



# Jeff Burch

MPP Niagara Centre  
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## Queen's Park

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July 3, 2020

Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford,

I am writing regarding the dire financial situation facing municipal governments across this province.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges to all levels of government. FCM, AMO, LUMCO, ROMA, CUPE, have sent letters, released reports, and engaged in behind the scenes talks all with one united message: Municipalities quickly need financial support from the upper levels of government. AMO and CUPE's most recent letter expressed the need for urgent action, and I join them in that call.

Local governments are at the forefront of this pandemic, including enforcing by-laws and provincial orders, overseeing municipal long-term care homes, and funding local public health units which are leading the charge to test and trace cases and to contain local outbreaks. Municipalities have risen to the challenge but without immediate financial support these critical local services, which are saving lives every day, are in jeopardy.

You've said many times that municipalities are partners with the provincial government. Municipalities have increased costs, and massively decreased revenues. Local governments are cutting their operations and service delivery to the bone in anticipation of massive deficits. Many of Ontario's highly-skilled municipal workers, who are largely responsible for the success of our municipalities, are already facing layoffs. Time is running out, money is running out, and our partners need our support desperately.

Without emergency operating funding, taxpayers will be looking at deep service cuts and property tax hikes. Toronto alone is predicting that without assistance, they would have to increase property taxes by 56 per cent. Tax hikes like these will hurt people across Ontario and undermine Ontario's economic recovery. Minister Clark has stated that he understands the fiscal challenges municipal governments are facing, but the time for understanding has passed. The provincial government must act quickly to prevent widespread financial ruin in Ontario's municipalities.

I strongly urge your government to work with the federal government and provide emergency operating relief funding for municipalities. Ontario has the responsibility and capacity to act to ensure the governments closest to the people in this province are protected immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Burch', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jeff Burch  
MPP, Niagara Centre  
Official Opposition Critic for Municipal Affairs