
Subject: Economic Recovery Plan Update 2
Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee
Report date: Monday, November 9, 2020

Recommendations

1. That Planning and Economic Development Committee **RECEIVE** report ED 15-2020 Economic Recovery Plan Update 2 for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide Planning and Economic Development Committee with an update on the progress on the Niagara Economic Recovery Plan.
- Niagara Economic Development continues to focus its work on supporting local businesses through actions developed in collaboration with the other Economic Development offices in the region as the Economic Rapid Response Team (ERRT).
- Niagara Economic Development is the Project Manager for the Economic Recovery Plan, but the action items included within the plan are owned by the ERRT members and require the support from these members and business stakeholders across the region, where applicable, to advance and complete.
- The actions in the plan are under the pillars of Research and Information; Advocacy; and Resilience.
- Each pillar has Immediate, Mid-Term and Long-Term actions. This time-line is meant to progress in succession with the Province's Framework for Business Re-opening as best as possible.
- Many of the actions in the plan have been initiated or are in-progress.

Financial Considerations

All financial implications of advancing or completing the action items included within the Economic Recovery Plan are being funded by the operational budget of the Economic Development department or through applications to granting programs made available by the Provincial and/or Federal government.

Analysis

We remain in Stage 3 of Phase 2 of the Province's Framework at this time. As a result, the actions in the plan under Immediate and Mid-Term are the first actions to be initiated and/or completed.

The actions under Long-Term will not be initiated until the Province provides direction that we will be entering into Phase 3. Should the Niagara region be placed in a modified version of Phase 2 as we have seen happen in the communities of Toronto, Peel and Ottawa, the economic recovery plan's progress would be re-assessed by the ERRT.

The plan's action items will be monitored and assessed are continually being assessed as they advance through consultation with the partners and the ERRT Task Force.

Niagara Economic Development intends to launch a third COVID-19 Business Impact Survey in November 2020 that will take a sector-specific approach to gauging the relevance of these action items along with the most pressing needs of businesses at this time.

Below is a high-level overview of the action items from the plan that have been completed and/or initiated. This chart highlights actions that have progressed or been initiated in addition to the items outlined in the update provided in report ED 11-2020 Economic Recovery Plan Update on Sept 9, 2020.

<u>Action(s)</u>	<u>Status/Progress</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Engagement with stakeholders representing tourism, manufacturing, agri-business and Task Force	On-going	Niagara Economic Development (NED) is preparing a third COVID-19 Business Impact survey to be launched mid-Nov 2020. This survey will be sector-specific, as we know they are impacted in different ways. The sectors of focus will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Manufacturing- Agri-business- Tourism- Non-Profit/Charities NED will be working with sector support organizations to push the surveys out to businesses, in addition to sending personal invitations.

<u>Action(s)</u>	<u>Status/Progress</u>	<u>Notes</u>
ERRT website updates	In progress	<p>Website updates are in progress to add the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The available webinars and advisory services of the Small Business Enterprise Centres including a calendar of events and centralized registration - Profiles of businesses that have successfully pivoted and/or innovated their products and services in the face of the pandemic - A web-form to collect on-going input on the impacts of COVID-19 from private businesses - New announcements of programs and funds available to businesses
PPE Directory	On-going, plus maintenance	<p>Referrals to the Niagara PPE directory are on going as inquiries are received on where businesses can acquire PPE. New additions to the site are added as received. The directory is hosted on NED's website at https://niagaracanada.com/covid-19/ppe/</p>
Expedited Planning approvals at all government levels	Completed and on-going	<p>Local area municipalities and the Region have been working with businesses on creative uses of public and private space to encourage business resiliency. Examples of this include the temporary outdoor patio expansions and the subsequent winter patio recommendations advancing with the new season.</p>

