

# PRESS RELEASE

14<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Government announcements are a step in the right direction but bolder measures needed. Lockdown should be decided on by competent authorities.**

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry welcomes the Government's first steps to support businesses at these extraordinarily challenging times.

While it is understood that this is only the first set of incentives which the Government intends to put in place to help businesses weather the storm, The Malta Chamber expects Government to be bolder and indicate clearly when it is going to dig into the country's reserves to make good for the hardships companies are currently facing and enduring through no fault of theirs.

The Malta Chamber welcomes the Government's incentives to promote tele-working, as suggested in the past days by The Malta Chamber of Commerce itself, and thanks the CEO at Malta Enterprise and Minister Schembri for taking on its recommendations.

The temporary tax-breaks announced during the Press Conference today are also welcome.

However, all this must be put in the context of the Government's decision to declare quarantine leave as equivalent to "jury leave" by means of a Legal Notice, and this without any consultation, which means it has to be paid by businesses. As The Malta Chamber has argued several times already, this decision is unacceptable and will have serious negative effects on our businesses and the economy at large.

Unfortunately, the method with which this decision has been taken, also leaves a lot to be desired, as all the competent and relevant institutions have all been bypassed. The Government has in fact ridden roughshod on the MCESD, and the ERB, against the express opinions of all constituted bodies, who were in complete unison on the subject.

Quarantine leave needs to be paid by Government, from its resources and reserves otherwise this will threaten the very survival of businesses.

Government's proposals to date are considered not to reassure the local economy in terms of any potential plans for a lockdown in the country to protect the health and welfare of our population. Unless there is complete and inclusive dialogue and planning in the appropriate fora and according to agreed procedures, the Chamber fears that the consequences of a lockdown, as much as this may be sensible from a national health viewpoint, will have catastrophic economic effects on businesses and jobs.

Once again, The Malta Chamber calls on Government to keep consultation in place at all times and to put the national reserves into good use in order for the country to plan for every necessary eventuality.

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