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## MEMORANDUM

**ED 9-2020**

**Subject:** COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity in Economic Development  
**Date:** July 15, 2020  
**To:** Planning and Economic Development Committee  
**From:** Valerie Kuhns, Acting Director, Economic Development

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### *Economic Development*

#### **Current Status of Operations**

This report is the economic development division's monthly update on our response to COVID-19 and business continuity. Niagara Economic Development continues to focus its work on supporting local businesses through new initiatives developed in collaboration with the other Economic Development offices in the region as the Economic Rapid Response Team (ERRT). The majority of our team are working from home and are starting to consider doing so on a longer term basis. We hold regular team meetings through Zoom to provide more formal updates but are in constant contact through video conferencing, email and cell phone calls. The level of productivity is high and it is impressive that the team has been able to adapt to the change in work focus and working environment.

#### **Service/Operational Changes**

We are now beginning to look longer term and exploring how new tools and processes can be developed to continue with our regular work in a modified way. Despite not actively being engaged in lead generation we continue to receive investment inquiries and respond to them. Going forward into the fall, we are looking into holding virtual FDI meetings and virtual site tours.

#### **Significant Initiatives or Actions Taken**

The COVID-19 webpage continues to provide up to date information on provincial and federal announcements, new funding programs, and local support. The link to the

website is [errt.niagararegion.ca](http://errt.niagararegion.ca). In the last 30 days, the website has had 712 page views and 249 were unique visits.

The dedicated ERRT email remains available for businesses to contact to ask questions. The emails are triaged and sent to the appropriate municipal Economic Development office or organization to respond immediately. The email address is [ERRT@niagararegion.ca](mailto:ERRT@niagararegion.ca)

The ERRT is promoting a Niagara PPE list that is continually updated by the Niagara Industrial Association. The list includes members and non-member companies from Niagara who produce different types of PPE or have pivoted to produce PPE. The directory has been built and is hosted on our website at <https://niagaracanada.com/covid-19/ppe/>

The first COVID-19 Business Impact Survey report was released in May and the results widely circulated to upper levels of government as well as FCM, AMO, FedDev etc. and the results also informed our recovery planning conversations.

The second COVID-19 Business Impact Survey closed on June 1<sup>st</sup> and a report has been circulated to all economic development offices and an extensive list of key business stakeholders and supporters in the region. A government relations plan was also executed that disseminated the information to the appropriate contacts in upper levels of government as well as FCM, AMO and FedDev.

This survey was focused on recovery, with questions that addressed the funding programs that businesses accessed, the areas where they require further assistance, the largest barriers to re-opening, etc. The survey yielded responses from 1,382 business across all 12 municipalities in Niagara. The full survey analysis report was circulated to Regional Council in the Weekly Correspondence but is also attached to this report as Appendix A.

Key highlights contained in the Part 2 Survey Results include:

- 1,103 businesses accessed the various federal/provincial relief programs, while 229 respondents had not accessed any programs at all.
- The most popular government programs were the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, Canada Emergency Business, and the Canada Emergency Response Benefit.

- Estimated total lost revenue is \$7.8 billion across the economy, which can be largely attributed to Niagara's higher concentration of tourism-oriented industry sectors.
- Jobs losses are expected to be significantly higher than what was reported in the Labour Force Survey (35,200+).
- Many businesses are not able to meet their monthly financial obligations o 36% reported the ability to only pay up to 50 percent of fixed expenses, i.e. rent, insurance, payroll, etc., and 22% reported only being able to cover up to 25% of fixed expenses.
- 35% of businesses surveyed reported they are either at risk of permanent closure or vulnerable to closure, which disproportionately affects accommodation and food services; arts, entertainment and recreation, retail trade, and other personal services.

Through work with the members of the Niagara (ERRT), a draft Economic Recovery Plan has been created to address the business needs identified through the second survey. The draft Economic Recovery Plan has been circulated to Economic Development Officers, Chambers of Commerce, academic institutions, sector associations, and additional stakeholders across the region for input. The Plan is organized in three pillars: Research and Information; Advocacy and Resilience and actions are organized into Immediate, Mid-Term and Long-Term timeframes. The most recent draft version of this plan is attached to this report in Appendix B.

The Economic Development division has partnered with Emergency Management and Public Health to facilitate weekly calls with business membership organizations from across the region, including but not limited to Chambers of Commerce, BIAs, etc. The calls focus on relevant safety guidelines and documents that are meant to assist businesses in safely reopening. The attendees provide a channel to inform their members on critical topics such as use of PPE, safe patio expansion, return to work guidelines, etc.

The partnership with Venture Niagara, Community Futures Development Corporation on the Regional Recovery and Relief Fund's (RRRF) administration, loan approvals, and promotion continues to be strong. This program was announced by FedDev at the end of May.

The businesses eligible for loans through the RRRF are those that have not been able to access other Federal Government programs. More specifically, the targeted businesses include sole proprietorships, "Main Street" type businesses and tourism-

based businesses. Approximately 20 businesses have received these loans or approval for financing to date, with new applications being prepared and approved weekly. The amount of money that has been provided to ranges from \$2,500 to \$40,000 which is the maximum amount available under the program.

<https://www.venturenigara.com/regional-relief-recovery-fund/>

Niagara Economic Development continues to represent the region on weekly GTA Economic Development Alliance meetings. This group is jointly promoting the impact being felt by businesses across the GTA to the provincial and federal governments and serves a resource for discussion on recovery planning best practices. The framework of the Niagara Economic Recovery Plan mirrors the framework being used by the GTA Alliance, to reflect the broader economic implications of the pandemic in our recovery efforts.

### **Operational Outlook**

The operational outlook is dependant on the ongoing situation and impact of COVID-19. At the present time there are still many unknowns, including the possibility of a second wave. Due to these uncertainties, the outlook is flexible and will be revised as necessary.

#### 1 month

- Economic Recovery Plan completed and implementation ongoing.
- Continued support to local businesses through ERRT initiatives.
- NED's budget reviewed and funds re-allocated to support local business and LAM recovery projects.
- Ongoing collaboration with local Economic Development Offices, Chambers of Commerce, Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Niagara Industrial Association etc.
- Explore new tools to conduct economic development activities virtually.
- Most team members continue to work remotely.

#### 3 months

- Continued implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan focused on long term actions.

- Monitor the economic indicators to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on the local economy compared to previous years, and determine where resources could best be utilized to maximize ongoing economic development programming.
- Development of the 10 Year Economic Development Strategy starts.
- Virtual Foreign Direct Investment program throughout the fall.
- Ongoing collaboration with local Economic Development Offices, Chambers of Commerce, Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Niagara Industrial Association etc.

#### 6 months

- Economic research and stakeholder consultation for 10 Year Economic Development Strategy completed.
- Review of ERRT initiatives depending on the continued impact of COVID-19.
- Continue to monitor the economic indicators to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on the local economy compared to previous years, and determine where resources could best be utilized to maximize ongoing economic development programming.
- Review work practices depending on Niagara Region recommendations and Public Health.
- Development of an economic emergency communications plan to address possible future emergencies that may impact the regional economy.
- Ongoing collaboration with local Economic Development Offices, Chambers of Commerce, Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Niagara Industrial Association etc.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

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Valerie Kuhns  
Acting Director, Economic Development

#### **Appendices**

Appendix A Niagara COVID-19 Business Impact Survey Report – Part 2

Appendix B Niagara ERRT's Draft Economic Recovery Plan



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June 23, 2020

### Re: Niagara COVID-19 Business Impact Survey Report – Part 2

In early April, Niagara's Economic Rapid Response Team (ERRT) shared the results of Part 1 of the Niagara COVID-19 Business Impact Survey. This survey was intended to better understand the initial effect and future projections the mandated closure of businesses resulting from the COVID-19 had on the local economy. The survey was a collaborative effort by all the regional economic development offices and led by Niagara Region Economic Development.

The second phase of the COVID-19 Business Impact Survey commenced on May 15, 2020. Niagara area businesses received a follow-up survey as a means for the ERRT to understand the impact COVID-19 has had on the regional economy and inform Niagara's recovery plan.

Together with the support of additional economic development partners, including Niagara's chambers of commerce, the survey data contained in the enclosed report identifies the gaps in the federal and provincial funding as well as initiatives that have been very successful and would benefit businesses with their continuation. This information illustrates the sectors most affected by the physical distancing restrictions and can advise public policy in determining the appropriate guidelines that can be reasonably implemented for businesses.

Key highlights contained in the Part 2 Survey Results include:

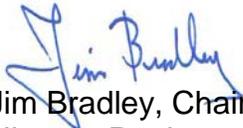
- 1,103 businesses accessed the various federal/provincial relief programs, while 229 respondents had not accessed any programs at all
- The most popular government programs were the Canada Emergency Wage Subside, Canada Emergency Business, and the Canada Emergency Response Benefit
- Estimated total lost revenue is \$7.8 billion across the economy, which can be largely attributed to Niagara's higher concentration of tourism-oriented industry sectors
- Jobs losses are expected to be significantly higher than what was reported in the Labour Force Survey (35,200+)
- Many businesses are not able to meet their monthly financial obligations
  - 36% reported the ability to only pay up to 50 percent of fixed expenses, i.e. rent, insurance, payroll, etc., and 22% reported only being able to cover up to 25% of fixed expenses
- 35% of businesses surveyed reported they are either at risk of permanent closure or vulnerable to closure, which disproportionately affects accommodation and food services; arts, entertainment and recreation, retail trade, and other personal services

With the collection of this valuable data, community stakeholders and all orders of government can ensure Niagara's business interests are included in any future recovery measures. To meet the needs of local businesses, at least \$35 million in large capital investments will be

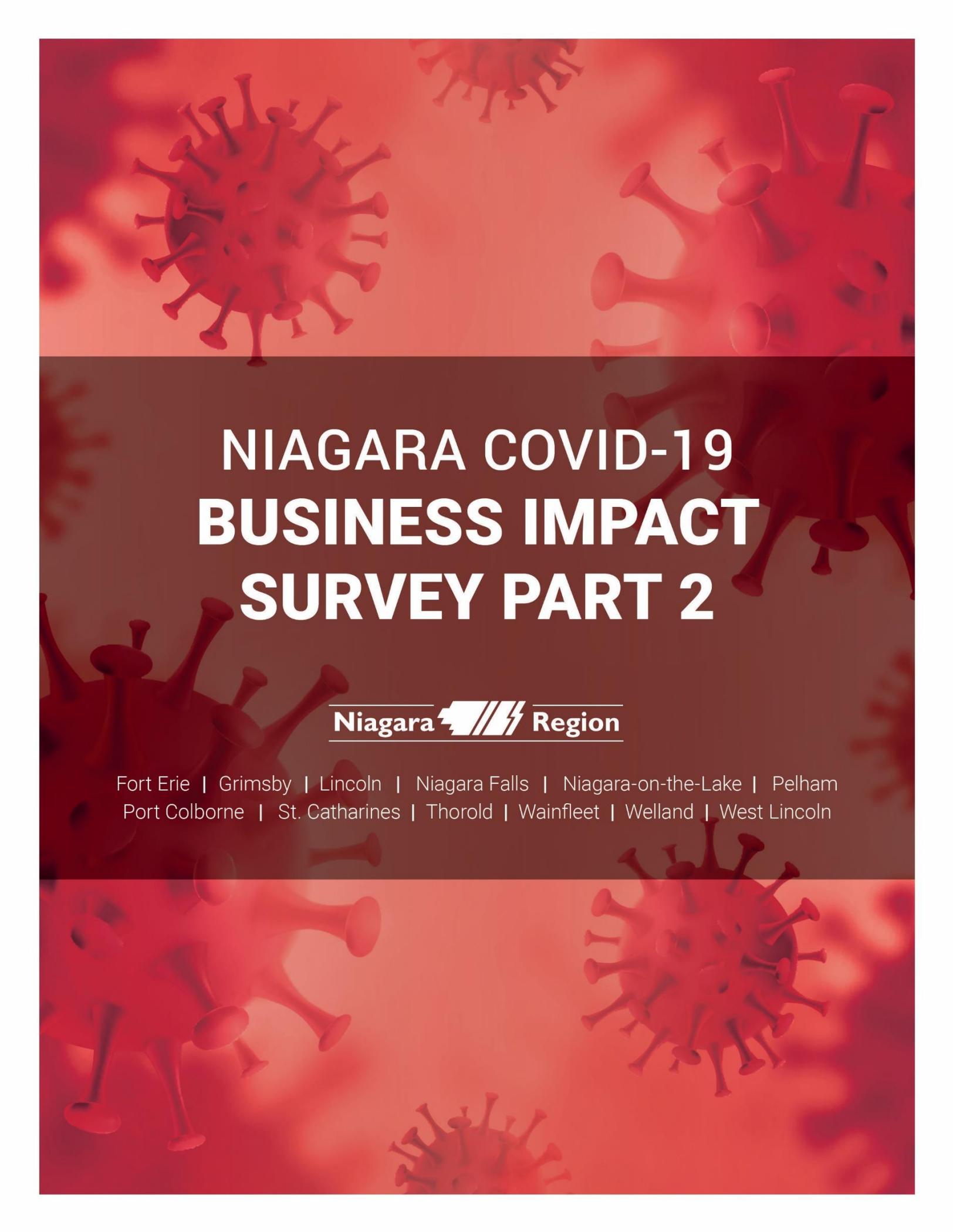
required for businesses to operate under COVID-19 precautionary measures. The data also offers some insight into what other tools can be developed to assist businesses in repurposing or transforming business models in order to adapt to the new way of conducting business in the post-COVID era. These supports will enable Niagara's economy to continue to thrive. Additional financial investments that reflect the needs of businesses will provide the foundation to boost job growth and reinvigorate Niagara's hospitality and tourism sector so that we can continue to be a keystone tourist destination in Ontario.

We look forward to collaborating with government representatives and community stakeholders in rebuilding Niagara's economy in the post-COVID period. For more information regarding the methodology or survey results, I welcome you to contact the Regional Chair's Office at 905-980-6000 ext. 3341.

Sincerely,



Jim Bradley, Chair  
Niagara Region

The background of the entire page is a deep red color, overlaid with several 3D rendered virus particles. These particles are spherical with numerous protruding spikes, resembling coronaviruses. They are scattered across the page, with some appearing larger and more detailed than others, creating a sense of depth and movement.

# NIAGARA COVID-19 BUSINESS IMPACT SURVEY PART 2

Niagara  Region

Fort Erie | Grimsby | Lincoln | Niagara Falls | Niagara-on-the-Lake | Pelham  
Port Colborne | St. Catharines | Thorold | Wainfleet | Welland | West Lincoln

## Introduction

COVID-19 has had a major impact on the lives and well-being of most people worldwide. This impact has certainly been felt in Niagara by both residents and the thousands of businesses that are the engine of the regional economy of Niagara.

Before the onset of COVID-19, Niagara was experiencing significant economic gains. By the end of 2019, the region had experienced the lowest unemployment rate in 20 years at 4.7 percent. Investment in new building construction was the highest it has ever been at \$2.4 billion. Export values were at an all time high of \$4.7 billion. Tourism expenditures were also reaching record levels at \$2.4 billion. The start of 2020 continued this momentum with the regional economy showing signs of strength and growth potential. However, COVID-19 abruptly stunted this economic progress; not just for Niagara, but for the entire global economy.

This Niagara COVID-19 Business Impact Survey – Part 2 is a collaborative effort of the Niagara Economic Rapid Response Team (ERRT), with an integrated and proactive focus on addressing the business and economic impacts of COVID-19, as well as planning the best steps for economic recovery. The ERRT was formed by the Niagara Regional Chair along with the mayors of Niagara's 12 municipalities: Fort Erie, Grimsby, Lincoln, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Port Colborne, St. Catharines, Thorold, Wainfleet, Welland, and West Lincoln.

The survey results provide insights into the depth and breadth of the impact that COVID-19 has had on the Niagara economy. It is significant and challenging with no real precedent in the history of the region. The Great Recession in 2008 eroded underpinnings of the global economy, but this time it is expected that Niagara is in a position to bounce back quicker provided the spread of COVID-19 can be contained.

The ERRT is working together along with stakeholders in the business community to ensure that Niagara gets back to business as soon as possible, and as responsibly as possible.

## Methodology

The Niagara COVID-19 Business Impact Survey – Part 2 was distributed to approximately 10,000 businesses from May 15 until June 1, 2020, mainly through direct email.

The economic development departments of the Town of Fort Erie, Town of Lincoln, City of Niagara Falls, City of St. Catharines, City of Port Colborne, and the City of Welland contacted the businesses in those respective municipalities while Niagara Region contacted businesses in the municipalities without economic development offices at the time, which included Wainfleet, Pelham, West Lincoln, Grimsby, Thorold, and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Additional channels were used to promote the survey to Niagara businesses including Niagara-based chambers of commerce, various business and industry associations, as well as social media channels including LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

The survey was intended only for businesses that operate in Niagara and non-Niagara businesses were removed from the data results.

Of the approximately 10,000 businesses that were contacted directly and reached through promotional channels, 1,382 businesses completed the survey for an approximate response rate of 13%.

Whereas the first Niagara COVID-19 Business Impact Survey focused specifically on the economic impact of COVID-19 as the crisis unfolded, the second survey focused on the continued economic impact of COVID-19, as well as business status, support measures, and details specific to business and economic recovery.

A copy of the survey instrument is included as an appendix.

The “n” figure on the graphs below refers to the number of responses to each part of the survey. Some sections will have more responses than total survey respondents due to the ability to select multiple answers on some questions.

## Analysis

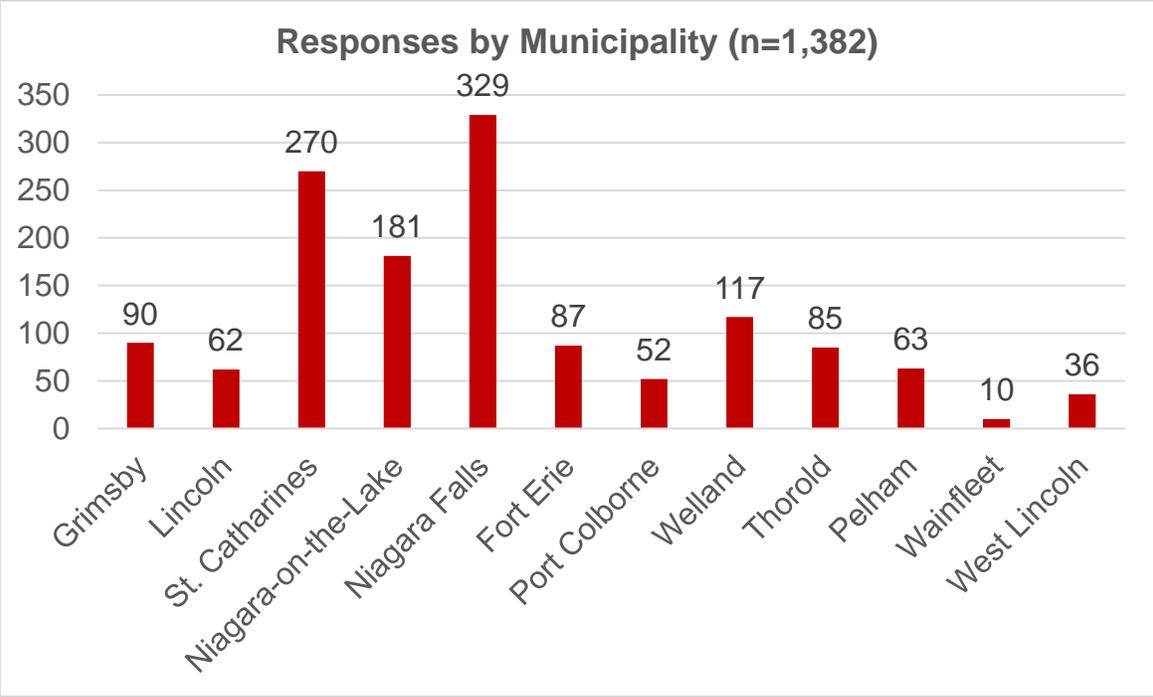
The following section provides a detailed analysis of the results from each question of the survey. The section is segmented into five sections:

- Respondents: This section provides information on the business that completed the survey.
- Employment: This section provide information on the effects of COVID-19 on employment and staffing.
- Revenue and Expenses: This section provides information on revenue loss, anticipate revenue loss, ability to pay, and added expenses.
- Business Status: This section provide information on the current situation of the businesses surveyed.
- Recovery: This section provides information on business recovery measures and related issues.

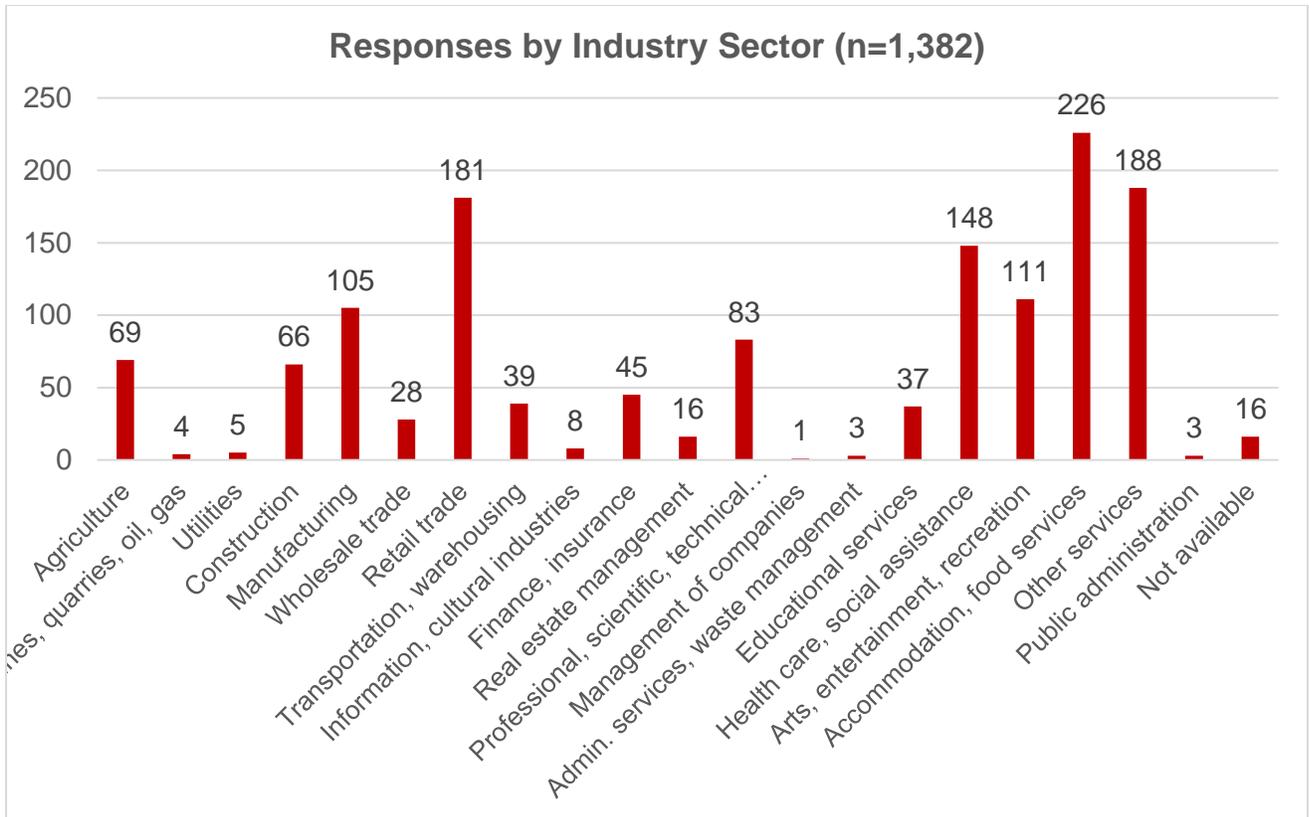
The respondents section provides information on the businesses that completed the survey. The employment section provides information on the effects of COVID-19 on employment and staffing. The revenue and expenses section provides information on lost revenue, the ability to pay, and added expenses. The business status section provides information on the current situation of businesses surveyed, and the recovery section provides information on business recovery measures and related issues to re-opening.

# Respondents

The following section provides information on the number of business respondents by municipality, and the number of respondents by industry sector using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).



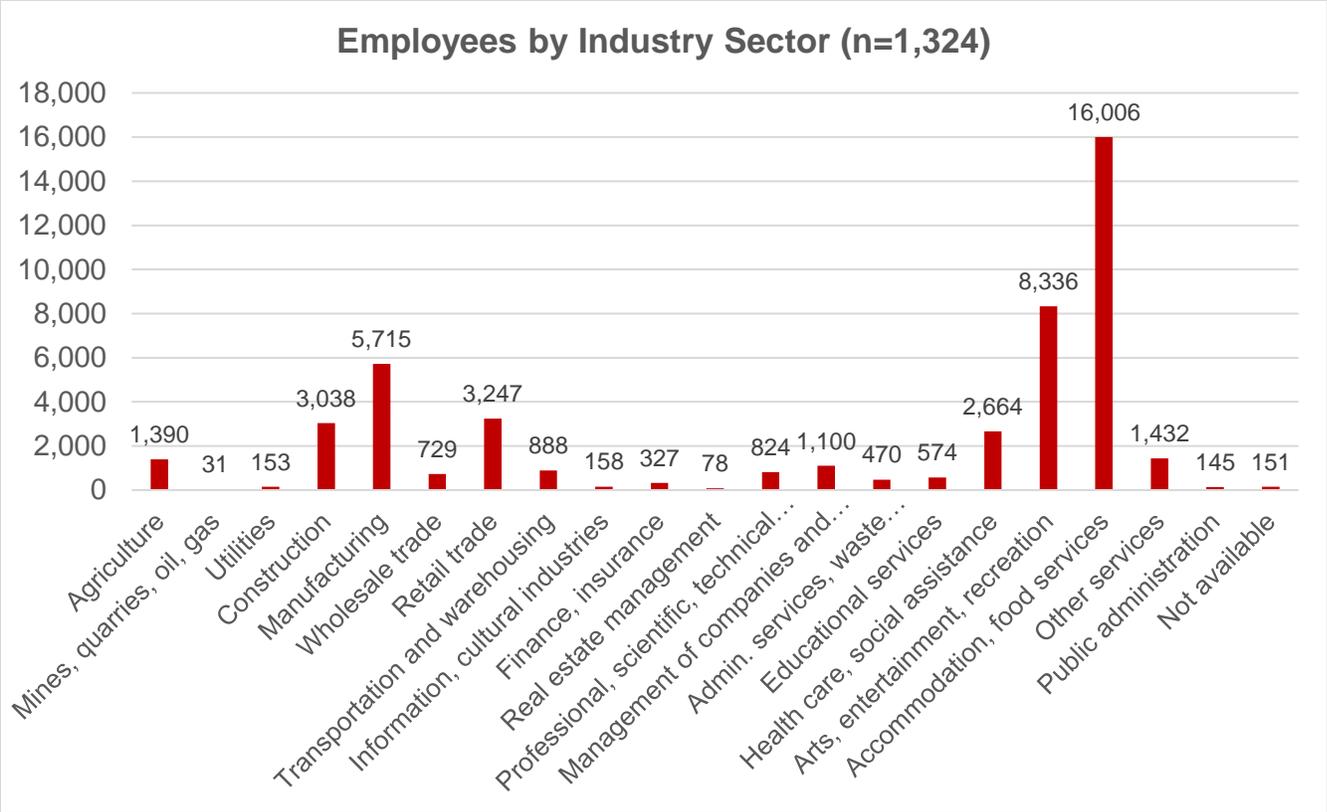
- Respondents selected the municipality in Niagara where their businesses have a physical presence. 1,382 businesses completed the survey with respondents from each Niagara municipality.



- Businesses self-identified the industry sector that best reflects their business activities. Responses were strong across the industry sectors that are most prevalent in Niagara.
- Responses were notably strong across industry sectors including accommodation and food services; other services; retail trade; health care and social assistance; and, arts, entertainment and recreation.

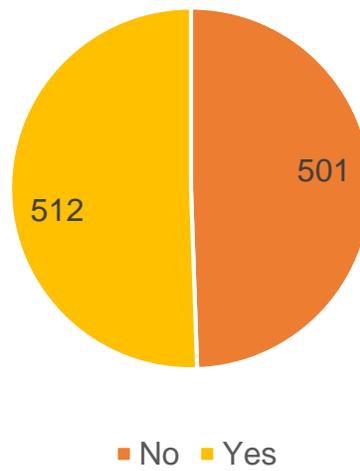
## Employment

The following section provides employment and staffing characteristics of the respondent businesses. The information provided includes employees represented by industry sector, staff layoffs, and staff layoffs by employment type, total layoffs by industry sector, anticipated future layoffs, and anticipated future layoffs by industry sector.



