



Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN)
414 Locust Street
Burlington, Ontario
L7S 1T7

January 14, 2022

Premier Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford:

On January 11, 2021, City of Burlington Council passed the enclosed resolution calling for the Federal and Provincial governments to support the survival of small businesses during Modified Step 2 of the Roadmap to Reopen.

The City of Burlington's fundamental priority throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been to protect the health and safety of Burlington residents, employers and employees, and support our business community to survive the economic impacts of COVID-19 public health measures.

The members of Team Burlington (Burlington Economic Development, Burlington Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Burlington, Burlington Downtown Business Association, and Aldershot Village BIA) came together to create the Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN) to engage our business community and ensure they are receiving the support they need during this challenging time. The City of Burlington is an integral part of BERN including members of senior management, the Mayor, and Ward 1 Councillor Kelvin Galbraith who brings his perspective as a business owner in Burlington. From the beginning of the pandemic, BERN has recognized that both the impacts and recovery from the necessary health measures to address the pandemic would vary greatly by economic sector.

Small business, including the Tourism and Hospitality sector, have suffered the greatest negative impacts due to COVID-19 and will face the most significant barriers for businesses to survive the pandemic. According to the latest COVID-19 business survey completed in December 2021, Burlington's main street businesses were already struggling to survive with 1 in 4 Burlington small businesses experiencing a decline in revenue of more than 50% in the last year. In addition almost 80% of Burlington's main street businesses expected it would take more than a year for business to return to pre-pandemic levels without any further lockdowns.

When the Province of Ontario entered Modified Step 2 of the Roadmap to Reopen on January 5, 2022, the restrictions forced many small businesses to either close their doors or significantly decrease their capacity until January 26, 2022. These closures and corresponding drop in revenues will exacerbate the issues that all main street businesses are facing to survive the long-term impacts of COVID-19. With over half of Burlington’s businesses taking on more debt due to COVID-19 at levels that they may not be able to sustain, immediate cash infusions are needed to ensure their survival.

In addition, many of Burlington’s essential employers who support our critical supply chain infrastructure are struggling with how to create a safe work environment with a lack of access to both Rapid and PCR testing. These employers are not able to pivot their workforces to remote work as they produce the essential products that Ontarians need to survive.

At the January 11, 2022, Burlington City Council meeting the enclosed resolution was passed, in partnership with the Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN) and Team Burlington, calling on the Provincial government to:

- Extend the Small Business Support Grant for a third round targeted towards all businesses whose revenues are directly and/or indirectly impacted by current public health restrictions. Eligibility should include businesses previously eligible for the Ontario Tourism and Travel Small Business Support Grant and businesses losing revenue as a result of restrictions affecting their clients (e.g. food service suppliers).
- Work with the Federal government to increase rental subsidies provided under the newly expanded Local Lockdown Program similar to the enhanced Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program for businesses directly or indirectly impacted by public health restrictions.
- Immediately open the recently announced portal which would allow businesses to access rebates for property taxes and utilities, accompanied by rapid disbursements for eligible business expenses.
- Expand access to Rapid Antigen tests and PCR testing, with priority given to Ontarians unable to work from home, both to limit unnecessary isolation time and allow workers to demonstrate eligibility for paid sick days and other supports.
- Work with financial institutions and the Federal government to forgive loans for businesses most severely impacted by public health restrictions.
- Offer an additional grant to businesses required to implement the government’s enhanced vaccine certification protocols and to cover increased pandemic-related expenses for PPE, improved ventilation, etc.

As we move through the pandemic, please know that the City of Burlington, Team Burlington and our business community will continue to seek opportunities to work with you to help Burlington residents and businesses. We would welcome clearer guidance on how to create safe workplaces without immediate access to Rapid or PCR testing with updates on how to manage COVID-19

spread in the workplace when symptomatic individuals cannot be tested. We would ask that PCR testing be expanded to include essential workplaces such as critical supply chain manufacturers. In addition, that efforts be made to immediately allocate Rapid tests to the Chamber of Commerce COVID-19 Rapid Screening initiative that supports small businesses under 150 employees with COVID-19 testing in the workplace. Like many regions across Ontario, our Burlington Chamber of Commerce program was depleted of tests in December 2021 and is still awaiting additional supply. This leaves many local small businesses who need to continue in-person operations without access to testing.

Thank you in advance. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Burlington Economic Recovery Network’s lead on this matter, Anita Cassidy, Executive Director, Burlington Economic Development, at Anita.Cassidy@burlington.ca or (905) 332-9415. It would be a pleasure to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Randall Smallbone
Chair
Burlington Economic
Recovery Network

Marianne Meed Ward
Mayor
City of Burlington

CC:

- Provincial Minister of Finance
- Provincial Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction
- Provincial Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
- Provincial Minister of Health
- MPP Jane McKenna
- MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos
- MPP Parm Gill
- Minister Karina Gould
- MP Pam Damoff
- MP Adam Van Koeverden
- Halton Regional Council
- Members of the Towns of Milton, Halton Hills and Oakville Councils
- Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
- Ontario Big City Mayor’s Caucus (OBCM)
- Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario (MARCO)
- Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC)
- Milton Chamber of Commerce



Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce
Oakville Chamber of Commerce
Team Burlington (Burlington Economic Development, Burlington Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Burlington, Burlington Downtown Business Association, and Aldershot Village BIA)
Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN)
Burlington Restaurant Association
Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA)