



**ECONOMIC AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT
MEMORANDUM**

Page: 1
File:
Pending #:

TO: MAYOR J. LEHMAN AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

FROM: S. SCHLICHTER, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

**NOTED: A. MILLER, RPP, GENERAL MANAGER OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH
MANAGEMENT**

M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RE: COVID-19 BARRIE BUSINESS RESPONSE ACTION PLAN

DATE: APRIL 27, 2020

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide members of Council with the Barrie Business Response Action Plan to COVID-19. The plan outlines the specific actions that the Economic and Creative Development Department (Invest Barrie) and the Small Business Centre (SBEC) are taking with the Mayor's Economic Support Task Force that includes several community stakeholders to support businesses in responding to the impacts of COVID-19.

The plan consists of Five Measures with several actions in each of the measures. The Business Response Action Plan will be shared through the Invest Barrie social channels and the full document will be made available on the Resources for Business During COVID-19 section of the City's website.

Invest Barrie will continue to monitor COVID-19 and will make changes when necessary, ensuring businesses are receiving the most current information and up-to-date programming. A plan for recovery will also be coming forward to General Committee for consideration in early May.

For businesses seeking service and information regarding supports, they can be directed to the Small Business Centre via email at smallbusiness@barrie.ca or calling 705-720-2445.

The Barrie logo, consisting of the word "Barrie" in white, sans-serif font with a white wave graphic underneath the letter 'B', set against a dark blue background.

COVID-19

Business Response
Action Plan

invest**barrie**



Invest Barrie has initiated the **Barrie Business Response Action Plan** which includes items that will help protect the local economy and assist businesses with the supports needed to navigate these trying times. Invest Barrie will continue to monitor COVID-19 and will make changes when necessary, ensuring businesses are receiving the most current information and up-to-date programming.

Federal and provincial economic response programs are focused on alleviating businesses' financial burdens, to minimize or offset deficits incurred throughout isolation—primarily through supports for core expenses including employees, commercial leases, and tax payments. Many municipalities are amplifying this support through alleviation and deferrals of fees for property taxes, water wastewater, and transit.

Municipalities have a valuable opportunity to leverage talent, partnerships, and local resources to enable businesses to re-think traditional operations and generate new revenues—both during the crisis and throughout the transition of societal norms and expectations as the crisis recedes.

The Invest *Barrie Business Response Action Plan* is built on the power of collaboration:

We Are All In This Together

Barrie Business Response Action Plan

5 Measures

1

Connect
Business to
Financial
Supports

2

Support
Immediate
Revenue
Generation to
Increase Survival
Rate of Existing
Businesses

3

Business
Outreach –
Understand
Business Needs

4

Keep the
Community
Connected

5

Move Barrie's
Economy
Forward Post
COVID-19

1

CONNECT
BUSINESSES
TO FINANCIAL
SUPPORT

- ③ Maximize participation in Provincial and Federal financial programs
- ③ Review and make Recommendations on Barrie's funding plan for 2020 Cultural Grant Program
- ③ Communicating City initiatives that reduce burden on business and bring new ideas forward to the City Executive Management Team

ACTIONS:

Provincial & Federal – Information and Application

Maintaining [Barrie Business COVID Resources web page](#), including up-to-date listing of all funding programs. Delivering educational programming (see Measure 2) in collaboration with stakeholders to **streamline businesses' application and approval of funding resources**. All program partners are sharing information and resource connections through their websites.

Actively reaching out to local businesses

to ensure they are aware of available funding to help them during COVID-19. Making connections with direct contacts at different funding offices, following up on questions and concerns arising in the business community. **Assisting with funding application questions** and ensuring that businesses have the information needed to apply.

2020 Cultural Grants Program

The 2020 Cultural Grants Program funds have been administered to local cultural organizations. As these organizations ability to deliver on planned programming for 2020 has been significantly impacted by COVID-19, staff will be presenting a report to Council on May 4th 2020 with a recommendation to **continue to support recipients with their existing program funding for 2020** .

ACTIONS:

Providing Essential Transit Service

It is critical for people to have the ability to ride the bus to get necessities like groceries or to jobs that we rely on. Offering free transit creates the opportunity to have riders board from the rear door, which reduces risk to transit operators and further supports physical distancing.

Water Wastewater Billing

There will be no new late fees or City-imposed non-sufficient funds (NSF) charges for water wastewater bills until June 30, 2020. Businesses and property owners can opt out or suspend pre-authorized payment plans by completing the Water Wastewater Pre-Authorized Payment Form. In addition, no water shutoffs will be carried out until June 30, 2020.

Property Tax Billing

There will be no new late fees or City-imposed non-sufficient funds (NSF) charges for tax bills until June 30, 2020. Businesses and property owners can opt out or suspend pre-authorized payment plans by completing the Property Tax Pre-Authorized Payment Cancellation Form

- ④ Collaboration with stakeholders and front-line assistance for businesses impacted by COVID-19
- ④ Build businesses' digital capacity to introduce or amplify e-commerce sales options
- ④ Provide guidance and support for businesses to pivot, with modified operations/service models or new business models
- ④ Topic-specific webinar series for urgent operational issues
- ④ Frontline Small Business and Entrepreneurship consultation services

2

SUPPORT IMMEDIATE REVENUE GENERATION TO INCREASE SURVIVAL RATE OF EXISTING BUSINESSES

ACTIONS:

Going Digital Project

Now more than ever businesses have become acutely aware of the importance of having a strong digital presence. However, building this presence has not been feasible for many small businesses to date, leading to the launch of the [Going Digital](#) project. By utilizing its' Digital Service Squad, the Small Business Centre **will provide free remote assessments of a company's digital presence needs** and connect the company with a roster of 18 digital agencies who are able to perform any work necessary to position the company to generate revenue through online sources.

<https://barriebusinesscentre.ca/digital-service-squad/>

Stakeholder Lead: Small Business Enterprise Centre
Support Stakeholders: BIA, HBEC, Chamber of Commerce, Sandbox, Tourism Barrie

Small Business Centre (SBEC) Virtual Learning Series Webinars

A series of [webinars](#) aimed at **assisting companies with their online presence**. The webinar series is addressing social media, web design, SEO and data analytics. All webinars are recorded to provide maximum accessibility to our business community.

Stakeholder Lead: Small Business Enterprise Centre
Support Stakeholders: BIA

ACTIONS:

Small Business Centre (SBEC) –

Maintain small business and entrepreneurship supports as essential services – **Specific counselling** related to cash flow management, business concept review, revenue stream analysis, and leveraging funding programs are being delivered to support small business with addressing COVID-19 impacts.

Stakeholder Lead: Small Business Enterprise Centre

Micro-Mentorship Pilot

Preparing to launch pilot program to **fast-track businesses and organizations on their journeys to recovery**, by quickly connecting them with skilled, experienced, and creative 'micro-mentors' for advice and insight at their time-of-need. This pilot program will shift mindsets from 'panic mode' to 'action mode' and help organizations identify opportunities to generate revenue by creatively pivoting their businesses and avoiding costly mistakes.

Stakeholder Lead: Invest Barrie, Small Business Enterprise Centre

Support Stakeholders: HBEC, Chamber of Commerce, Sandbox

ACTIONS:

Virtual Town Hall Meetings with Government

As new funding programs and supports are being launched at the Federal and Provincial levels we will **provide business with updates from all levels of government**, regular updates to business are scheduled through online town hall format with local MP, MPP's and the Mayor.

Stakeholder Lead: Chamber of Commerce, Sandbox

Informational Webinars on Managing COVID-19 Impacts to Business

Many webinars are continuing to be developed and delivered by business network partners on various topics from detailed information on **how to utilize COVID-19 funding programs, managing cash flow, exploring new revenue generating opportunities, managing mental health, employment law issues, and many more**. Complete listings can be found [here](#).

Stakeholder Lead: Small Business Centre, Chamber of Commerce, Sandbox, Henry Bernick Entrepreneurship Centre, Tourism Barrie

Downtown Barrie Lifeline Program

Downtown Barrie Business Association (BIA) is **encouraging the Barrie community to support and shop local in a new, safe and responsible way!** The Downtown Barrie Lifeline E-Gift Card Program offers shoppers an easy way to buy online gift cards for their favourite Downtown Barrie shops. Participating in the program comes at **no cost to businesses and they will be receiving 100% of the funds from the E-Gift Card purchases**.

Stakeholder Lead: Downtown Barrie BIA

3

**BUSINESS
OUTREACH –
UNDERSTAND
BUSINESS
NEEDS**

- ④ Direct business outreach by Invest Barrie
- ④ Business Impact Surveys
- ④ Sectoral Focus Groups

ACTIONS:

Invest Barrie Business Outreach

Direct engagement with local manufacturers, ICI landlords and realtors, artists and other key business to **understand impacts, share best practices**, opportunities to supply medical equipment, and to ensure companies are aware and **connected to all available resources**.

Stakeholder Lead: Invest Barrie

Business Impact Survey

In partnership with the County of Simcoe and City of Orillia, a multi-part survey was created that aims to **capture the impacts of COVID-19 on local business, and support advocacy efforts to higher levels of government**. Invest Barrie in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce have promoted the survey through their channels. Survey results can be found [here](#) and Georgian College's Research Analytics students will be conducting a detailed analysis of results.

