**Hamilton Roundtable with MPP Skelly**

**April 29, 2020**

**Writer: Julia Davis, City of Hamilton**

[**Julia.Davis@hamilton.ca**](mailto:Julia.Davis@hamilton.ca)

**1) There was some confusion and lack of clarity for non-essential businesses surrounding take-out, curbside pickup and delivery and still is now. We unfortunately had some businesses in Hamilton who were forced to close due to "public shaming" even though they were practicing proper techniques. Is it possible to have some more clarity and specific guidelines when businesses are permitted to re-open so that the public is aware - a stamp of approval of sorts?**

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Non-essential services can only be provided online, by telephone, or by other remote means, they cannot be provided curbside.

Beginning Friday, May 8 at 12:01 a.m., garden centres, plant nurseries, and greenhouses with retail operations will be able to open for in-store payment and purchases, operating under the same rules as grocery stores and pharmacies.

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Businesses should review the [more than 60 sector-specific guidelines](https://www.news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/health-and-safety-association-guidance-documents-for-workplaces-during-the-covid-19-outbreak.html) from Ontario’s Health and Safety Associations. These include [guidelines for curbside pickup and delivery services](https://www.wsps.ca/WSPS/media/Site/Resources/Downloads/covid-19-delivery-service-health-and-safety-guidance.pdf?ext=.pdf) released by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

## For stores in malls, a non-essential business can operate for retail sales from a store in a mall only if the store itself has a public entrance that opens onto a street or exterior sidewalk. If the store does not have such a door, it cannot operate. The store may only operate by curbside pickup or delivery. No member of the public is permitted to access the place of business except in exceptional circumstances.

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**2) Will there be continued physical distancing mandates in place once the emergency order is lifted in the coming weeks and months?**

As the situation evolves in Ontario, we will continue following the advice of our public health officials and stay the course in order to keep people safe and healthy.

Our government recently released [*A* *Framework for Reopening our Province*](https://www.ontario.ca/page/reopening-ontario-after-covid-19), which outlines the criteria Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and health experts will use to advise the government on the loosening of emergency measures, as well as guiding principles for the safe, gradual reopening of businesses, services and public spaces.

**3)**

**3a) Do you have a specific recovery plan for small business aligning with the Provincial Framework? If so, can it be shared publicly?**

**3b) With the expectation that there will be additional waves of COVID-19 until there is a vaccine (potentially 18 months from now), what steps is the Ministry taking to prepare small business and offer supports in expectation of this? We could be in the same position at various points during the next year and a half to 2 years.**

**3c) The Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Culture has announced a 10 point action plan with dedicated funding to Tourism businesses and the Creative Industries. Will there be a similar grant or funding program coming from your office? Is there discussion of overall grants or targeted to specialized sector support?**

[*A* *Framework for Reopening our Province*](https://www.ontario.ca/page/reopening-ontario-after-covid-19) provides details of an outreach strategy, led by the Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee, to help inform the restart of the provincial economy.

The Committee will be holding virtual consultations and telephone town hall meetings to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the provincial economy and develop an action plan to move forward, including business associations, chambers of commerce, municipal leaders, corporate leaders, small business owners, and entrepreneurs.

For more information and advice on how to navigate the economy during the COVID-19 outbreak, please visit the government of Ontario’s [COVID-19: Support for businesses](https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-support-businesses).

To support small businesses, the Ontario government has also worked with the federal government to develop the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Loan that will enable up to $40 billion in lending, supported through [Export Development Canada](https://www.edc.ca/en/campaign/coronavirus-covid-19.html) (EDC) and the [Business Development Bank](https://www.bdc.ca/en/pages/special-support.aspx?special-initiative=covid19) (BDC). This new program will help businesses meet cash flow requirements through guaranteed loans. Ontario is also committing $241 million in partnership with the federal government to deliver more than $900 million in urgent relief to small businesses and their landlords through a new program, the [Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program (OCECRA)](https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-canada-emergency-commercial-rent-assistance-program.html).

