



County of Brant Economic Development & Tourism Divisional COVID-19 Response Plan Update – April 24, 2020

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide an update regarding the support the County of Brant Economic Development team is providing to the local business community during the COVID-19 health emergency.

In mid-March 2020, the County of Brant, provincial and federal governments began taking quick action to protect the community from the spread of COVID-19. As a result, many businesses were required to temporarily close or reposition to offer online or pick up services. This posed many challenges for our business community.

Below is an outline of the Response Plan the Economic Development team has and is following to support local businesses through COVID-19:

Phase 1: Situation Impact Assessment

This phase commenced at the onset of the crisis in mid-March and regular data collection will occur throughout the entire process. The main purpose of this phase was to understand the current needs of local businesses and to provide resources to businesses in an efficient manner. The main actions completed in this phase were launching a webpage www.brant.ca/BrantWorksTogether and the online survey for local businesses. The webpage hosts a number of resources for businesses and shares peer success stories for others to learn from. The survey assessed current impacts to businesses and support needs. From this information, broader industry needs emerged and the team supported by:

- Helping to resolve the Temporary Foreign Worker matter for Brant agricultural operations,
- Providing support to local businesses who are re-tooling to meet PPE demand,
- Adjusting the focus and deployment of the Digital Main Street Program to assist participating small businesses achieve greater on-line capability,
- Facilitating business owners and operators to attend online industry information sessions.

Phase 2: Sector Focused Individual Support

We are currently in phase two of this process. This phase began in mid-April and focuses on offering one-on-one support to businesses to provide immediate value. We are assisting individual businesses to understand a great deal of evolving information and helping them to access required resources.

One of the primary tasks staff are engaged in involves the tracking and facilitation of funding and relief programs. With over 40 COVID-19 specific programs having been announced by various levels of government and supporting agencies the need for our support to facilitate the information and assist in navigating it is enormous. Additionally, another major role being fulfilled by staff within the division involves being the main point of contact for response and resolution of essential vs non-essential business concerns. As well, we are promoting a variety of local businesses to the community who offer online and pick up services. An online map is underway to help showcase the various local businesses who are offering services. We are also establishing a forum for local artists to be able to perform on line with the hope that a small amount of income might be able to be generated. As well, we are collaborating with partners to create a Job Portal that will allow displaced workforce to correspond directly with businesses in need of labour.



Overall, we plan to move through five phases during the COVID-19 health emergency (as it relates to businesses).

The Phases include:

- Phase 1: Situational Impact Assessment
- Phase 2: Sector Focused, Business Specific Support
- Phase 3: Business Reintegration Support Plan
 - The timing of this phase will coincide with the Municipal, Provincial and Federal direction. We will support both broadly and sector specific. Continual assessment of business needs will be maintained.
- Phase 4: Business Recovery and Growth Support Plan
 - The timing of this phase will vary depending on sector and condition of specific business.
- Phase 5: Preparedness and Mitigation Development Plan
 - The last phase will include a review of all actions taken throughout this process and assess the effectiveness of our response. We will review best practice from various networks, industry organizations and governmental reports to correlate findings and measure against the tactics we employed. To complete this phase we will produce a guide for future situations of similar size and scope and offer recommendations for future strategic planning.

With this phased plan fully engaged by staff, it is worth noting as well that The County of Brant Economic Development team remains committed to supporting businesses through this challenging time while also maintaining regular business support to expressions of interest for new and expanding businesses.