

**To: Members of Council**

**From: Mayor Marianne Meed Ward, Councillor Kelvin Galbraith, Ward 1, Councillor Lisa Kearns, Ward 2**

**Date: August 13, 2020**

**Re: Small Business Support for Safe Reopening**

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## **BACKGROUND**

In May 2020 City Council endorsed the Terms of Reference for the Burlington Economic Recovery Network. The Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN) has strategically brought together key stakeholders and business leaders from across Burlington to develop a robust local strategy that will prepare our economy for recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

Burlington City Council has unanimously approved a temporary bylaw making masks or face coverings mandatory in enclosed public places in Burlington, as of July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The bylaw will be in effect until Sept. 30, 2020 unless extended or revoked by City Council.

On July 24, 2020 Halton Region moved into Stage 3 of reopening. This Phase permitted the re-opening of additional retail, food and personal services subject to the implementation of revised health and safety protocols issued by the Province.

In compliance with the aforementioned Provincial directives the Burlington business community has proactively equipped their places of business to protect their staff and patrons.

Many small businesses in Burlington have suffered from reduced or no revenues since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020. During Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the provincial re-opening of the economy Burlington businesses have quantified a drop in revenues resulting from a disruption in business directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some members of the City's business community have reduced revenues over seventy per cent.

Similarly, many small businesses have invested in excess of \$2500 (and up to \$5,500) since March for the purchase of: personal protective equipment (PPE), customer screening, enhanced cleaning and sanitization, physical distancing decals and signage, building retrofits and the installation of Plexiglass barriers to protect the health and safety of both their employees and the public.

In partnership with Team Burlington (Burlington Economic Development, Burlington Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Burlington, Aldershot Village BIA and the Burlington Downtown Business Association) the City of Burlington has commenced stakeholder sessions with key sectors in the Burlington business community.

Several key themes have emerged from BERN's outreach to date including:

- Much needed support for safe reopening and building trust with employees and customers
- Recovery, reopening and uncertainty about the future require flexibility and adaptability in supporting business
- Digital transformation and rethinking all systems to support business infrastructure and swift move from traditional sales tools across all sectors is important

Team Burlington has partnered with the City of Burlington on a number of targeted campaigns designed to provide short-term and long-term relief for small business entrepreneurs

Members of Burlington's small business community have identified "plummeting consumer confidence" as a key concern through Phase 3 of Halton Region's re-opening.

The City of Burlington recognizes the need for local interventions to assist and incentivize the successful reopening of Burlington's small business community.

The City of Burlington is committed to a main street support program that will provide immediate and timely support to Burlington's most vulnerable corporate citizens.

The City of Burlington recognizes the value that programs like Provincial Safe Restart and Digital Main Street can provide to assist Burlington's small businesses with supports.

The City of Burlington, in partnership with Team Burlington and BERN will lead an advocacy campaign to request that Halton Region and other upper-tier governments commit matching funds to Burlington's local business supports interventions.

Team Burlington and its member organizations are committed partners with the City in the promotion and communications of a Burlington Small Business Supports program which ensures ensure broad equitability and clearly defined eligibility requirements

The City of Burlington is supportive of a delivery model for local Small Business Supports that is compliant and does not interfere with the intent of Section 106 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*. However, this provision in The Act is currently a barrier to the crafting and implementation of a locally sensitive support program that is responsive to both the local business community's and the municipality's priorities and needs. This constraint is not unique to Burlington; it currently affects all municipalities across Ontario who are looking to target financial relief to businesses to mitigate the adverse economic impacts of COVID-19.

Municipalities must be able to effectively direct relief to their business community members to support recovery and now require additional flexibility to tailor economic relief and funding programs to those businesses most in need. A commitment on the part of the Government of Ontario to relax the current Section 106 *Municipal Act, 2001* ("Anti-bonusing") restrictions is an essential pandemic response and will be key to the successful re-opening and economic recovery of the province's economy.

Now therefore be it resolved that the province of Ontario provide the ability for lower tier levels of government at the municipal and regional level to support local businesses through the economy recovery and restart associated with covid-19 by recognizing that emergency support measures provided as part of recovery efforts such as grants or other financial aid to local business does not a violation of anti-bonusing provisions.

and ;

That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford and relevant ministers along with MPPs Jane McKenna, Effie Triantafilopoulos and Parm Gill, Halton Region, AMO, LUMCO, Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN) and Team Burlington

**Cosigned:**

**Mayor Marianne Meed Ward**

**Councillor Kelvin Galbraith**

**Councillor Lisa Kearns**