The federal government is also supporting businesses through emergency funding programs, lending programs and by offering lower interest rates for people and businesses affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. For information on these measures please visit: [Canada’s COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html).

In addition, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and health and safety associations has issued guidance notes (at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/resources-prevent-covid-19-workplace#section-1>) that contain a set of resources, tips and best practices to help employers and employees prevent the spread of COVID-19 and work together to reopen the province.

**4) The Hamilton Business Centre has been engaged and is running amazing programs through the SBEC network. Beyond this, what opportunities are there for local Economic Development groups to collaborate with your office and develop programs that are in alignment with your recovery plan?**

The ministry continues to review its business support programs and consider options for supporting small business at this time. We encourage you to remain in contact with your Small Business Enterprise Centre as they likely will be aware of any new programs or supports available.

Small Business Enterprises continue to support their clients through this time by providing resources and supports for small businesses. As an example, the Hamilton Business Centre has put together a listing of resources for small businesses during COVID-19 that you may find helpful.  You can access this at:  <https://investinhamilton.ca/hamilton-business-centre/2020/03/25/resources-for-small-businesses-during-covid-19/>

**5) How is Ontario looking at shifting it's Open for Business practices beyond the pandemic and how can municipalities assist?**

Ontario remains committed to reducing regulatory burden and red tape. The COVID-19 pandemic has re-enforced this as a government priority.

Thank you for your offer to assist in reducing the regulatory burden on business. Municipalities can assist by identifying out of date and unnecessary provincial regulations that increase municipal costs and compliance costs of businesses.

Municipalities across the province also have a role in adopting a common approach to implementing provincial regulatory requirements. One example concerns the different approaches taken to implementing Ontario’s building code among municipalities. Business stakeholder have raised concerns about the cost of meeting the different requirements set by municipal building inspectors.

You may send submissions containing your suggestions for addressing regulatory challenges. This would assist in Minister Sarkaria’s ongoing discussion with Cabinet Colleagues regarding Ontario’s Open for Business action plan.

**Writer: Susie Braithwaite, Executive Director, International Village BIA**

[info@hamiltoninternationalvillage.ca](mailto:info@hamiltoninternationalvillage.ca)

**1) I am hearing that several property owners will not be applying for the rent subsidy loans therefore leaving our tenants vulnerable. How will landlords be held accountable so that our members who lease from them don't end up having to close their doors?**

We urge tenants to speak with their landlords and work together to find solutions that work for everyone. We have already seen examples across the province of residential tenants and landlords coming together to offer solutions that work for everyone – and we expect to see the same in the commercial sector.

**Writer: Tracy, Westdale BIA**

[info@westdalevillage.ca](mailto:info@westdalevillage.ca)

**1) How is it ok for large businesses to be open for things like clothing, housewares, gardens, when other small businesses cannot? i.e. Costco and Galen Weston Co.s (Loblaws, Superstore, Fortinos)**

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**2) Is the government looking at a balanced approached to the economy (i.e. Sweden, Taiwan) and considering the huge costs to the secondary effects? i.e. domestic abuse, child abuse, divorce, bankruptcy, loss of employment/income, death from cancelled surgeries, etc.**

As the situation evolves in Ontario, we will continue following the advice of our public health officials and stay the course in order to keep people safe and healthy.

COVID-19 continues to be a clear and present danger, especially to our seniors and most vulnerable citizens. That is why we must continue to follow the advice of our public health officials and stay the course in order to keep people safe and healthy.

Our government recently released [*A* *Framework for Reopening our Province*](https://www.ontario.ca/page/reopening-ontario-after-covid-19), which outlines the criteria Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and health experts will use to advise the government on the loosening of emergency measures, as well as guiding principles for the safe, gradual reopening of businesses, services and public spaces. The framework also provides details of an outreach strategy, led by the Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee, to help inform the restart of the provincial economy.