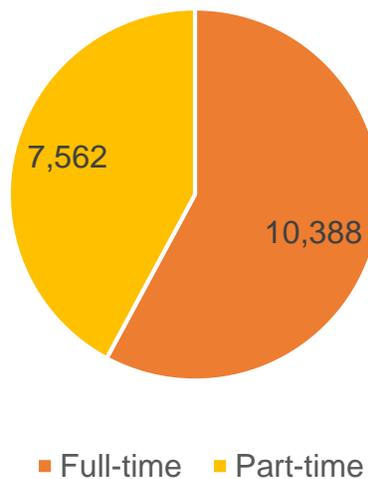
- Respondents were asked to identify the number of employees employed in their establishment. 1,324 respondents reported employing 47,456 staff.
- The industry sectors where respondents reported the highest number of employees included accommodation and food services (16,006); arts, entertainment and recreation (8,336); manufacturing (5,715); retail trade (3,247); and, health care and social assistance (2,664).

**Staff Layoffs Since April 1, 2020 (n=1,013)**

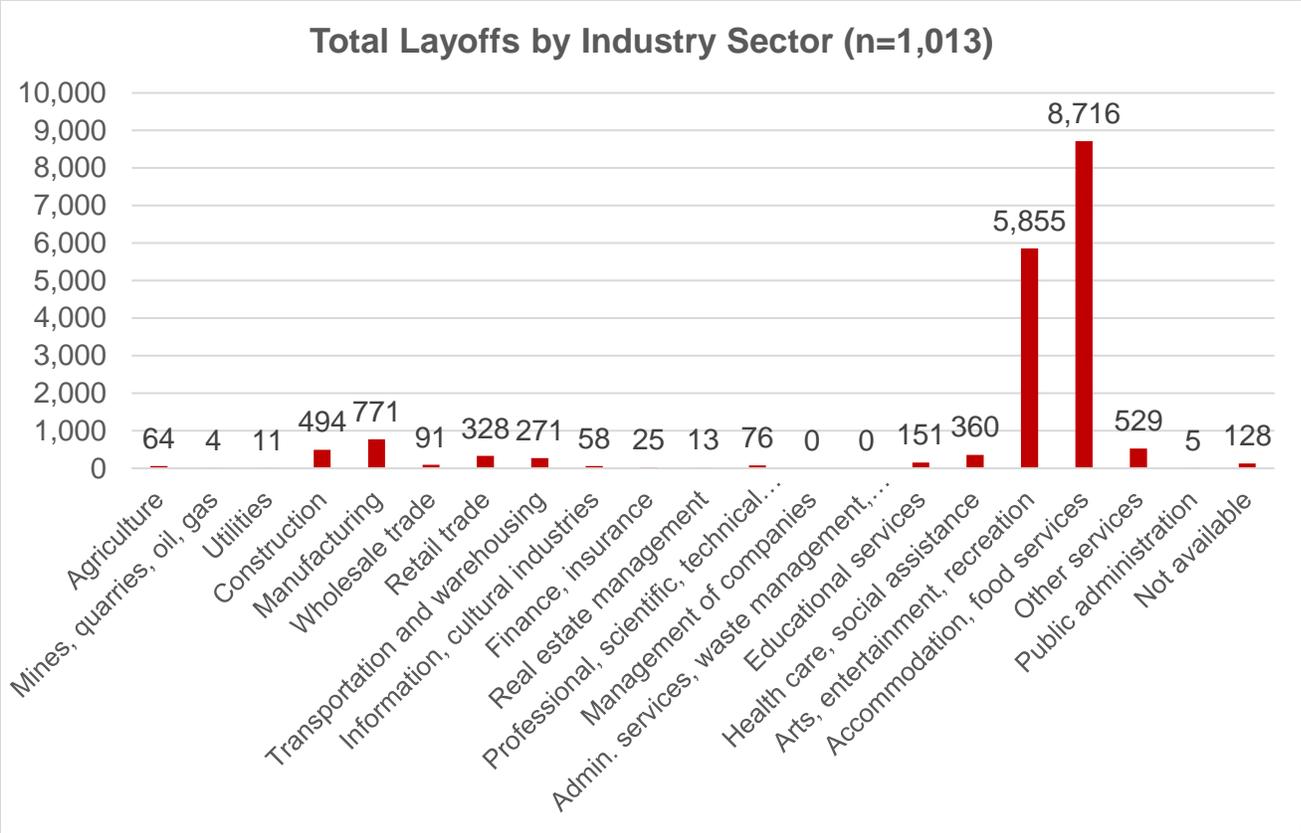


- 512 (51%) respondents reported that they laid off staff, while 501 (49%) had not laid off any staff.

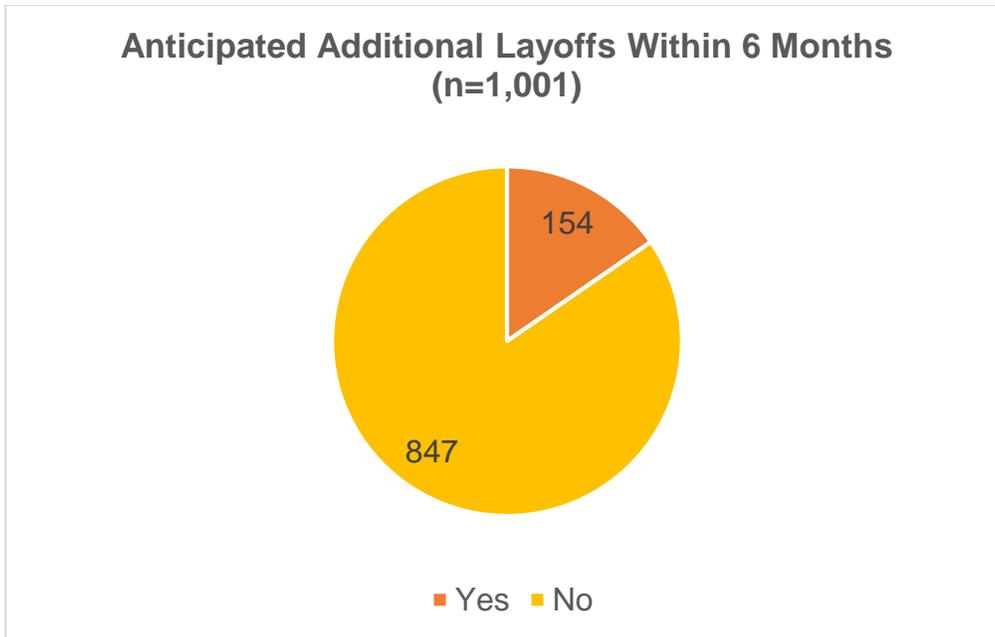
**Staff Layoffs by Employment Type (n=1,013)**



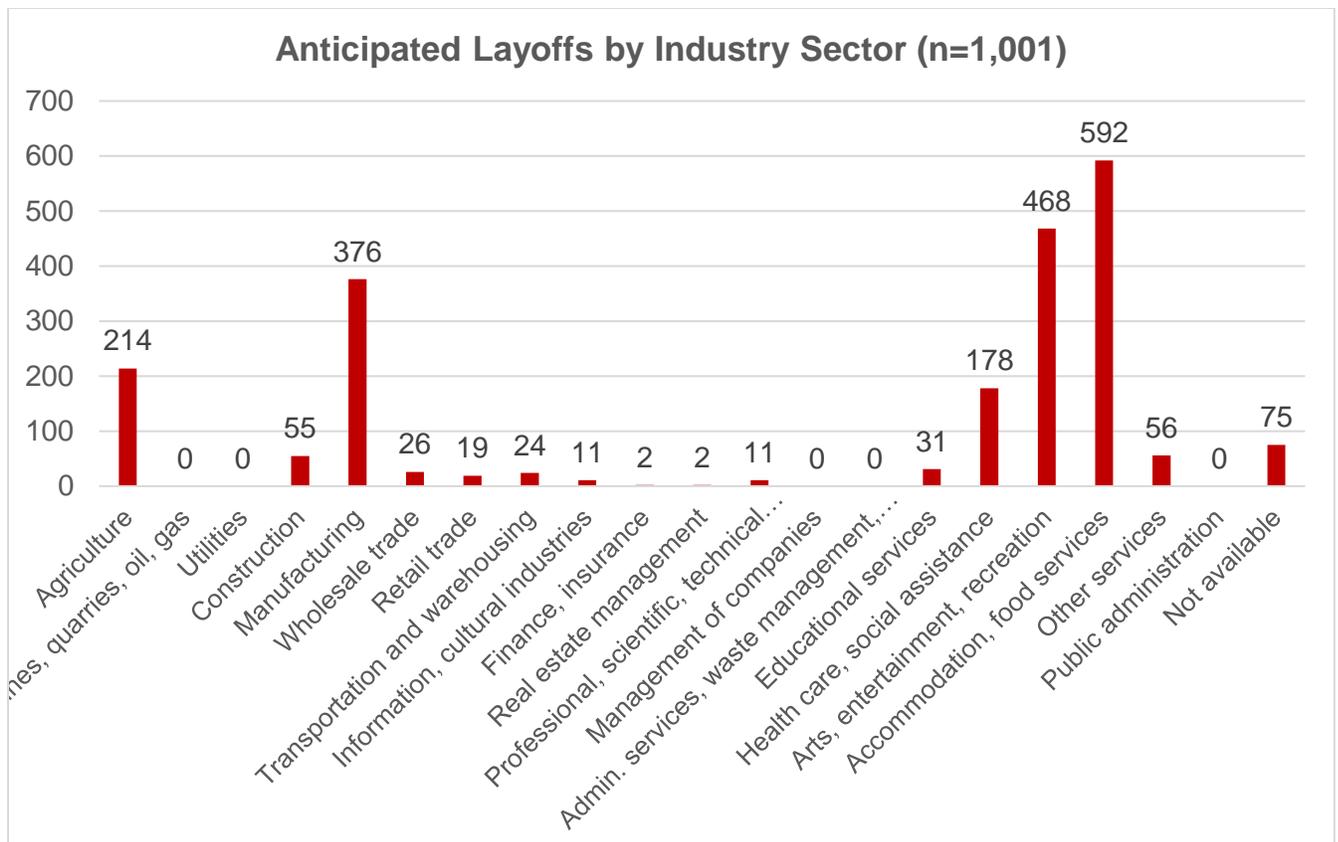
- Respondents reported total layoffs of 17,950 staff across industry sectors. 10,388 (58%) were full-time staff and 7,562 (42%) were part-time staff.



- Total staff layoffs were disproportionate by industry sector. Although accommodation and food services; and, arts, entertainment and recreation had the highest number of responses, the number of staff layoffs were exponentially higher than the other sectors.
- Manufacturing also reported a high number of layoffs, but it is important to note that food and beverage manufacturing businesses such as wineries and some food processing experienced significant layoffs.
- The other services sector also experienced a high number of layoffs. Many of the businesses in this sector include salons, personal services, repair services, funeral homes, pet care, civic and social organizations, etc.



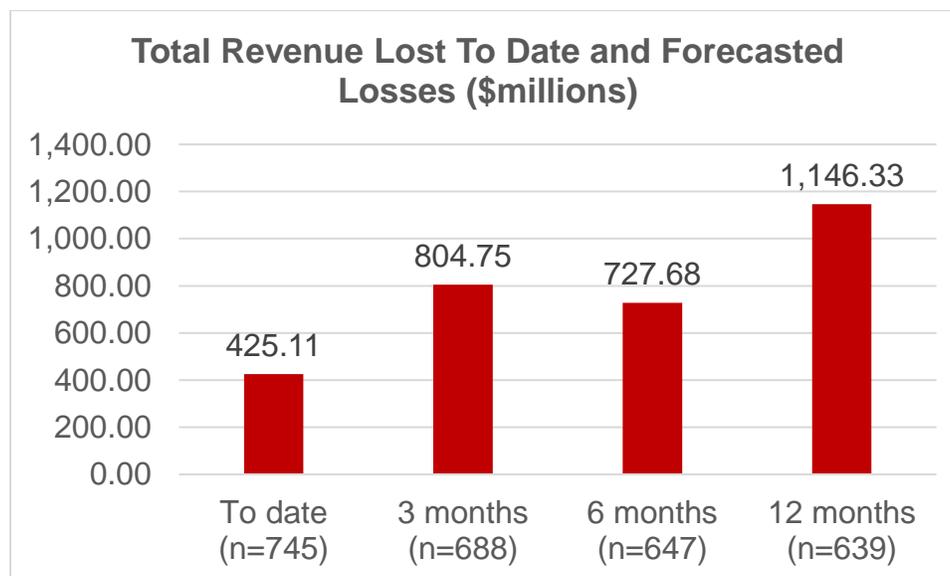
- Most respondents (85%) did not anticipate further staff layoffs within the next 6 months, while 15% indicated they would be making additional lay-offs. This would be contingent on measures implemented to open parts of the economy.