Stakeholder Lead: County of Simcoe

Supporting Stakeholders: Invest Barrie, Chamber of Commerce, HBEC, Town of Innisfil

ACTIONS:

Arts Community Impact Survey

An arts community specific COVID-19 impact survey has been sent out to obtain a better **understanding of the impact** to this growing employment sector and its key needs. Results will **inform recommended direction** for the 2020 Barrie Cultural Grant Program. The survey can be found [here](#).

Stakeholder Lead: Invest Barrie

Tourism Barrie Focus Group Sessions

To better understand impacts to the hospitality and tourism industry and what **short and long term needs and recovery plans** should address, a set of video & teleconferences are scheduled with specific industry stakeholders. Barrie **hotels, restaurants, retailers and tourism operators** will be invited to participate in sessions starting the week of April 20th.

Stakeholder Lead: Tourism Barrie

Supporting Stakeholder: Invest Barrie

ACTIONS:

COVID-19 Downtown Barrie Impact Survey

In an effort to monitor the effects of COVID-19 on our Downtown, the BIA is seeking **input from members in providing information on how to best support downtown business**. Information gathered will inform supports, where possible and advocacy. The survey can be found [here](#).

Stakeholder Lead: Downtown Barrie BIA

Barrie Construction Association Business Impact Survey

To better understand impacts to the construction industry and what **short and long term needs of the sector are for recovery**, members will be invited to complete a survey that will inform advocacy and supports needed for the construction industry.

Stakeholder Lead: Barrie Construction Association

- ④ Mayor's Economic Support Task Force
- ④ Manufacturers Discussion Forum
- ④ Virtual Connections
- ④ PPE Response Efforts
- ④ Employment Connections

4

KEEP THE
COMMUNITY
CONNECTED

ACTIONS:

Mayor's Economic Support Task Force

Established with the purpose of connecting with key business organizations to **determine urgent needs across different sectors of the economy**, open two-way communication, develop communication best practices between business organizations, and discuss & implement tangible steps to seek **support for short term and long-term business needs**. Several initiatives have been launched as result of the collaboration between organizations.

Stakeholder Lead: Mayor Lehman

Manufacturing COVID 19 Chat Forum

Based on industry feedback, Invest Barrie has launched a chat forum for manufacturers focusing on best practices as they are working through COVID-19. It is a private platform that **enables local manufacturers to share ideas, best practices and ask questions of each other**. Through the forum companies have been able to connect for supply chain of PPE, and share job and retooling opportunities in support of medical supply.

Stakeholder Lead: Invest Barrie

ACTIONS:

Virtual Connections

The business support services ecosystem has rallied to deliver programming remotely to ensure that the **connectivity between our business and entrepreneurial community remains strong, connected and supported** during this time. Sandbox has maintained its CNNX Peer Groups and 'Thirsty for Knowledge' discussion series via online meeting platforms. HBEC has introduced a weekly series of online 'Coffee Talks' to bring local business together to discuss impacts and measures they are taking to manage their businesses during COVID-19, and the Chamber of Commerce has leveraged online platforms to connect its members for networking, connecting and issue discussion addressing both mental and business health.

Stakeholder Lead: Chamber of Commerce, Sandbox, Henry Bernick Entrepreneurship Centre (HBEC)

Employment Connections

Working with local employment service agencies to **match job seekers with employment** and connecting employers who are experiencing staff reductions to support employers that are hiring. They assist in making matches wherever possible.

Stakeholder Lead: Employment Ontario Offices

PPE Response Efforts

Stakeholders have been communicating and raising awareness for PPE needs in the community and connecting local companies to Ontario supply opportunities. Georgian College has reached out with help partner organizations and industry to source feed stock to produce face shields and full masks.

Highlights of Impacts:

Georgian supporting health-care partners with donations and innovative manufacturing

Construction Association comes together to support RVH

Local Businesses Supporting Health Care Workers

5

MOVING BARRIE'S
ECONOMY
FORWARD POST
COVID-19

- ④ Through consultation with key sector stakeholders, community and business consultation, develop a Recovery Action plan to accelerate businesses' path to re-opening post-isolation, and bring employees and customers back safely and efficiently.

Collaborating Partners

Through the City's Invest Barrie team, Small Business Centre (SBEC), and the Mayor's Economic Support Task Force there is regular communication with our industry partners to identify actions to support businesses in responding to the economic impact of COVID-19.

There are roles for other community stakeholders that will continue to evolve as the Plan matures:

- Service Organizations
- Business Leaders



We are in this
together.

Together we
will succeed.

