Good morning everyone,

Hope you are all keeping well. Given how we are all trying to navigate our changes to society and social distancing we want to share some online opportunities that you can take advantage of with respect to gift cards, e-commerce and online presence.

Hamilton’s Economic Development Office is very focused right now on helping the businesses in our community in any way they can and understand that for BIAs in particular the help is needed now.  They have put together an assistance program to drive online sales if customers can’t venture out from their homes.

The program will see the City of Hamilton working with Hamilton Rising (an online local news and lifestyle outlet) and Shop, Eat, Play (an exclusively local online gift card company) to create an all-in-one online shopping experience.  Customers will be directed to a page on the Hamilton Rising website and mobile app that will list all of the online shopping offerings from participating BIA merchants - this will be a centralized one stop for all customers.

1. [Hamilton Rising](https://hamiltonrising.com/) will list and link to those participating merchants who have gift cards and/or online shopping offerings via a direct link to the merchant’s site. Members who are interested in participating will have to fill in a submission for with basic information to have their listing published.  **There is no cost for the merchants to participate.**
2. If the merchant does not offer gift cards at this time, [Shop, Eat, Play](https://www.shopeatplay.ca/) will get them up and running with a digital gift card (hosted on [Shop, Eat, Play](https://www.shopeatplay.ca/) and linked to from the [Hamilton Rising](https://hamiltonrising.com/) page) **at no cost to the business for three months** (please note, ShopEatPlay will take off 5.95% off of the purchase price of each card. This is a standard credit card fee [approx. 4% that goes to the credit card company and fraud and the remainder goes to ShopEatPlay's costs to pay them out]. These fees would be paid by the merchant regularly either online or in-store if they were handling their own point of sale operation).
3. If the merchant wants to integrate the Shop, Eat, Play technology into the merchant’s website to provide greater gifting features, or would like to set up a fully functioning e-commerce site both Shop, Eat, Play and Hamilton Rising can accommodate, however costs for this additional work would have to be negotiated between Hamilton Rising and Shop, Eat, Play.

As the pandemic continues and more shopping options are being restricted, the time to go digital is now.  We believe this program can assist you quickly and offers a full suite of services to build a total digital shopping experience over the next few months.

Program Contacts:

Hamilton Rising                                                        Shop. Eat. Play

Sam Holdridge                                                           Joe Citino

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[www.hamiltonrising.com](https://hamiltonrising.com/)                                         [www.shopeatplay.ca](https://www.shopeatplay.ca/)

This initiative now has the approval of the City of Hamilton’s Emergency Operations Centre and they are working to get the entire program operating by Wednesday, March 25th so we are encouraging you, as small business owners, to get on board as soon as possible.  This program will also be followed with extensive marketing support from the City, Hamilton Rising, and Shop, Eat, Play to the marketing we will be doing to promote our merchants through this program.

I will be on a WebEx call on Monday March 23, 2020 at 2:00pm where additional information will be provided and all questions will be answered. If you have any questions you would like to submit ahead of time, please send them to me anytime and I will make sure they are addressed in our conversation. I will share any follow up information with you as soon as I have it.

I hope you all participate in these opportunities to innovate and increase your online presence. We will continue to communicate additional details as they are available to keep you all informed.

Thank you all, and please continue to be healthy and stay safe.