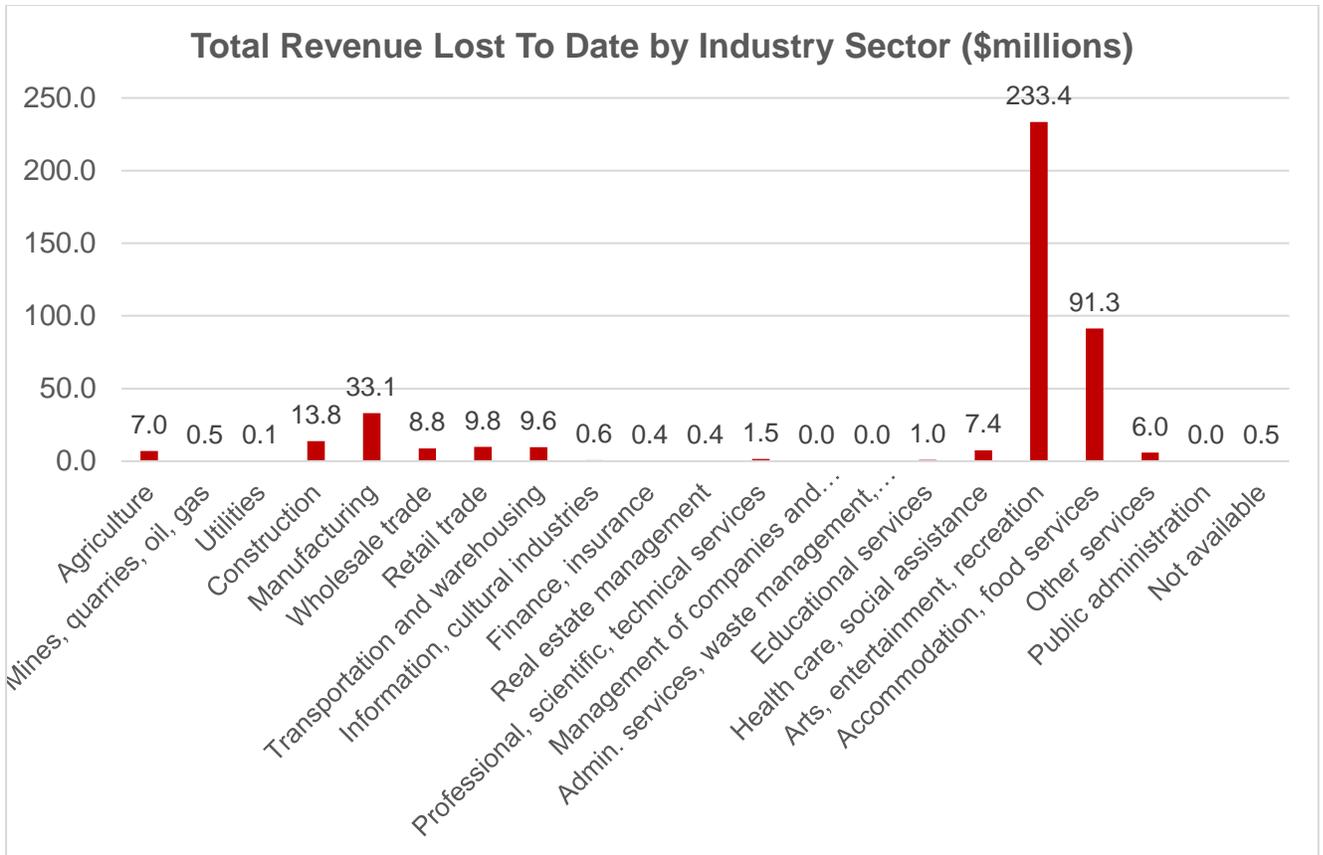
- The business in industry sectors that reported the most layoffs are also those that report the most number of anticipated layoffs. Accommodation and food services, and arts, entertainment and recreation report the highest number of anticipated layoffs.
- It is surprising to see that manufacturing reported such a high number of anticipated layoffs, but this could be a result of global supply chain challenges, as well as effects on food and beverage manufacturing sectors, particularly the wine industry since there is a hospitality component to those businesses.

## Revenue and Expenses

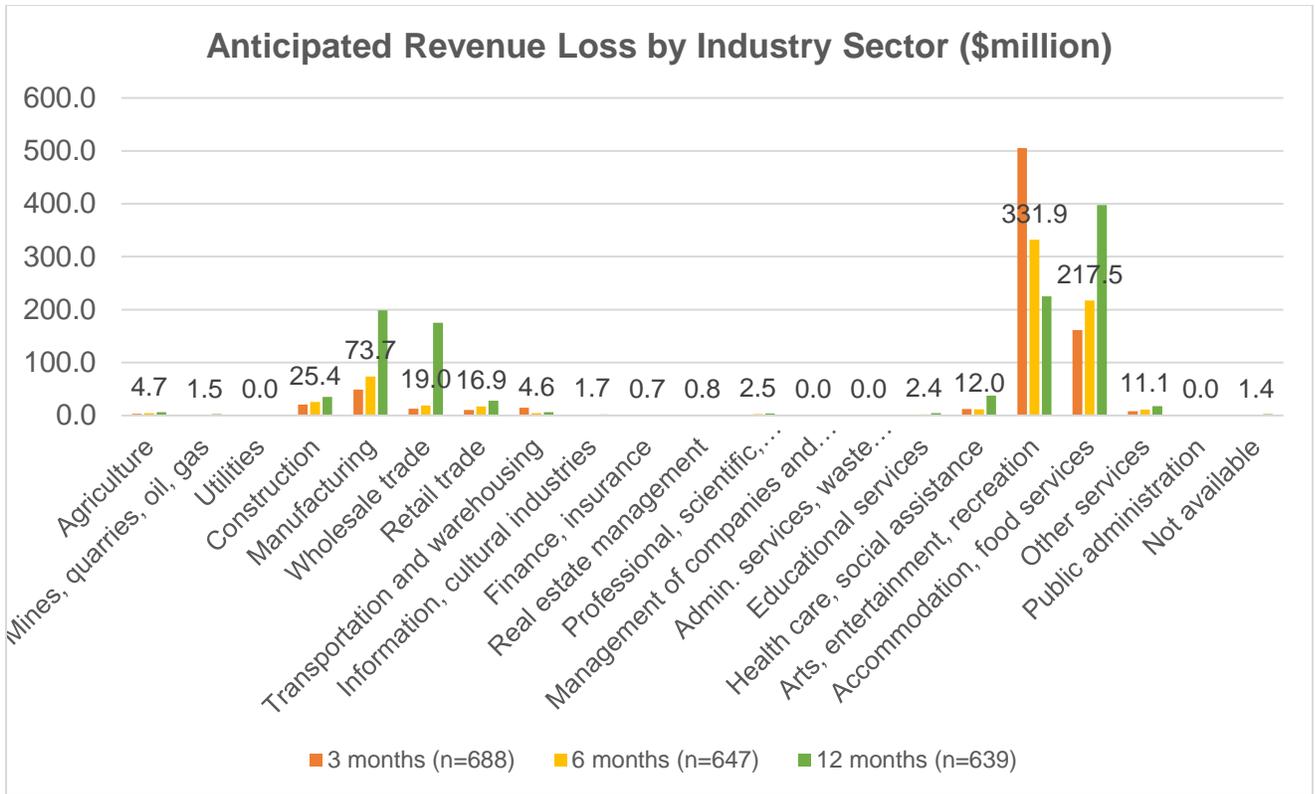
The following section provides information specific to current and forecasted lost revenue, current and forecasted lost revenue by industry sector, and the ability for businesses to pay fixed expenses.



- Businesses have reported a staggering loss of revenue since the start of COVID-19. 745 respondents reported a combined loss of \$425.11 million.
- In regards to anticipated losses, 688 businesses anticipated a loss of \$804.75 million within 3 months, 647 business anticipate a loss of \$727.68 million in 6 months, and 639 businesses reported anticipate losses of \$1.146 billion within 12 months.
- Respondents represent only 5% of businesses in Niagara, so existing and anticipated losses would be in the multi-billions of dollars across the regional economy.

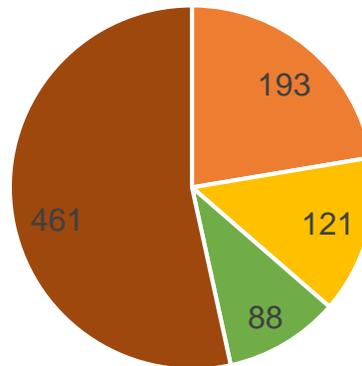


- It is apparent some industry sectors were affected disproportionately. Arts, entertainment and recreation (111 respondents) reported an estimated loss of \$233.4 million; accommodation and food services (226 respondents) reported an estimated loss of \$91.3 million; and, manufacturing (105 respondents) reported an estimated loss of \$33.1 million.
- The sectors that reported the smallest revenue losses include management of companies and enterprises; utilities; administration, waste management and remediation; mines, quarries, oil and gas extraction; finance and insurance; real estate management; and, information and cultural industries.



- The sectors that anticipated the largest ongoing loss of revenue included accommodation and food services at \$397.4 million over 12 months; arts, entertainment and recreation at \$225.1 million over 12 months; manufacturing at \$198.5 million over 12 months; and, wholesale trade at \$175.4 million over 12 months.

### Percentage of Fixed Expenses Businesses Can Currently Pay (n=863)

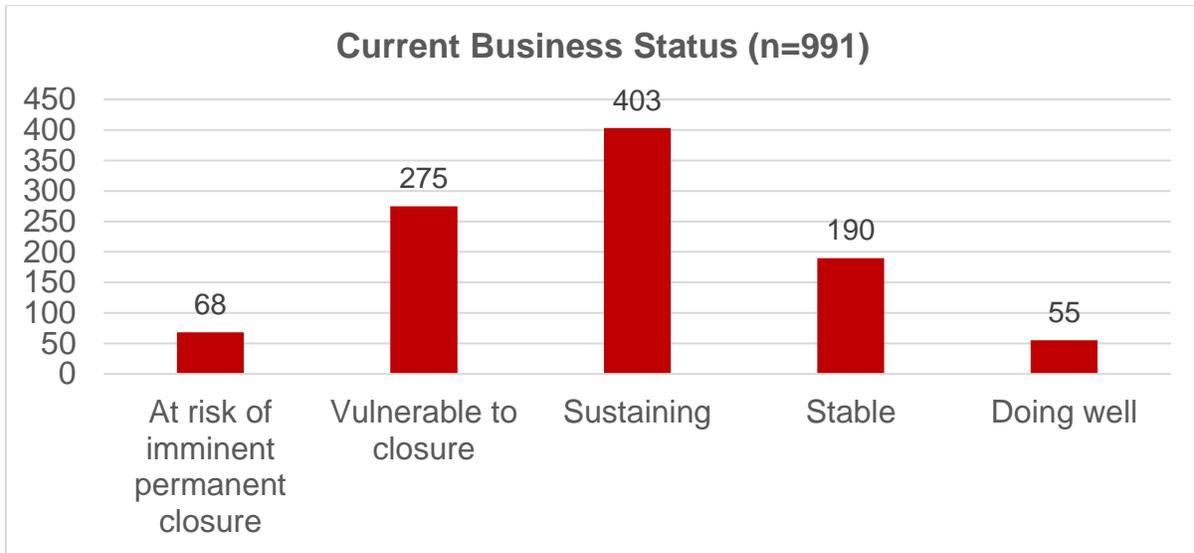


■ 1 to 25 percent    ■ 26 to 50 percent  
■ 51 to 75 percent    ■ 76 to 100 percent

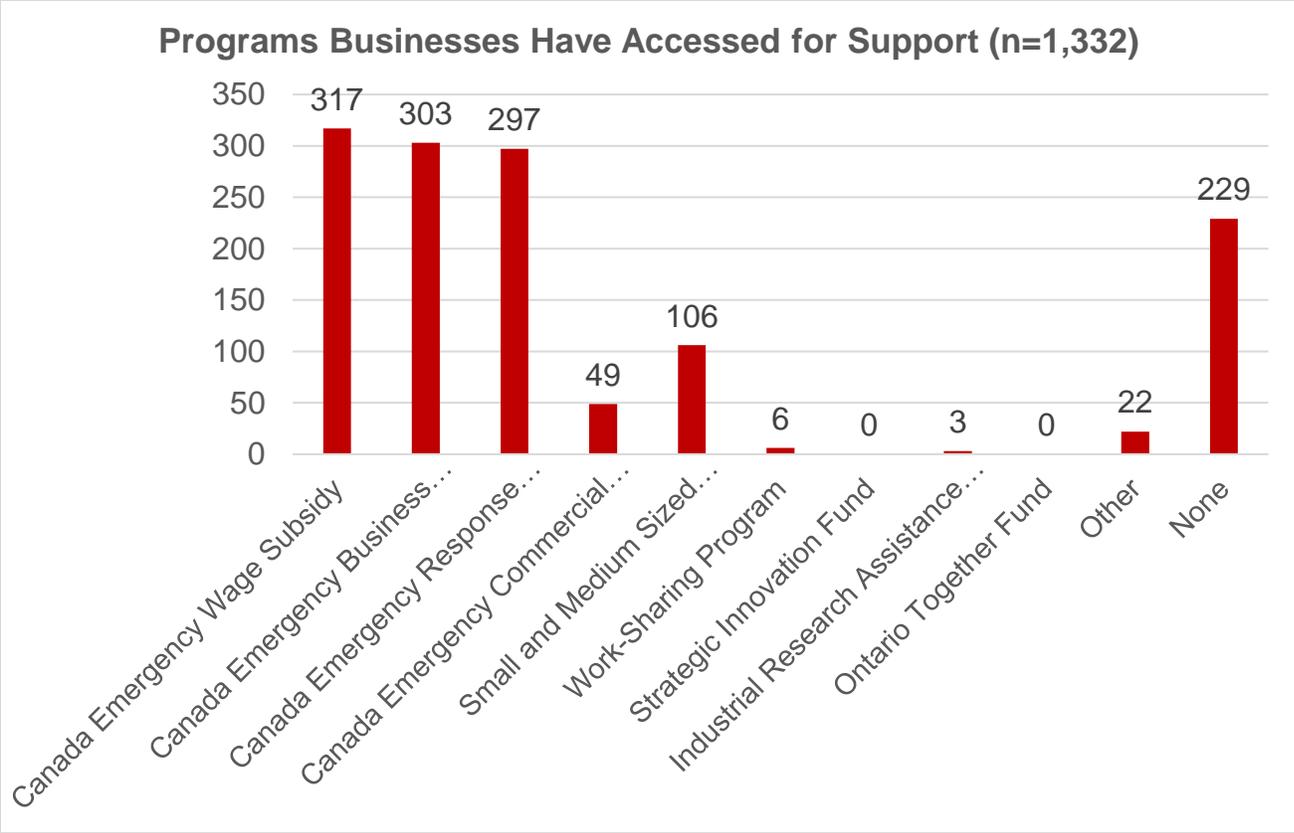
- Respondents reported the percentage of fixed business expenses they were able to pay under the current circumstances. These included expenses such as rent, insurance, subscriptions, equipment leases, payments on loans, depreciation, advertising, etc.
- Almost half of respondents (45%) reported that they were able to cover 100% of their current fixed expenses. However, 471 (55%) reported that they were not able to cover total current fixed expenses.
- 193 (22%) reported only being able to cover 1 to 25 percent of expenses, 121 (14%) reported only being able to cover 26 to 50 percent of current fixed expenses, 88 (10%) reported only being able to cover 51 to 74 percent, and 461 (53%) reported being able to cover 76 to 100 percent.