The Committee will be holding virtual consultations and telephone town hall meetings to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the provincial economy and develop an action plan to move forward, including business associations, chambers of commerce, municipal leaders, corporate leaders, small business owners, and entrepreneurs.For more information and advice on how to navigate the economy during the COVID-19 outbreak, please visit the government of Ontario’s [COVID-19: Support for businesses](https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-support-businesses)

**Writer: Rachel Braithwaite, Barton Village BIA**

[info@bartonvillage.ca](mailto:info@bartonvillage.ca)

**1) Kindly share any PPE requirements or alterations for business**

The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and health and safety associations has issued guidance notes (at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/resources-prevent-covid-19-workplace#section-1>) that contain a set of resources, tips and best practices to help employers and employees prevent the spread of COVID-19 and work together to reopen the province.

Employers and workers in Ontario have certain duties and rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations. Employers should also review and follow any applicable directives and guidance coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Health.

You may also be interested in the Ministry of Health’s Guidance document for Essential Workplaces: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_essential_workplaces_guidance.pdf>

**2) Clarified information on which businesses are allowed to do curbside pick-up and which are not**

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**3) How do we ensure commercial tenants can benefit from CECRA?**

The Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (OCECRA) program will provide forgivable loans to eligible commercial property owners experiencing potential rent shortfalls because their small business tenants have been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. To receive the loan, property owners would be required to reduce the rental costs of small business tenants for April to June 2020 by at least 75 per cent and commit to a moratorium on evictions for three months.

Partnering with the federal government on the OCECRA program builds on the provincial government’s approach to supporting business during COVID-19. It is expected that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation will administer the OCECRA program. The federal government expects that the OCECRA program will be operational by mid-May and are expecting to announce further details including requirements in the agreement between small businesses and commercial property owners.

Here is a link to the federal government’s website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html#business>

**4) That a moratorium on commercial evictions will be coming soon**

Under the new OCECRA program, forgivable loans would be conditional on the property owner and tenant entering into a rent forgiveness agreement, including a moratorium on eviction for three months.

In addition, our government implemented measures to improve the cashflows of people and businesses – providing $10 billion in relief.

We urge banks, tenants, and landlords to work together to find solutions that work for everyone. We have already seen examples across the province of residential tenants and landlords coming together to offer solutions that work for everyone – and we expect to see the same in the commercial sector.

We continue to work closely with the federal government and coordinate our efforts to provide maximal relief to employers in Ontario.

We understand that this is difficult time for all Ontarians. We will consider all available options in order to get through these difficult and uncertain times.

**5) The Digital Main Streets Initiative through OBIAA be extended**

Thank you for your suggestion. The ministry continues to review its business support programs and is considering several options for supporting small business at this time. Once the ministry finalizes the details regarding any new programs or about announcing future funding rounds of existing programs, we will share this information with the sector.

**6) What supports are there for new businesses (less than two years) with a payroll less than $20,000?**

To support the provincial effort to deal with this global outbreak, our government launched [*Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19*](https://budget.ontario.ca/2020/marchupdate/index.html?_ga=2.255508877.448778587.1585158228-363235773.1574998706). This is a $17 billion package with funding targeted to help families and businesses.

To support small businesses, the Ontario government has also worked with the federal government to develop the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Loan that will enable up to $40 billion in lending, supported through [Export Development Canada](https://www.edc.ca/en/campaign/coronavirus-covid-19.html) (EDC) and the [Business Development Bank](https://www.bdc.ca/en/pages/special-support.aspx?special-initiative=covid19) (BDC). This new program will help businesses meet cash flow requirements through guaranteed loans. Ontario is also committing $241 million in partnership with the federal government to deliver more than $900 million in urgent relief to small businesses and their landlords through a new program, the [Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program (OCECRA)](https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/ontario-canada-emergency-commercial-rent-assistance-program.html).

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