

My name is David (Puppy) Johnston. I purchased the Blue Grotto Nightclub, #1, 319 Victoria St. Kamloops BC on Dec 17th 2017. The club in and of itself has been a successful live music venue for almost 20 years, and employing 30 people. showcasing bands like Trooper, Bif naked, Hank Williams, Sweeny Todd, and modern Canadian recording artists, Ria Mae, Scott Helmond, Tyler Shaw, and The Beaches. As well as many other up and coming original entertainers, and international acts. From Feldman agency, AMI, MPRO4, Jelly. And a host of other promoters.

At the beginning of 2020 our revenues had begun significantly. Increasing. After 2 years in business I had found my groove, we had almost doubled February's income, and March was on track for an increase as well. I had more acts booked in April and May. Than had ever been booked before. Things were going extremely well going into my 3rd year. It may have well been our first year over a million.

On March 14th, I received a phone call from the Public health authority, it was expected that we would cease all operations immediately until further notice. Due to a rapidly spreading worldwide pandemic. I am not naive, I understand fully that what I sell is dancing, touching, shaking hands, hugging, singing, close talking, loving. Human connection is everything that live music is about.

Pups Blue Grotto, as it is now called, is internationally famous. It's considered in the Top 10 of live music venues in Canada. Kamloops being located in the central Okanagan means we are in the midst of Canada's summertime playground. As well as next to the world class ski resort SUNPEAKS. actually we're busier in the winter months. Our clientele is an older crowd, we're the only 21 and over club in Canada. Although we often promote all access shows on midweek evenings. I run the club without partners, and a strong staff, we run 7 doormen, 2 servers and 4 bartenders all of which have had to seek other employment as well as my cleaning staff, bookkeeper, accountant, my monthly payrolls were infusing around \$16000.00 into the local community. My suppliers have lost a significant amount of income as well.. delivery drivers, uniform service, breweries and liquor stores. Grocery stores. Also the local Hotel industry i would often spend around \$1600.00 per month on rooms for my bands. And or out of town guests. Another highly affected sector that is directly tied to this is of course the bands that play the Grotto... and average band takes 1500 to 1800 per weekend, and there has been no respite for them either. Needless to say, big name acts would often draw people from outlying communities to indulge in local restaurants and hotels and shops. By all reports we were very well thought of in the community and a source of pride for the city.

With our mandatory closure in March 2020, we have seen a 100% loss in revenue. This is exacerbated by the fact that my rent and MONTHLY payments are still due. Approximately \$10,000.00 for rent,

around \$4,500.00 for the business loan. \$500.00 for insurance. Business license, liquor license, health board, all must be maintained in spite of being 100% closed. The losses are insurmountable. In the early months of the pandemic i was able to take out a "loan"... and I emptied my savings account, sold some personal property, it wasn't until October, 7 months

later that the federal govt changed its CECRA program to make it accessible to renters.. not owners. My landlords would not use it.. so i spent 7 months paying the rent out of my own pocket.. with borrowed money.. the CECRA program now pays 90% of my rent.. but I am 100% shut down.. so it's just short enough to create stress every 30 days.. TO DATE, NO Provincial funding has been given. After 8 weeks of an exhaustive process of applications on top of more applications and 4 different levels of approval a "final" decision was apparently made to allow me \$30000.00 I have not seen that as of April 7th the day of this letter.. just one week shy of 13 months in a highly affected sector! I know for a fact there is still 270 million of the 300 million allotted still available after a year..

Personally, I feel that I have made a massive impact in the fight against COVID19, I have not only remained fully closed, but I have advocated on social media on behalf of the Grotto, to support Dr. Henry, and the closures and the vaccines. I've argued the benefits of circuit breaker shut downs, to the point I have lost friends and employees who are convinced that this is "all a scam." In my opinion I have gone ABOVE AND BEYOND. I have sacrificed my business, my family has made sacrifices as well, giving up music and dance lessons and activities. To save money. I'm at the point now where, both federal and provincial responses have been too little, too late, or in the case of provincial not at all.

My hope for this impact statement is that somebody that up until now hasn't realized what "HIGHLY AFFECTED SECTOR" means. I'm heading into May with not enough money to make rent and payments. My 14th month of closure could be my last. You see.. it's not just about losing the revenue.. its about the COST of what you had to make that revenue.. it's not like i can just sell my tools. I have contracts to maintain at risk of being sued. Well thanks for hearing this. Let's hope this ends soon, and never happens again.

David Pup Johnston
Pups Blue Grotto

April 7th letter to Premier:

Dear Mr. Horgan,

I hope you're doing well during these trying times? I'm struggling myself. Recently I spent 7 weeks applying for the small/medium business grant. A very time-consuming labour prohibitive process! Which now, through the efforts of myself and 4 other govt employees, including a government appointed accountant who received \$2000.00 to verify that the other 3 government appointed "adjudicators??" work was apparently done correctly... and let's face it, I was the one that filled out the application and provided the financials and wrote the "NEW" business plan. Etc etc..they.. just judged it... 4 times over..

Now I've received a letter 2 weeks ago saying yes! I've been approved for the funding.. plus the highly affected sector bonus!. 30K.. which has not yet been deposited.. thank you for this.

However...night clubs have graciously shut down for 13 months now. At 9k/ month for rent and 5K/ month for loans.. and all licenses and insurances and security internet and phones maintained... for 13 months.. I've spent about 180K just to keep my doors LOCKED.. as you know 300 million was allocated to small business after 13 months I believe there's still 250million left.. and the absolute most that a fully mandated closed business can get is 30K.. that barely covers 2 months.. now not to look a gift horse in the mouth.. i appreciate the help.. but you would have to agree it's far too late. Not unlike the federal Govts CECRA program to benefit commercial landlords.. not the tenants.. I emptied my savings and credit cards and borrowed \$60000.00 dollars up until October to pay rent!! Before the Feds changed the program. But at least they did!

You support the decision to mandatorily close nightclubs and banquet halls 100%.. I agree, to break this virus I've towed the line and I believe in that.. first to close last to open.. but can we agree, that the live venues and banquet halls have gone above and beyond! This past year. We need a bit more of a special consideration financially for the sacrifices we've made during this pandemic. Perhaps there's others too, but let's not cloud this. I'm still after almost 13 months awaiting my first penny of provincial assistance. After dutifully closing my doors March 14th 2020..

Sincerely

David Pup Johnston

The Blue Grotto,

Kamloops B.C.