

MEMORANDUM

ED 11-2021

Subject: COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity in Economic Development

Date: May 12, 2021

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee

From: George Spezza, Director, Economic Development

Economic Development

Current Status of Operations

This memo is the Economic Development Division's monthly update on our response to COVID-19 and business continuity. We continue to lead the implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan in collaboration with the Economic Rapid Response Team (ERRT).

Service/Operational Changes

In April, Economic Development appointed Linda Sicoli to the permanent position of Economic Development Officer. Interviews were also held for the Manager, Trade and Investment position vacated by Tim Reynold's retirement. Bryan Blue who undertook a two month redeployment to the Linhaven Long Term Care Home, returned to the Economic Development Division on April 19th.

Marketing Support to Businesses

Ongoing projects remain a priority including launching the Business Directory, updating COVID Business Support page and working with the team to launch and promote the third Business Impact Survey. Preparation has begun to launch COVID resiliency stories once Public Health measures allow for photography to be done at the places of business safely. These stories will be featured on NiagaraCanada.ca.

Website Analytics:	Last 30 days:	Vs. Same time last year:
Visits	3,655	+1,881
Page views:	7,310	+1,292
Unique Visitors:	2,932	-1,590*
Returning Visitors:	167	+82

*Unique visitors have gone down because the audience is now Niagara Region heavy and their web pattern shows they return to the site for updates and information.

Most popular Pages:	Number of Views:
COVID Business Support	1,068
Tourism	599
Niagara Advantage	231
Key Sectors	227

Business Updates/Economic Recovery Plan

An update on the progress of the Economic Recovery Plan is included on the agenda for this Committee meeting, report ED 12-2021 Economic Recovery Plan Update 4. Although, it is important to continue to support local business, we are now starting to plan for the longer term and the development of a 10 year Economic Development Strategy. Letters of commitment have been received from the 8 municipalities with economic development offices. The development of the strategy will be a collaboration between all of these offices.

Tourism Adaption and Recovery Funding

The successful applicants are currently going through the process of registering with the Region as suppliers and receiving purchase order numbers. Once they have a

purchase order they can submit their invoice for the first 80% of their funding. A total of 168 applicants are receiving funding of \$2m.

ERRT Biweekly Update Calls

The ERRT Biweekly calls continue. Attendance is approximately 30 participants and the minutes are distributed to the entire group of just under 90. The last meeting was focused on mental health resources available to employers and employees, as well as the regular updates on the vaccination program and Public Health protocols.

Business and Economic Research and Analysis

Ongoing projects include: Niagara Active Economy research project with the Niagara Community Observatory; ICT Policy Brief, Niagara Community Observatory; Scenario Planning Prioritization Committee, Niagara Workforce Planning Board (draft report completed); ERRT COVID-19 Business Impact Survey – Part 3 (currently drafting final report and presentation); FDI program research and analysis looking at Niagara's position in FDI and trade from a data perspective (May 2021); conducting industrial base analysis for economic development strategy (June 2021).

Other projects include: Niagara Region COVID-19 Recovery Measurement Indicators (providing advice and information); Airport Economic Impact Assessment Project (providing advice and assistance); research and data provision for DC Background Study; and, updated Niagara Tourism Profile.

Business Development

Niagara Economic Development received three Industrial Development Charge Grant applications. This will result in the immediate retention of 25 existing jobs and the creation of 110 new jobs in the Niagara region.

Since the last report to committee a Gateway CIP application has been received, reviewed, and approved. The successful investment will result in \$1,520,000 in new construction and the creation of 30 new jobs to the Niagara region.

A successful advertising campaign was launched through the publication of a paid editorial in the Financial Post. The article, "Niagara is attracting world-class companies

that are priced out of larger centres” showcases a number of recent investments in Niagara as well as our competitive advantage compared to the Greater Toronto Area.

Trade and Investment

Effective March 31, 2021 the Manager of Trade and Investment retired from his position at the Niagara Region. In the absence of the past Manager of Trade and Investment, and until their replacement can be hired, the Manager of Business Development and Expedited Services will oversee this portfolio and respond to any new inquiries and continue working with existing clients.

Foreign Direct Investment (*FDi*) meetings are ongoing virtually, focused on the U.S. and EU markets. The lead generation contract for 10 qualified leads in the EU has come to a successful conclusion. We found strong leads in the EU that were receptive to Niagara Economic Development's value proposition and our strategic location. Two different lead generation consulting companies are working at the moment in separate markets in the U.S. in an effort to provide pre-qualified leads. The current status of Niagara Economic Development's (NED) lead generation work has 48 outstanding qualified leads due in the US. NED's lead generation consulting work has been postponed until May due to lack of staff resource within the department. The *FDi* work which was placed on hold for 15 virtual qualified lead meetings with the Hamilton Niagara Partnership in the State of Florida for the December-January period, has now been relaunched.

The Niagara Foreign Trade Zone Point continued to be active in April, with on-going meetings CanadaBW and the Canadian Border Services Agency.

Sector Support and Economic Development Support to Local Area Municipalities without Economic Development resources

- Partnered with the Grape Growers of Ontario on the project: Fostering Sustainability: Grape Processing from Soil to Shelf which will integrate the sustainable growth accreditation programs and create a public site to educate on sustainable winegrowing.
- Advisory support to LAM with inquiries and business, tourism and development initiatives.
- Project management support and business/EDO/FedDev engagement and response for Tourism Adaptation and Recovery fund.
- Moderated West Niagara Town Hall.
- Tourism Advisory Task Force for Niagara-on-the-Lake.

- Presentation to Transportation Committee to engage Economic Development to support tourism enhancement elements of Niagara Circle Route.
- Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance Working Group engagement.
- ConnectON Steering Committee.
- Local Food conference sessions (every Wednesday in March through OMAFRA)
- Support to Phase 2: Implementation of vaccine via Sub working group for agricultural and farm workers.

Operational Outlook

1 month

- All initial grant payments made to Tourism Adaption and Recovery Fund applicants. Project reporting ongoing.
- COVID-19 third Business Impact Survey analyzed and all reporting completed.
- Online regional Business Directory is 'live' and being promoted to businesses and organizations.
- Manager, Trade and Investment position recruitment completed.
- Implementation of Economic Recovery Plan on-going. Initial work started on development of a 10 year Economic Development Strategy.
- Review work practices depending on Niagara Region recommendations and Public Health advice.

3 months

- Continue to monitor economic indicators to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on the local economy compared to previous years and determine where resources could be best utilized to maximize ongoing economic development programming.
- Longer term strategic economic development planning underway.
- Review work practices depending on Niagara Region recommendations and Public Health advice.

6 months

- Longer term strategic economic development planning continues and stakeholder consultations completed.

- Review work practices depending on Niagara Region recommendations and Public Health advice.

Respectfully submitted and signed by

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Director, Economic Development