



County of Brant Economic Development & Tourism Divisional COVID-19 Response Plan Updated – September 23, 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. A sampling of how the team supported include:

- 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

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 engaged in involved the tracking and facilitation of funding and relief programs. With over 100 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 was and is enormous. Additionally, another major role fulfilled by staff within the division involved being the main point of contact for response and resolution of essential vs non-essential business concerns. As well, promotion of a variety of local businesses to the community who offered online and pick up services was engaged. An online map was created to showcase the various local businesses who are offering services. During this period we were collaborating with partners to create a Job Portal that allowed displaced workforce to correspond directly with businesses in need of labour.

Examples of activities in this phase included:

- Complete sector B2B outreach across all sectors by email or phone



- Analyze & publish finding from survey 2.0 and provide GM comparison to region, province, National position
- Launch Resiliency GIS Map of Brant Businesses and their state of operation
- Adjust response plan tactics based on needs assessment from data gathered in 2.0 survey

Phase 3: Business Reintegration Support

Phase 4: Business Recovery and Growth Support

Both phase 3 and Phase 4 were initiated simultaneously in early May through June in accordance with the provincial advancement into Phase 2 and 3). Through our data acquisition, correspondence with key stakeholders and direction being provided provincially and corporately it became apparent that depending on the type, size and operational model of any specific business support could mean assisting with integration only, with integration and recovery, with integration and immediate growth support needs or integration, recovery and in short order possible growth support. The objective was to have the team in their areas of expertise identify businesses that needed immediate re-integration support once allowed to resume some form of operation and to identify those businesses that through support of growth could potentially provide opportunity for further labour and income opportunities. By identifying businesses in those situations, resources would then be allowed to also focus on essential tasks required for recovery. A sample of activities in this phase include:

- Host Cushman Wakefield 'Next Normal' Business Preparedness Virtual seminar
- Facilitate resumption of allowable construction and development projects
- Initiate creation a "Brant-specific" brand to calibrate focus of efforts on supporting local business
- Suspend "Good Times In Brant" Tourism brand to avoid mis-alignment with focus on local only
- Launch #LoveLocalBrant brand to 'hyper-focus' on local support
- Initiate participation in Canada Day Celebration event to bring local focus to Brant businesses
- Engage the tactics outlined and approved in the Regional Relief & Recovery funding program
- Further investigate initiatives for restaurant/market/grocery delivery e-commerce program
- Adjust delivery of program receiving Provincial/Federal funding aligning with COVID 19 realities
- Develop, present & launch Temporary Patio Allowance Program
- Develop and implement a funding list resource for ongoing distribution
- Facilitation and promotion of industry & manufacturers efforts to pivot to additional product lines (as highlighted in the Ontario Trillium Network for Advanced Manufacturing)

Phase 5: Preparedness and Mitigation Development Plan

The last phase includes a committed review of all actions taken throughout the pandemic to date to assess the effectiveness of the tactics employed. On-going review of best practices from various networks, industry organizations and governmental reports, correlating findings and measure against the tactics employed locally will provide clarity on future activities. Additionally, specific tactics intended to 'prepare in advance' as well as to mitigate impacts on the Brant economy from another similar impact situation were engaged. Some of these include:

- Research the creation of a Public Safety in Business CIP Program
- Facilitation & collaboration into an Ag Operators Certification Course
- Participation and support of an On Farm Diversification & Retail Sales ZBL Update
- Develop protocol for supporting businesses in adopting and implementing the Face Covering Bylaw



- Engage Digital Main Street 2.0 small business digital enhancement project

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.