## Business Status

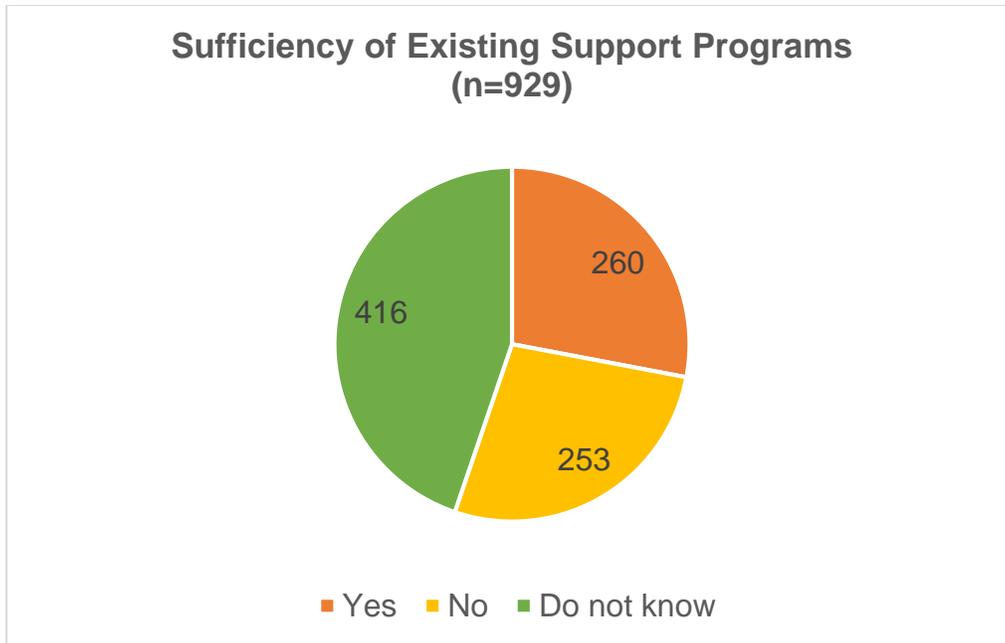
The following section provides information specific to the current status of business respondents including their well-being, support programs accessed, the sufficiency of the support programs offered, supports desired from local and regional government, resources required to pursue new opportunities, capital required to operate under COVID-19 precautionary measures, operating capacity under COVID-19 precautionary measures, and supply chain characteristics and sourcing intentions.



- Businesses were asked to identify their current business' level of vulnerability. Of 991 respondents, 68 (7%) indicated they were at risk of imminent permanent closure, 275 (28%) indicated that were vulnerable to closure, 403 (41%) indicated that they were sustaining, 190 (19%) indicated that they were stable, and 55 (6%) indicated that they were doing well.
- It is important to highlight that 343 (35%) of respondents are at serious risk of closure.

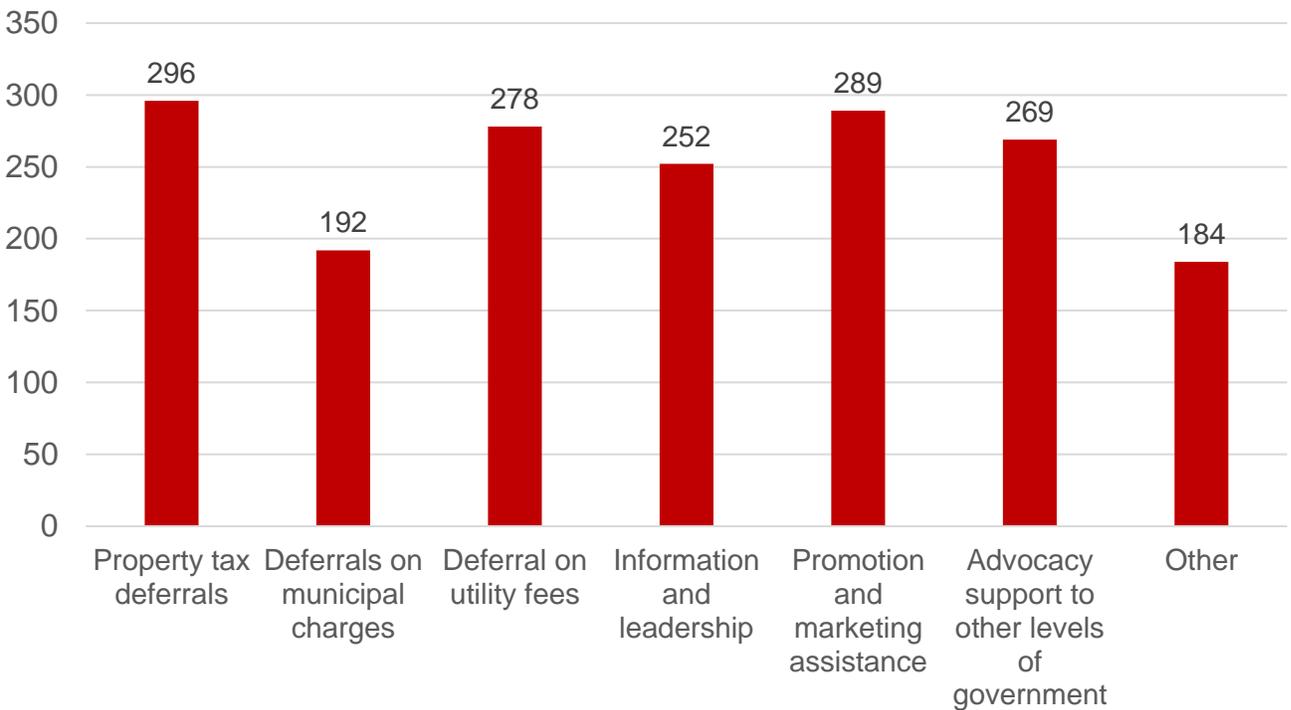


- A number of new business support programs were launched and some existing programs were directed to provide support to businesses struggling through COVID-19.
- In total, 1,103 respondents accessed programs while 229 respondents did not access any programs.
- Based on survey results, Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy program was the most accessed with 317 recipients, followed by Canada Emergency Business Account with 303 recipients, Canada Emergency Response Benefit with 297 recipients, and Small and Medium-Sized Business Enterprise Loan with 106 recipients.
- The lesser access programs included Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance with 49 recipients, other programs with 22 recipients, Work-Sharing program with 6 recipients, and Industrial Research Assistance Program with 3 recipients.
- Respondents did not access the Strategic Innovation Fund or the Ontario Together Fund.



- Businesses were asked if the existing programs were sufficient to support them through COVID-19 to recovery. Of 929 respondents, 260 (28%) indicated yes, 253 (27%) indicated no, and 416 (45%) indicated that they do not know.

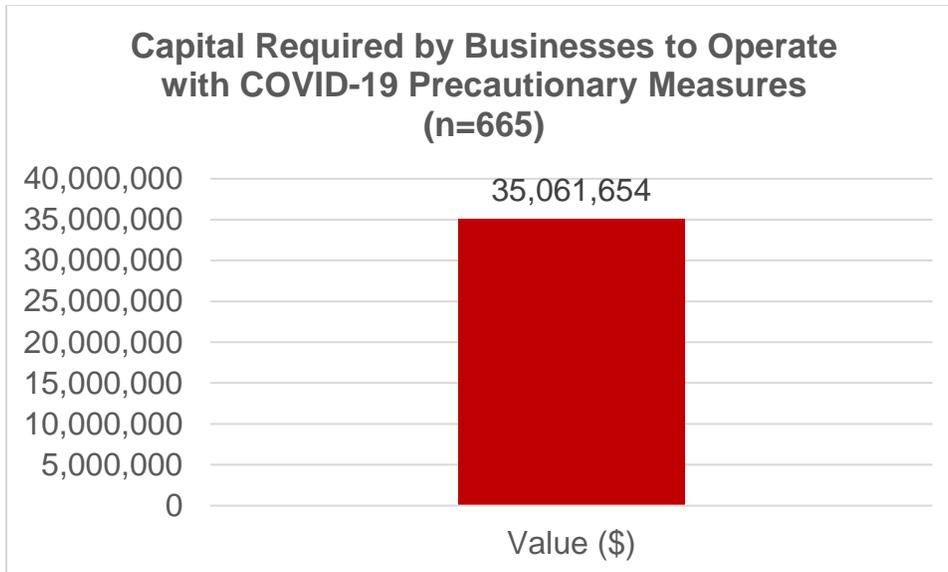
### Supports Desired from Local and Regional Municipalities (n=1,760)



- Businesses were asked what type of supports they would like from local and regional municipalities.
- 296 (17%) reported they would like property tax deferrals, 289 (16%) reported they would like promotion and marketing assistance, 278 (16%) reported they would like deferrals on utility fees, 269 (15%) reported they would like advocacy and support to other levels of government, 252 (14%) indicated they would like information and leadership from the municipalities, 192 (11%) reported they would like deferrals on municipal charges.
- 184 (10%) reported other, which includes regulatory reductions, property tax forgiveness and reductions, and grants.

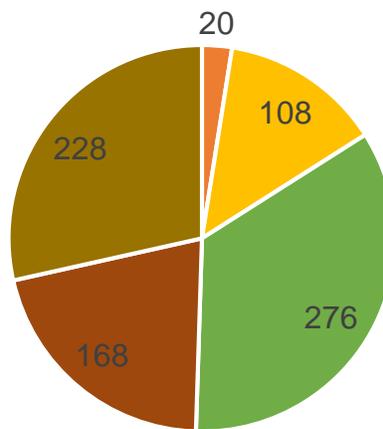


- Due to COVID-19, many businesses have had to make substantial pivots to survive.
- Businesses were asked what resources they require in order to pursue a new market and/or service/product delivery opportunities. 323 (21%) indicated they require additional capital, 241 (16%) indicated they need market research support, 181 (12%) indicated they need business planning assistance, 145 (9%) indicated they need new employees, 134 (9%) indicated they need new tooling, and 103 (7%) indicated they need new suppliers.
- 78 (5%) indicated they needed other supports, which were mostly technical/advisory in nature.



- In order to operate with COVID-19 precautionary measures in place businesses will need to make substantial capital investments into supplies, infrastructure and other fixed assets.
- 665 respondents reported a need to make a combined capital investments of \$35.1 million to operate with COVID-19 precautionary measures in place.
- The sectors that reported the highest amount of capital investments required included manufacturing (\$8.43 million), accommodation and food services (\$7.94 million), health care and social assistance (\$4.0 million), agriculture (\$2.7 million), and retail trade (\$1.4 million).

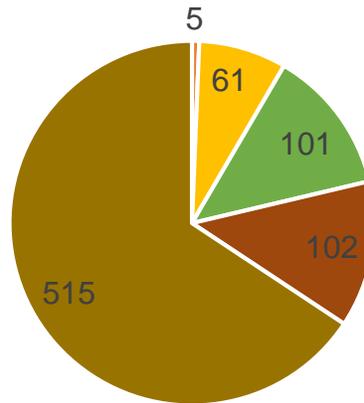
### Capacity Businesses Can Operate Under COVID-19 Precautionary Measures (n=800)



■ 0 percent      ■ 1 to 25 percent      ■ 26 to 50 percent  
■ 51 to 75 percent      ■ 76 to 100 percent

- With COVID-19 precautionary measures in place, many businesses will not be able to operate at full capacity. Only 143 of 800 companies (18%) reported that they would be able to operate at full capacity with precautionary measures in place. 20 businesses (2.5%) reported that they would not be able to operate with precautionary measures in place.
- Almost half of respondents (384) have indicated they would be able to operate at 50% capacity or less, while 396 respondents (49%) reported that they would be able to operate above 50% capacity.

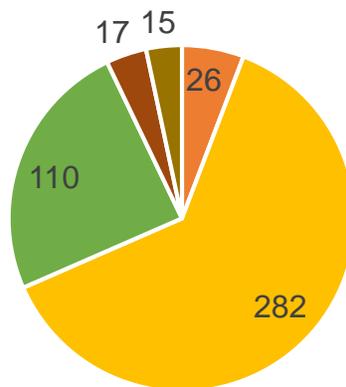
### Percentage of Supply Chain Sourced in Canada (n=784)



- 0 percent
- 1 to 25 percent
- 26 to 50 percent
- 51 to 75 percent
- 76 to 100 percent

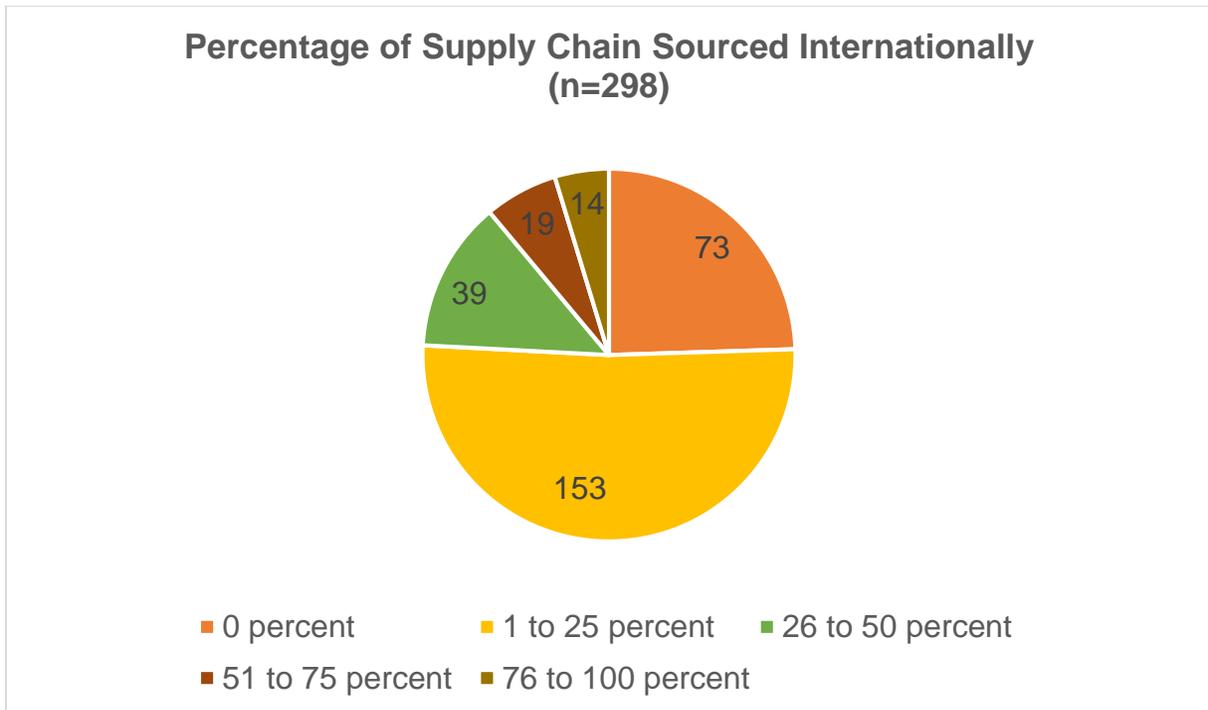
- Businesses were asked the percentage of supply chains sourced in Canada.
- Only 5 (1%) of respondents reported sourcing no supplies in Canada, while 61 (8%) reported sourcing 1 to 25 percent, 101 (13%) reported sourcing 26 to 50 percent, 102 (13%) reported sourcing 51 to 75 percent, and 515 (66%) reported sourcing 76 to 100 percent.

