

Resolution based on Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN) recommendations to support economic recovery and sustainability

Whereas, in May 2020 City Council endorsed the Terms of Reference for the Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN). The Burlington Economic Recovery Network 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. On December 3rd, the Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN) members met to discuss the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on the Burlington business community, current economic realities and ongoing support needed by Burlington business; and

Whereas, we continue to support the Province's COVID-19 re-opening framework, it is critical to recognize that some of the public health measures have created an uneven playing field in affected jurisdictions, placing small businesses and local retailers at a significant competitive disadvantage when lock-down or red control level occurs. Specifically, larger retail outlets, which are permitted to remain open and sell more than just essentials are in direct competition with small retailers, which are limited to online sales and curbside pick-up or delivery; and

Whereas, we must do everything possible to protect our economy, while at the same time balancing the interests of public health and safety. The survival of small businesses is essential to the Province's recovery efforts, and as such, we must address the current inequity between small businesses required to limit their sales to online or curbside pickup and those businesses permitted to remain open and continue in-person sales; to avoid unfair competitive advantage between businesses; and to provide consistency with continued effective health risk management in consultation with Public Health; and

Whereas, as we move through the pandemic, the City of Burlington will continue to seek opportunities to work with the province to help Burlington residents and businesses to innovate and provide localized solutions. Recognizing that public health measures and restrictions on business are not one size fits all and need to be varied based on local public health conditions, demographics and geographic scale. The provincial government has been responsive in rolling out and adapting public health on a provincial scale and as we move into the second year of managing our pandemic response we need to acknowledge that what is appropriate in the province's largest cities may not be appropriate in smaller municipalities that are facing different issues in managing public health while balancing supporting local businesses and economic growth.

Therefore be it resolved that the provincial government be requested to revise the Rules for Areas in Stage 1 under Ontario Regulation 82/20 (the "lockdown") to address the inequity created between small businesses required to close and businesses permitted to open and continue sales; to avoid unfair competitive advantage between businesses; and to provide consistency with continued effective health risk management in consultation with Public Health; and

That the provincial government be requested to revise the physical distancing with capacity limits determined on a per square metre basis for persons admitted to *all* businesses, including restaurants, which are currently in Halton Region under the red control level of the COVID-19 response framework subject to a hard-capped occupancy limit of 10 regardless of business size or capacity based on the current provincial re-opening framework subject to consultation on Public Health best practices; and

That the City of Burlington calls on the province to partner with municipalities to pilot unique/additional parameters and programs with our local business community that may be key to offering a safe consumer and employee experience so that businesses can remain open and viable while recognizing the unique makeup of local communities; and

That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford, the Honorable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, the Honorable Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance, MPPs Jane McKenna, Effie Triantafilopoulos and Parm Gill, Halton Regional Council, AMO, Ontario Big City Mayors (OBCM), Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN) and Team Burlington.