

Mr Paul Chan Mo-po, GBM, GBS, MH, JP
Financial Secretary,
25/F, Central Government Offices
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Hong Kong
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1 April, 2020

Dear Mr. Chan,

Support to Business to Maintain Employment

We are writing as leaders of some of the largest international business organisations in Hong Kong. Our member companies are major investors here, employing many hundreds of thousands of its citizens. We are strong supporters of Hong Kong's role as the region's leading international business and finance centre.

We support the Government in its critical work to counter the coronavirus outbreak, which clearly has to be the overriding priority.

The outbreak is having an enormous impact on business here. We welcome the range of measures the government has undertaken in recent months to support business, including those in your own budget.

However, that impact has significantly worsened just in recent weeks with the outbreak having become global.

This is adding yet further to the immense pressure on business, and to the severity and immediacy of that impact. For many businesses the issue is not one of medium-term relief, but of straightforward short-term survival, given the huge strain on cash flow and revenues.

We are therefore writing to urge the Government to consider, as a priority, and as a matter of urgency, some form of **financial support to business to maintain employment**. We see this as the key issue. Maintaining employment would:

- keep money flowing through the economy and into citizens' pockets;
- help avoid a sharp rise in unemployment, which would place an extra burden on the government's social welfare programmes, while also having potential negative social consequences
- maintain individual workers' skills
- maintain companies' capacities and capabilities so they are able to move quickly to reboot their business once we emerge from the crisis
- help retain talent and ensure Hong Kong remains an attractive international business centre

A number of other jurisdictions have implemented such schemes, including Singapore, the UK, the US, Australia, France and Germany. Any such scheme would need to reflect Hong Kong's particular circumstances and structures. We would be pleased to work with the Government on this.

We recognize this would be an exceptional step. But these are exceptional times, with many Hong Kong businesses facing unprecedented pressure.

We strongly urge the Government to consider this, and stand ready to offer any help and support to such an initiative.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Burnett
Chairman
British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong



Robert Greives
Chairman
American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong



Andrew Macintosh
Chairman
The Australian Chamber of Commerce Hong Kong



Wolfgang Niedermark
Chief Representative
German Industry and Commerce Ltd.



Rebecca Silli
Chair of the Board
French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in
Hong Kong

Cc: Mrs Carrie Lam, GBM, GBS, Chief Executive
Mr Edward Yau Tang-wah, GBS, JP, Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development