### Percentage of Supply Chain Sourced in USA (n=450)



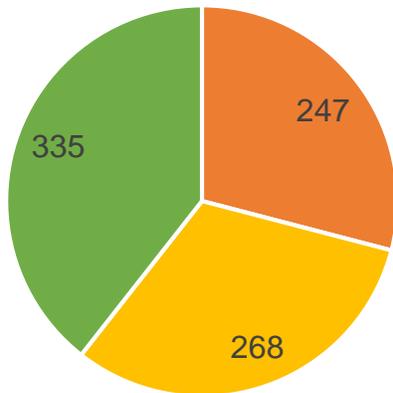
- 0 percent
- 1 to 25 percent
- 26 to 50 percent
- 51 to 75 percent
- 76 to 100 percent

- Business were asked to indicate the percentage of supply chains sourced in the USA. 26 (6%) reported no USA supply chains, 282 (63%) reported 1 to 25 percent, 110 (24%) reported 26 to 50 percent, 17 (4%) reported 51 to 75 percent, and 15 (3%) reported 76 to 100 percent.



- Businesses were also asked to indicate the percentage of supply chains sourced internationally. 73 (24%) reported no international suppliers, 153 (51%) reported 1 to 25 percent, 39 (13%) reported 26 to 50 percent, 19 (6%) reported 51 to 75 percent, and 14 (5%) reported 76 to 100 percent.

### Plan to Increase Volume of Supplies Sourced in Canada (n=850)



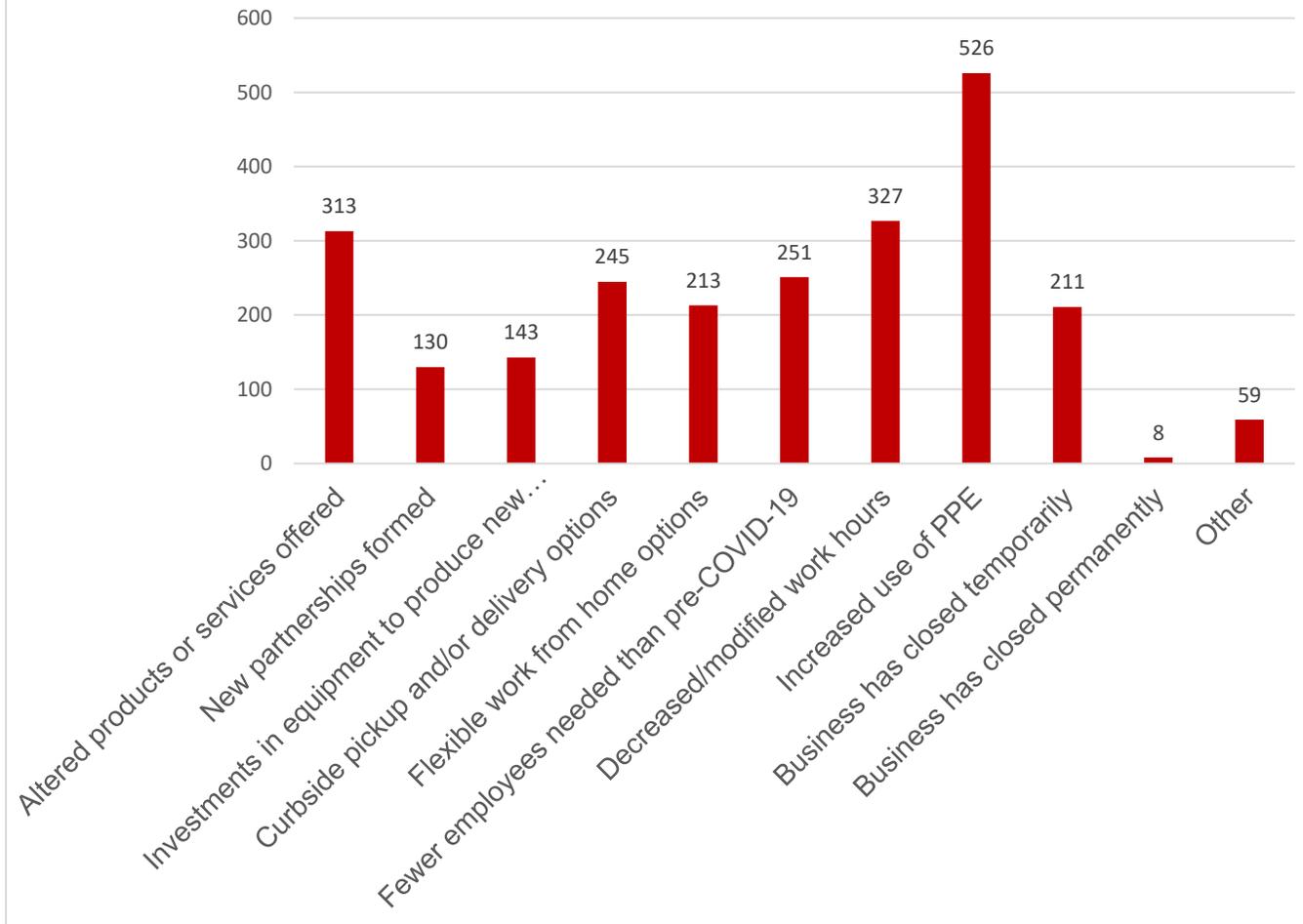
■ Yes ■ No ■ Do not know

- Businesses were asked if they plan to increase the volume of supplies they are sourcing from within Canada. 247 (29%) respondents reported yes, 268 (32%) reported no, and 335 (39%) reported that they do not know.

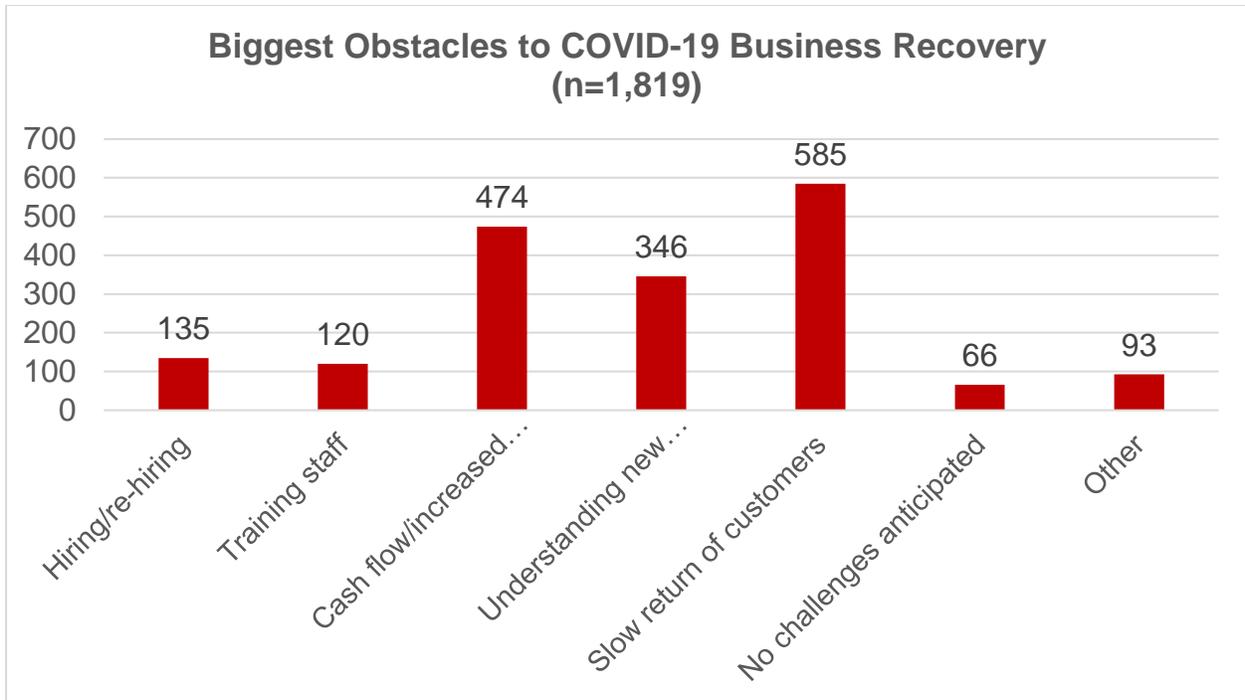
## Recovery

The following section provides information on COVID-19 measures being maintained going forward, the biggest obstacles businesses face to recovery, businesses that need help with COVID-19 recovery, assistance measures required by businesses, and mental health resources required by businesses.

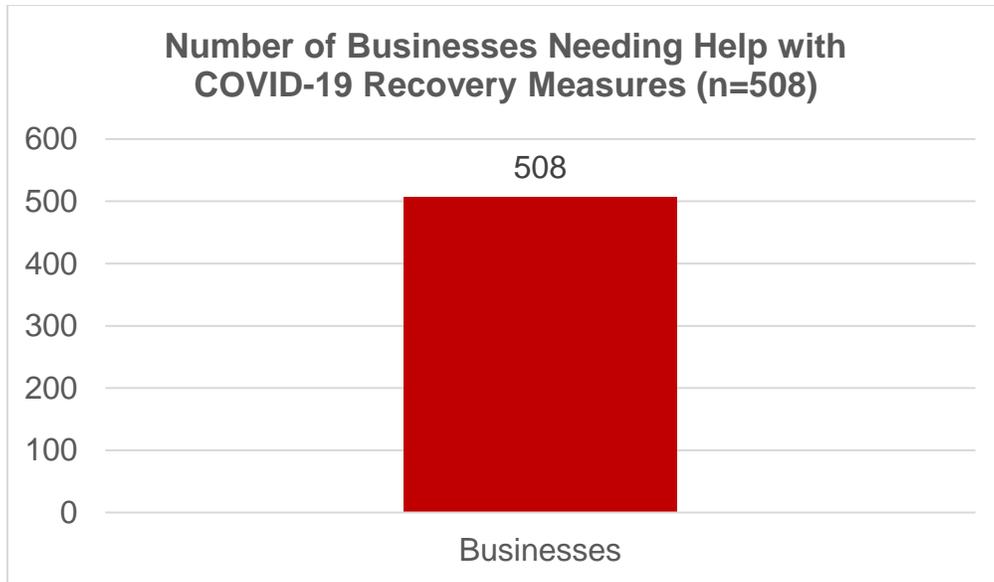
## COVID-19 Business Measures Being Maintained (n=2,426)



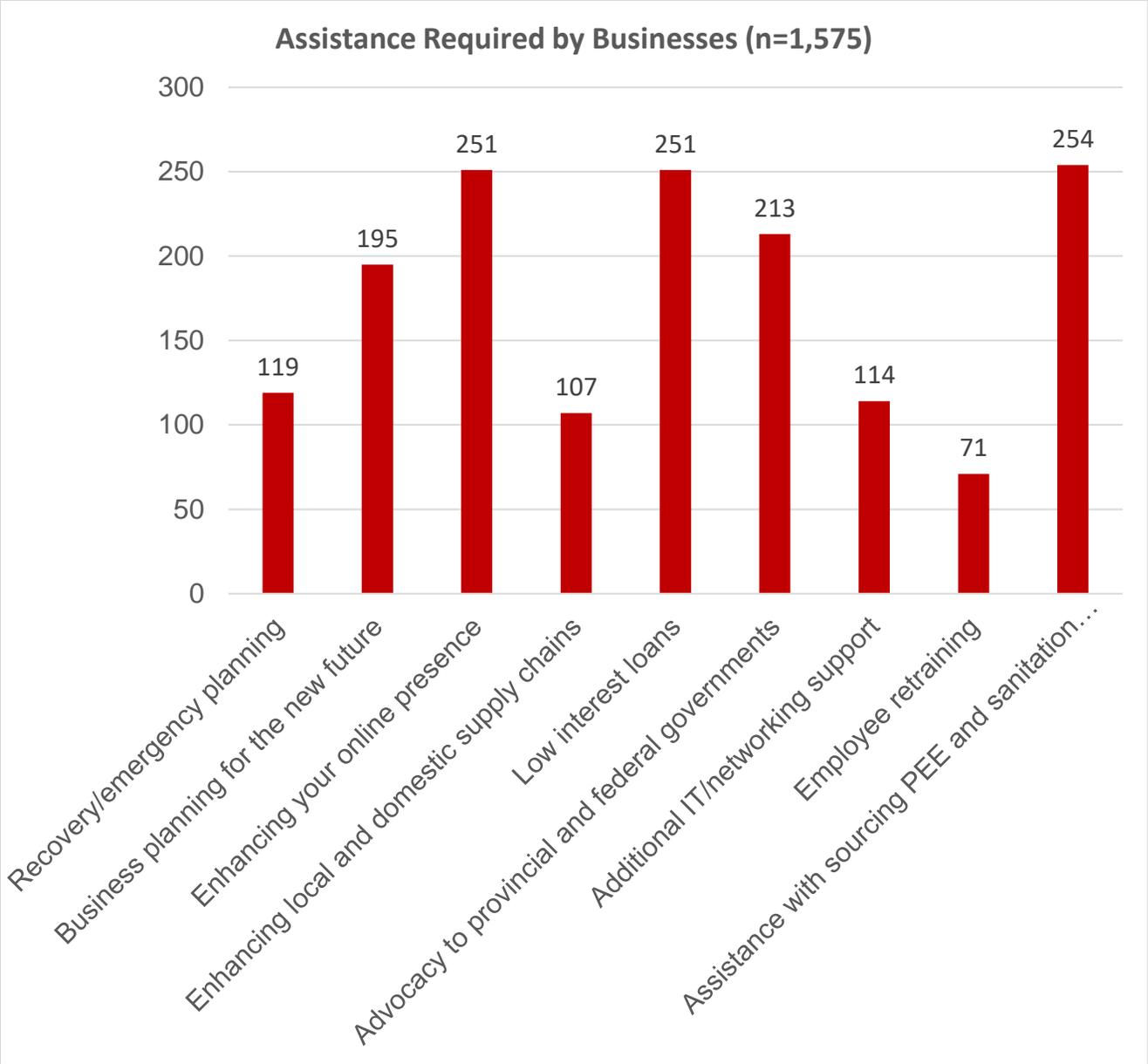
- Most businesses had to make substantial changes to operations with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and many indicated they will maintain these changes going forward.
- The most prevalent change was increased use of PPE with 526 respondents (22%), followed by decreased/modified work hours with 327 respondents (13%), altered products or services offered with 313 respondents (13%), fewer employees needed than pre-COVID-19 with 251 respondents (10%), curbside pickup and/or delivery options with 245 respondents (10%), flexible work from home options with 213 respondents (9%), business has closed temporarily with 211 respondents (9%), investment in equipment to produce new offerings with 143 respondents (6%), new partnership formed with 130 respondents (5%), and other with 59 respondents (2%).
- 8 respondents (0.3%) reported closing the business permanently.