<u>Action(s)</u>	<u>Status/Progress</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Transition OpenInNiagara.com tool into regional online business directory	In-progress	<p>The online OpenInNiagara.com directory was launched in May to allow businesses in Niagara a free channel to promote that they were open and/or offering modified services.</p> <p>The action plan identifies the need to transition this tool into a long-standing online business directory for buy-local and supply chain inquiries. NED is working to identify the best partner to assist in that transition and with the population of businesses in the directory, starting with the Niagara Employment Inventory database.</p>
FedDev Ontario - Tourism Adaptation and Recovery Fund	Application submitted	FedDev Ontario launched an \$8 million Tourism Adaption and Recovery Fund initiative to assist tourism-dependent SMEs with the impacts of COVID-19. The ERRT joined together to submit an expression of interest for a program that would support Niagara's tourism operators. A decisions on this expression is expected in Nov 2020.
GTA Economic Development Alliance participation	Completed, bi- weekly attendance	NED continues to represent the region on bi-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.

<u>Action(s)</u>	<u>Status/Progress</u>	<u>Notes</u>
ERRT Update calls to Task Force in partnership with Public Health	Initiated and conducted bi-weekly	NED facilitates bi-weekly calls with the members of the ERRT Recovery Plan Task Force. The calls provide updates on relevant public health guidelines as well as updates on the recovery plan actions. Four (4) calls have been hosted at the time of this report and the average attendance is 30 stakeholders at each meeting.
Training and education for businesses, hosting online webinars	Initiated, running until Feb 2021 as pilot	NED invested in the expansion of the Small Business Enterprise Centre services in Niagara. New staff have been hired and are well into their outreach efforts to offer their services. Webinars and consultation topics include business-planning, ecommerce, building their online presence, etc. The pilot runs from Sept 2020 – Feb 2021.
Supply chain replacement survey	Completed initial survey, now refocusing	Local Economic Development professionals assisted in the surveying of an initial group of Niagara businesses to determine supply chain replacement opportunities. The results were inconclusive. NED will now be targeting manufacturers through the third COVID-19 Business Impact survey to determine opportunities.
Monitor and assess the impact of remote education on Niagara's economy and employment needs	Initiated and underway	NED is pleased to be partnering with Niagara Workforce Planning Board who will be undertaking an analysis of the economic impact of students studying digitally on Niagara's economy. This analysis will look at the impacts on labour market, discretionary spending on goods and services, the housing market, and public transportation. The report is expected mid Dec 2020.

<u>Action(s)</u>	<u>Status/Progress</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Research	Initiated, reports forthcoming	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NED has initiated the purchase of data from a qualified provider that provides an outlook on the financial health of the private sector and sectors that are most vulnerable. The raw data is expected in Nov 2020 and a report on this data is expected later in 2020/early 2021.2. NED is partnering with Niagara Workforce Planning Board who will be undertaking an analysis of the economic impact of students studying digitally on Niagara's economy. This analysis will look at the impacts on labour market, discretionary spending on goods and services, the housing market, and public transportation. The report is expected mid Dec 2020.3. NED will be producing the latest economic update report on Nov. 9 at the Region's Planning and Economic Development Committee meeting. It will include data on the effect of COVID-19 on the economy.4. NED will be working through our real-estate software system and in partnership with local area municipalities and real estate stakeholders to monitor industrial and commercial vacancy rates as a result of the pandemic's impact.

Regular updates on the progress of these actions are provided to the plan's ERRT Task Force group through bi-weekly calls facilitated by Niagara Economic Development as Project Manager. The list of Task Force members can be found in the attached "Niagara Economic Recovery Plan" document.

Alternatives Reviewed

No alternatives.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The ERRT Economic Recovery plan supports the Council Strategic Priority of "Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth".

Other Pertinent Reports

- ED 11-2020 - Economic Recovery Plan Update

Prepared by:
Kelly Provost
Acting Manager, Strategic Initiatives
Economic Development

Recommended by:
Valerie Kuhns
Acting Director
Economic Development

Submitted by:
Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Appendices

Appendix 1 Niagara Economic Recovery Plan (final)