontario launches new program helping businesses impacted by lockdown

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As of January 18, eligible businesses that were required to close or reduce capacity due to the current public health measures put in place because of the spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, can apply for the new Ontario Business Costs Rebate Program.

Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones is encouraging those impacted by the restrictions to apply to the program. Through the new program, the government will provide eligible businesses with a rebate payment of up to 100 per cent for property tax and energy costs they incur while subject to these restrictions.

?We are continuing to support businesses who have been impacted by the province's modified Step Two requirements,? said Jones. ?This new program will provide substantial relief for many businesses so that they can continue to support our community as we work together to overcome COVID-19 and its variants.?

Eligible businesses required to close for indoor activities, such as restaurants and gyms, will receive a rebate payment equivalent to 100 per cent of their costs. Those required to reduce capacity to 50 per cent, such as smaller retail stores, will receive a rebate payment equivalent to 50 per cent of their costs.

?We recognize that these necessary public health measures are impacting businesses, and as we have been since the beginning of the pandemic, we are there to support them,? said Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance. ?With the opening of applications for this new rebate program, our government is putting money directly into the hands of impacted businesses during this critical time.?

Businesses will be required to submit proof of costs associated with property tax and energy bills as part of the application process. All eligible businesses must submit an application to be considered, including those that received previous COVID-19 support payments.

?We recognize that these are challenging times for Ontario's businesses,? said Todd Smith, Minister of Energy. ?We are committed to supporting businesses most impacted by the public health measures and this rebate program will provide them with the much needed support on their energy bills.?

The government is also improving cash flows for Ontario businesses by making up to $7.5 billion available through a six-month interest- and penalty-free period for Ontario businesses to make payments for most provincially administered taxes. This penalty and interest-free period started on January 1, 2022. This supports businesses now and provides the flexibility they will need for long-term planning.

The government is also introducing a new COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant that will give businesses subject to closure under the modified Step Two of the Roadmap to Reopen a $10,000 grant. The money will flow to eligible businesses in February.

The government's new Ontario COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant will also help eligible small businesses that are subject to closures under the modified Step Two by providing eligible small businesses with a grant payment of $10,000. Eligible businesses that qualified for the Ontario Small Business Support Grant and that are subject to closure under modified Step Two of the Roadmap to Reopen will be pre-screened to verify eligibility and may need to provide some additional information but will not need to apply to the new program. Newly established and newly eligible small businesses will need to apply once the application portal opens in the coming weeks. Small businesses that qualify can expect to receive their payment beginning in February.

?Small businesses play a vital role in Ontario's diverse economy,? said Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation

and Trade. ?Through the Ontario Business Costs Rebate Program and other vital support programs like the new Ontario COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant, our government will continue to provide thousands of small businesses with the financial relief they need.?

To learn more, including to find a full list of eligible businesses, visit the online application portal at www.app.grants.gov.on.ca/obcrp/#/.