- The COVID-19 recovery process will present many obstacles and challenges to most businesses.
- Businesses reported the biggest obstacle to be the slow return of customers with 585 (32%) respondents, followed by cash flow/increased debt loads with 474 (26%) respondents, understanding new physical space requirements with 346 (19%) respondents, hiring or re-hiring with 135 (7%) respondents, training staff (with 120 (7%) respondents, and other with 93 (5%) respondents.
- 66 (4%) respondents reported no challenges anticipated.

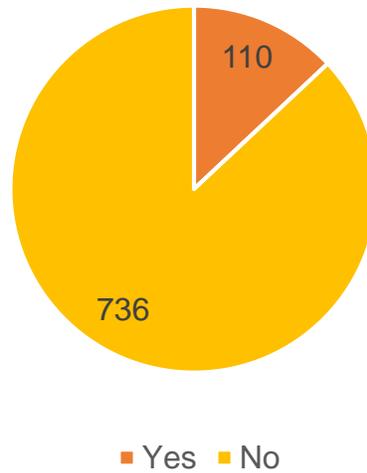


- Businesses will also require a significant amount of help and guidance when recovering from the impacts of COVID-19.
- 508 businesses (37%) of total respondents indicated that they need help with COVID-19 recover measures.



- The 508 businesses that reported needing help with COVID-19 recovery measures in the previous question selected 1,575 measures that they need help with.
- Businesses reported assistance with sourcing PPE and sanitation supplies as their biggest need with 254 (16%) respondents, followed by enhancing online presence with 251 (16%) respondents, low-interest loans with 251 (16%) respondents, advocacy to provincial and federal governments with 213 (14%) respondents, business planning for the new future with 195 (12%) respondents, recovery/emergency planning with 119 (8%) respondents, additional IT/networking support with 114 (7%) respondents, enhancing local and domestic supply chains with 107 (7%) respondents, and employee retaining with 71 (5%) respondents.

**Businesses That Request Mental Health Resources  
from Niagara Region (n=846)**



- COVID-19 has affected the mental health and well-being of many people including business owners and employees.
- Businesses were asked if they would like to be contacted by Niagara Region Public Health for resources related to mental health. 846 businesses responded and 100 (13%) requested mental health resources while 736 (87%) did not.

## Conclusion

All industry sectors and businesses in Niagara have experienced some form of negative effect from COVID-19. However, it is very clear that some have been affected disproportionately. The negative economic impact is staggering and if some businesses have not felt a negative effect yet, they may once the lost revenue, unemployment and decline in GDP ripples through the regional economy.

Revenue lost figures are staggering and have the potential to decimate Niagara's economy if the recovery process is prolonged and if we experience a second wave COVID-19. 745 respondents reported a combined loss of \$425.1 million. If we extrapolate this across the entire economy, the total estimated revenue losses would be \$7.8 billion. For perspective, total retail and restaurant expenditures in Niagara in 2017 alone were \$6.3 billion, tourism expenditures were \$2.4 billion, and Niagara's total GDP is approximately \$17.2 billion.

Niagara's GDP will be hit much harder than Ontario and Canada given our reliance on tourism-related industries, businesses and jobs. Niagara has a provincial tourism location quotient of 1.8, which means we have 1.8 times the concentration of jobs in Niagara than Ontario. This means our tourism industries will be affected much harder in Niagara than Ontario as a whole, so it is important to have resources and measures in place to support tourism in Niagara.

As mentioned, some industry sectors were affected disproportionately with respect to revenue loss and staff layoffs. Based on the survey results, the most vulnerable sectors include accommodation and food services; arts, entertainment and recreation; retail trade; other services; and, health care and social assistance. These sectors often involve businesses activities that rely on person-to-person interaction and or assembly of people in some form.

Most businesses surveyed (55%) cannot keep up with their current fixed expenses and this could lead to bankruptcies if recovery is prolonged, particularly in accommodation and food services; other services; arts, entertainment and recreation; health care and social assistance; and, retail trade

Many businesses are either at risk of imminent permanent closure (7%) or vulnerable to closure (28%) mainly affecting accommodation and food services; arts, culture and recreation; retail trade; and, health care and social assistance.

Many support programs have been accessed (1,332) by businesses across almost all industry sectors in Niagara. However, a high number of companies have specified the current supports are insufficient, especially in accommodation and food services; other services; retail trade; arts, entertainment and recreation; and health care and social assistance

Although many businesses are looking for some sort of financial relief from local and regional municipal governments, many are looking for non-financial supports including promotion and marketing assistance, advocacy and support to other higher levels of government, and information and leadership from municipalities.

Businesses will require a large range of support resources to pursue new market opportunities and diversify their markets and offerings in response to COVID-19. However, some in traditional industries are not able to make substantial pivots.

A large amount of capital and investment is required for businesses to safely operate under COVID-19 precautionary measures. The average business will be required to invest \$52,724, which would equate to about \$720 million in capital investment required across the entire regional economy.

Business capacity and productivity declined abruptly in Niagara due to COVID-19. 72% of businesses cannot operate at full capacity under COVID-19 precautionary measures. 51% of businesses are operating at 50% capacity or less. Sectors that are not public-facing such as manufacturing, agriculture, construction, and finance and insurance and wholesale were not as affected.

Businesses in Niagara currently do most of their supply sourcing domestically. Some businesses that source from the USA and internationally will be looking to do more sourcing domestically to stabilize their supply chains while many are currently undecided on what they will do. This is an opportunity to help businesses find local suppliers where possible.

The recovery process will be resource intensive and require additional advisory supports to assist businesses through recovery. Many businesses are looking to maintain changes in operations due to COVID-19. However, many are looking to maintain lower staffing levels, which will pose a problem for employment recovery in Niagara.

Businesses perceive many obstacles to recovery from COVID-19. Many businesses consider a slow return of customers, cash flow and debt repayment, and being familiar with new physical space requirements as their biggest obstacles to recovery.

Businesses will need a wide range of supports to recover from the effects of COVID-19. The biggest support needed will be sourcing the proper PPE and sanitation supplies and having sufficient supplies to meet demand. They will require financial supports such as no/low interest loans, technical and advisory supports to enhance their online presence, advocacy to upper levels of government for resources and support, market research, and business planning for the new future.

Lastly, many business owners and staff are dealing with mental health challenges during these times, especially given the uncertainties they face on a daily basis. They will need resources and supports to ensure that they remain well.

**For more information economic development contacts are:**

<b>Niagara Region</b>	Valerie Kuhns	Acting Director, Economic Development	<a href="mailto:valerie.kuhns@niagararegion.ca">valerie.kuhns@niagararegion.ca</a>
<b>Fort Erie</b>	Caralee Grummett	Manager, Economic Development & Tourism Services	<a href="mailto:cgrummett@forterie.ca">cgrummett@forterie.ca</a>
<b>Lincoln</b>	Paul Dilanni	Economic Development Officer	<a href="mailto:pdilanni@lincoln.ca">pdilanni@lincoln.ca</a>
<b>Niagara Falls</b>	Serge Felicetti	Director of Business Development	<a href="mailto:sfelicetti@niagarafalls.ca">sfelicetti@niagarafalls.ca</a>
<b>Port Colborne</b>	Julian Douglas-Kameka	Economic Development Officer	<a href="mailto:juliandouglas-kameka@portcolborne.ca">juliandouglas-kameka@portcolborne.ca</a>
<b>St. Catharines</b>	Brian York	Director, Economic Development and Government Relations	<a href="mailto:byork@stcatharines.ca">byork@stcatharines.ca</a>
<b>Thorold</b>	Marco Marino	Manager of Economic Development	<a href="mailto:marco.marino@thorold.ca">marco.marino@thorold.ca</a>
<b>Welland</b>	Dan Degazio	General Manager, Economic Development Recreation and Culture	<a href="mailto:dan.degazio@welland.ca">dan.degazio@welland.ca</a>

# Appendix

## Survey Instrument

1) Business name:

2) Municipality:

3) Number of employees:

4) Industry sector:

Agriculture

Mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction

Utilities

Construction

Manufacturing

Wholesale trade

Retail trade

Transportation and warehousing

Information and cultural industries

Finance and insurance

Real estate management

Professional, scientific and technical services (includes business services)

Management of companies and enterprises

Administrative services, waste management and remediation

Educational services

Health care and social assistance

Arts, entertainment and recreation

Accommodation and food services

Other services

Public administration (government)

5) Please estimate the loss of business revenue to date due to COVID-19, as well as your projections for the next three months, six months, and 12 months:

To date

3 months

6 months

12 months

- 6) Have you made staff layoffs since April 1, 2020? If so, please indicate the number of full-time and part-time staff that have been laid off (e.g. 0, 1, 5, 10, etc.):
- 7) Do you anticipate having to make additional staff layoffs within the next 3-6 months? If yes, please indicate the number of anticipated layoffs (e.g. 1, 5, 10, etc.):
- 8) What percentage of your current fixed expenses (e.g. lease, mortgage, loans, insurance, etc.) are you able to pay under current conditions (e.g. 0, 10, 15, 50, 75, etc.)?
- 9) What best describes your current business situation?

At risk of imminent permanent closure  
Vulnerable to closure  
Sustaining  
Stable  
Doing well

- 10) Have you received support from any of the following programs or measures?  
Please select all that apply:

Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy  
Canada Emergency Business Account  
Canada Emergency Response Benefit  
Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance  
Small and Medium Sized Business Enterprise Loan  
Work-Sharing Program  
Strategic Innovation Fund  
Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP)  
Ontario Together Fund  
Other (please specify)

- 11) Are existing government support programs sufficient to ensure your operation will remain viable and ready to reopen when COVID-19 restrictions are removed (yes/no)?
- 12) Are there other areas of support that the federal and/or provincial government can provide to assist your business during this time (please specify)?

13)What type of support would you like from local municipal/regional government right now (please check all that apply)?

- Property tax deferrals
- Deferrals on municipal charges
- Deferral on utility fees
- Information and leadership
- Promotion and marketing assistance
- Advocacy support to other levels of government
- Other (please specify)

14)If you were to change your product or service offering to target new market opportunities, what would you require?

- Additional capital
- New employees
- New suppliers
- Market research/intelligence
- New tooling
- Business planning assistance
- Not interested in offering new products or services
- Other (please specify)

15)What capital investments will be required for your business to operate safely under physical distancing and/or other precautionary measures (specify value)?

16)What capacity will your business be able to operate at while adhering to social distancing and other precautionary measures when you are able to reopen (e.g. 10%, 50%, 75%, etc.)?

17)What percentage of your supply chains and/or business supplies are sourced within Canada, the United States, and internationally (e.g. 10%, 20%, etc.)?

- Canada:
- United States:
- International:

18)Do you plan to increase the volume of supplies you are sourcing within Canada (yes/no)?

19) Do you anticipate maintaining any of the following changes you implemented due to COVID-19 (check all that apply)?

- Altered products or services offered
- New partnerships formed
- Investments in equipment to produce new products or provide new services
- Curbside pickup and/or delivery options
- Flexible work from home options
- Fewer employees needed than pre-COVID-19
- Decreased/modified work hours
- Increased use of PPE in the workplace
- Business has closed temporarily
- Business has close permanently
- Other (please specify)

20) What do you perceive to be your business' biggest obstacle to recovery from COVID-19? Check all that apply:

- Hiring/re-hiring
- Training staff
- Cash flow/increased debt loads
- Understanding new physical space requirements/enforcement
- Slow return of customers
- No challenges anticipated
- Other (please specify)

21) Would you like assistance with any of the following COVID-19 recovery measures (check all that apply)?

- Recovery/emergency planning
- Business planning for the new future
- Enhancing your online presence
- Enhancing local and domestic supply chains
- Low interest loans
- Advocacy to provincial and federal governments
- Additional IT/networking support
- Employee retraining
- Assistance with sourcing PPE and sanitation supplies

22) If you selected any of the items above, please provide your email address:

23) Due to COVID-19, employers and employees in Niagara are facing increased stress, anxiety and uncertainty about the future. Would you like to be contacted by Niagara Region Public Health regarding the mental health resources and supports available for your workplace? If yes, please provide your email address:

## Niagara ERRT's Draft Economic Recovery Plan

On March 18, 2020, Niagara's mayors and Regional Chair came together to launch the Niagara Economic Rapid Response Team (ERRT). Through this team, Niagara's economic development professionals have been collaborating throughout the pandemic to connect Niagara businesses with the supports and resources they need to survive and recover.

Niagara is united in its support of the business community during this unprecedented crisis and will foster collaboration, innovation and resilience as we seek to safely re-open. The ERRT is committed to offering long-term, ongoing support to help ensure Niagara's businesses remain supported and connected throughout this process and will re-emerge prosperous and sustainable.

The 13 municipalities across Niagara have each taken measures to relieve the burden on local businesses in their communities. These activities include deferrals of taxes and utility fees, increased online advisory services, access to personal protective equipment (PPE) waiving various penalties and interest on outstanding accounts, and launching shop local campaigns promoting businesses that are open and offering modified services.

Stakeholders like the Chambers of Commerce, Niagara Workforce Planning Board, and Employment Ontario providers have been, and will continue to be, critical partners in assuring that communications about new programs are being received and businesses' challenges are being brought to the forefront. They are part of a larger network of community enablers that will play an active role in the ERRT recovery planning process and implementation.

The Niagara Economic Recovery Plan (the "Plan") and its identified actions are reflective of the responses and input received from businesses through the survey responses, input from further by industry and sector consultation, as well as the results from corporate calling efforts.

The Plan will focus on local initiatives to address the needs of our businesses and connect them with resources to provide further assistance. This will include both strategies to re-open safely and to build more resilient businesses by learning from changes realized as a result of the pandemic. The plan is centred on encouraging and supporting businesses, investment, and job creation in order to proactively recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Plan has been developed in a way that aligns with local economic recovery efforts, as well as broader, province-wide priorities. This alignment has been obtained by engaging the local area municipality (LAM) staff responsible for economic recovery planning and through participation in the GTA Economic Development Alliance.

The GTA Economic Development Alliance is recently formed group, composed of 20+ municipalities that have come together to support economic recovery across Ontario. Current members are Aurora, Brampton, Burlington, Durham Region, Georgina, Halton Hills, Halton Region, King, Markham, Milton, Mississauga, Niagara Region, Oakville, Richmond Hill, Toronto, Vaughan, Whitchurch-Stouffville, York Region, the Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO), as well as the regional investment attraction agency Toronto Global.

Based on the initial reporting through the first COVID-19 Business Impact survey, the impact of the pandemic was projected to be close to \$576.3 million within the first 3 months. It is recognized that for many Niagara businesses, the road to economic recovery will be long and difficult.

The Accommodation and Food Service and Tourism sectors were especially hard hit, being the first to be mandated closed and experiencing the highest reported staff lay-offs and revenue losses. Retail and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation were also hard-hit and experienced a significant loss in revenue and high lay-offs. An unprecedented number of people have left the workforce as a result of lay-offs due to COVID-19.

There are significant workforce and labour market challenges that lie ahead to combat the negative effects of the pandemic.

The Niagara COVID-19 Business Impact Survey – Part 2 was distributed to approximately 10,000 businesses from May 15 until June 1, 2020, mainly through direct email.

This survey's questions centred on recovery, with questions that address the aid programs that businesses accessed, the areas where they require further assistance, the largest barriers to re-opening, and the like. The survey yielded responses from 1,382 business across all 12 municipalities in Niagara. The responses are representative of all industry sectors in Niagara's economy and respondents reported employing 47,456 staff.

The industry sectors where respondents reported the highest number of employees included accommodation and food services; arts, entertainment and recreation; manufacturing; retail trade; and, health care and social assistance. Respondents reported total layoffs of 17,950 staff across industry sectors, with 58% being full-time staff and 42% being part-time staff.

Through the survey, businesses reported a combined loss of \$425.11 million in revenue. It is apparent some industry sectors were affected disproportionately. Arts, entertainment and recreation and accommodation and food services reported the highest revenue losses.

Although many businesses reported accessing a number of aid programs, it is apparent that additional supports are required to assist them in re-opening and recovering. Respondents reported the highest needs as property tax deferrals, promotion and marketing assistance, deferrals on utilities, and advocacy to other levels of government.

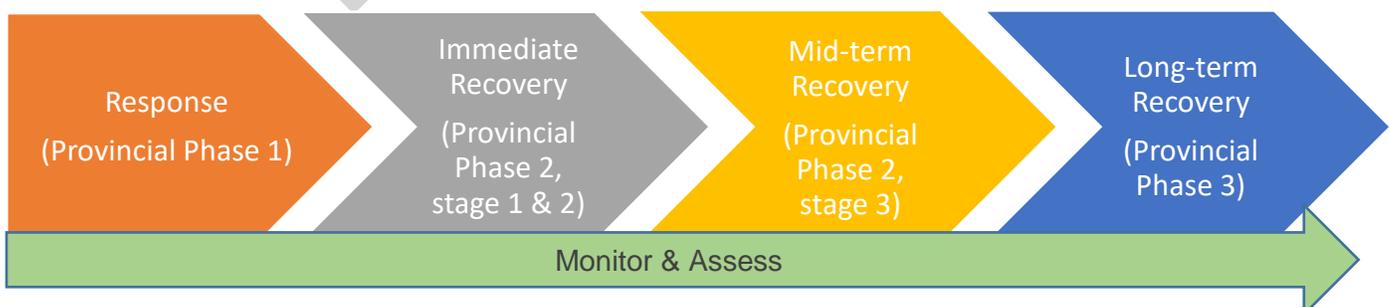
We acknowledge the overall responsiveness of policymakers that introduced support and relief measures for many businesses and employees impacted. As the Province looks to re-open parts of the economy through the [Re-Opening Ontario after COVID-19 framework](#), the ERRT has shifted its focus and efforts to recovery planning.

The proposed Plan is a series of actions that will create a positive investment climate in Niagara and help its local economy by supporting local businesses. Specifically, the plan is centered on the following 3 main themes: Research and Information, Advocacy, and Resilience.

In order to help move the economy forward, a series of actions will be taken immediately, while other measures will be actioned subsequently. The Plan uses a phased approach that will follow the Province's framework for re-opening. Guidance will be taken from the Province to guide how we move between phases. Input from the local Medical Officer of Health will be sought to help advise decisions locally on how to move between phases as well.

The Plan will be updated regularly and will likely change as the COVID-19 emergency evolves, as more information becomes available, and as the Province of Ontario updates its Emergency Orders. This will not be a linear progression through the framework, as any sharp increase in the number of cases would require movement back to previous phases.

The proposed progression of this Plan is as follows:



The actions in the plan are intended to progress in conjunction with the Province's framework. Any adjustment in the progression through that framework by the Province would require an assessment on the impact locally to this plan. As such, the plan will continue to assess, evolve, and adjust as necessary depending on the advice directed by the Province and in consultation with the local Medical Officer of Health.

Niagara's ERRT will work in consultation with Niagara Region's Strategic Communications and Public Affairs division to create a comprehensive communications strategy to support the Plan. This strategy will ensure local businesses remain engaged with the progression of the plan, and remain connected with the supports and initiatives outlined in the Plan.

As the region moves into Phase 3 and beyond, the efforts in the Recovery Plan will lead into the Long Term Economic Development Strategy that has been identified as a Regional Council strategic priority.

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	Immediate	Mid-term	Long-term
<b>Research and Information Pillar</b>	<p>Conducting a second COVID economic impact (Business Impact) survey</p> <p>Maintain a strong base of data on the local economy and businesses, available to stakeholders to inform decision making</p> <p>Ongoing promotion and timely posting of new Federal and Provincial initiatives and announcements on the ERRT website page</p> <p>Promoting Provincial and Federal aid programs, including the Resiliency Help Desk at 1-866-989-1080 where businesses can access accountants or financial advisors</p> <p>Monitoring and reporting on the impact of the new future for students at Brock/Niagara College on Niagara's economy and business's employment needs</p>	<p>Prepare a report on the second regional COVID Business Impact survey results</p> <p>Identify vulnerable companies and sectors from the survey as a focus for municipal BR+E efforts</p> <p>Preparation and circulation of sector- and municipal-specific reports produced from second COVID Business Impact survey</p> <p>On-going monitoring of development application activity upon re-opening of economy, including year over year analysis as indicator of economic growth post-pandemic</p> <p>Recognizing and showcasing businesses that are successfully pivoting through the ERRT website and other channels</p> <p>Adding a COVID business impact feedback form on the ERRT website for ongoing data collection</p> <p>Regular/on-going updates to Regional Council on COVID-19 impact related activities, issues and efforts</p> <p>Monitor activities and impacts in other comparable municipalities to benchmark Niagara and learn from best practices</p>	<p>On-going: Regular research updates to stakeholders on general market conditions, including local workforce changes, large expansion investments, business closures, etc. as available/released</p> <p>Conduct a third COVID Business Impact Survey in phase 3 to determine the status of recovery of businesses</p>

		<p>Host online webinars on topics relevant to supporting business</p> <p>With Emergency Management and Public Health, support businesses to re-open in a safe and responsible way by sharing guidelines and protocols with business associations through update calls, as needed</p> <p>Using the survey results, look for commonalities in supply demand locally. Identify essential supplies and support companies in sourcing Niagara/Canada suppliers</p>	
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	Immediate	Mid-term	Long-term
<b>Advocacy Pillar</b>	<p>Continued alignment between Regional and LAMs' Government Relations strategies and advocacy efforts.</p> <p>Advocating for alignment and longer-term repayment schedules for all deferral programs to allow businesses reopening to generate sufficient cash-flow</p> <p>Continue to provide research and anecdotal findings from Niagara businesses to the appropriate levels of government within relevant Ministries, as well as AMO, FCM, FedDev and the joint Ontario government committee</p> <p>Continued participation in the GTA and provincial recovery planning efforts to identify best practices and synergies across communities in recovery efforts</p> <p>Advocate for a strong child care system that will enable parents to return to their employment</p>	<p>Strive for consistent application of bylaw enforcement across LAMs and the Region.</p> <p>Advocate for COVID-19 relief programs to continue into 2021 for tourism and hospitality sectors, including but not limited to CERB, CEWS, and rent relief programs</p> <p>Supporting Planning departments in review of red-tape reduction efforts to increase speed for development to re-start</p> <p>Advocate for digitization of Region permits and applications, where possible, to assist business cost savings</p> <p>Advocate to keep COVID-19 relief programs in place for employees while they are in re-training or re-skilling process</p> <p>Advocating for expedited planning approvals at the Provincial level including MTO, Greenbelt, Niagara Escarpment Commission, etc.</p>	<p>Immediate and longer term: Advocate for changes to the Ontario Planning Act to allow existing CIP funding programs to support COVID-19 related relief efforts. For example: CIPs allowing for an enhancement of virtual a presence (e.g. website design)</p> <p>Immediate and longer term: advocacy for accelerated broadband infrastructure investment in areas with limited/no service, working with SWIFT and other available programs</p> <p>Immediate and longer term: Continued advocacy for infrastructure investments for major/regionally significant projects and expediting those already in process</p>

	Immediate	Mid-term	Long-term
<p><b>Resilience Pillar</b></p>	<p>Conduct significant engagement with stakeholders representing tourism, manufacturing and agri-business and Task Force members (see below)</p> <p>Expedited approval and coordination of use of public realm spaces by businesses to allow for distancing while supporting business resiliency</p> <p>Targeted business retention efforts (BR&amp;E) led by the EDOs in the local area municipalities with specific strategies to assist businesses in distress</p> <p>Encourage “buy-local” promotion via Social Media, particularly Linked-In &amp; <a href="http://www.openinniagara.com">www.openinniagara.com</a>. and amplify existing or complementary buy-local initiatives across Niagara</p> <p>Increased digitization of government services including but not limited to: digital business advisory/support services, consultations and webinars, pre-consultation meetings, online applications, virtual town hall meetings, etc.</p> <p>Assist businesses that need access to capital by partnering on the promotion of the Regional Recovery &amp; Relief fund at Venture Niagara</p> <p>Maintain a listing of Niagara PPE suppliers on the ERRT website.</p>	<p>Work with Public Health to provide clear guidance on public safety and appropriate PPE for businesses</p> <p>Assist businesses in procurement of PPE by maintaining database on ERRT website and other tools</p> <p>Working with partners in workforce development – helping displaced workers find employment and deploy talent attraction initiatives to fill gaps</p> <p>Identify programs/funds for workforce training/re-training/re-skilling for a more flexible and adaptive workforce and assist employers in accessing them</p> <p>Assisting businesses in increasing their online presence – promotion of Digital Main Street and/ or other resources to get gain virtual presence</p> <p>Review decision-making process to allow for expedited approvals on development initiatives to support business re-opening</p> <p>Monitoring and mitigating any future wave of business closures or bankruptcies that may occur when relief programs end</p>	<p>Monitor level of demand for office and retail space due to increased adoption of online technologies and work-from-home options by business. Creative thinking to repurpose use of any excess space made available.</p> <p>Supply chains have been strained. Seek opportunities for import replacement – sourcing new domestic suppliers, or supporting repatriation of manufacturing.</p> <p>Re-focus FDI strategies and messaging to opportunities post- COVID. Develop new tools to undertake investment attraction, including site selection virtually</p> <p>Retain and develop OpenInNiagara tool to be a comprehensive online, regional business directory tool with input from municipalities</p> <p>Include a portion in the Long Term Economic Strategy that addresses mitigation plans for future pandemic impact</p>

The ERRT cannot achieve these actions on their own. There is a large group of community enablers whose support and resources will be necessary to achieve these actions. This group will provide input to the plan and provide resources and feedback.

It is suggested that this group be referred to as the Niagara Economic Action Task Force. This group will be used as a channel for communication to provide updates on the recovery plan actions, as well as solicit feedback and engage in assessment of relevancy of these actions as time progresses. Information will be shared by Niagara Economic Development at regular intervals, through email and virtual meetings.

The proposed Economic Action Task Force members would include, but not be limited to:

- Niagara Region Economic Development
- EDO representatives from each of the Local Area Municipalities
- Niagara Workforce Planning Board
- Chambers of Commerce
- Innovate Niagara
- Niagara Falls Small Business Enterprise Centre & St. Catharines Enterprise Centre
- Niagara Association of Realtors
- Employment Ontario service providers
- Niagara Region Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities
- Niagara Region Children's Services
- Business Development Bank of Canada and Venture Niagara
- Brock University and Niagara College
- Private sector participation
- Tourism, manufacturing and agri-business stakeholders
- Niagara Industrial Association
- Niagara Home Builders Association
- Niagara Construction Association
- St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation
- Tourism Partnership of Niagara and local DMOs
- Any additional members will be added where applicable to deliver on pillar activities

Underscoring the work being done by the Economic Action Task Force, there will be extensive public-private sector consultation and participation from Tourism, Manufacturing and Agri-business sectors to guide the work being done by the group.

The Niagara Region Economic Development department will act as a Project Manager on this recovery plan. Encouraging participating in the Pillar groups, liaising with the Pillar Leads (where applicable), coordinating the meet-ups of different advisory stakeholders, compiling the updates and sending communications to all Task Force members.