
Memorandum

CAO 10-2020 Appendix 6

Subject: COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity in Economic Development
Date: April 23, 2020
To: Regional Council
From: Val Kuhns, Acting Director, Economic Development

Economic Development

Current Status of Operations

Following the formation of the Economic Rapid Response Team (ERRT), Niagara Economic Development has re-focused its work to support our Niagara businesses impacted by COVID-19. Initially, this involved the development of a dedicated ERRT web page as a source of information on funding announcements, the creation and monitoring of an ERRT email address for business inquiries across the region, and the design and deployment of a COVID business impact survey on the immediate impacts of the pandemic to our local economy. Our social media and digital marketing channels have been used to widely promote these tools.

Service/Operational Changes

- All Foreign Direct Investment work has been suspended and staff redeployed within the Division to support our local companies and work on economic recovery planning.
- External marketing activities have been suspended and are now supporting efforts to get information out to businesses and communicate with our stakeholders.

Significant Initiatives or Actions undertaken

- The COVID-19 Business Impact Survey yielded more than 2,600 responses in 10 days. The analysis has been completed on the data and the report has been released. The data is being widely used to inform economic recovery planning as well as advocacy efforts. Local area municipalities are using the survey as a tool for continued engagement with their businesses.
- Regular virtual meetings are being organized with economic development staff from the 6 offices across the Region. Niagara Economic Development has also joined the weekly GTA Economic Development Recovery Team to tie the Niagara Recovery Plan into a larger effort.

- 'Open in Niagara' was launched to EDO and stakeholders as a free tool to use to promote business that are open and offering modified services in Niagara (www.openinniagara.ca)
- Economic Development Officers are having weekly calls with the Employment Ontario network to understand the services they are offering and to connect businesses needing support.
- A second Business Impact Survey is being developed to be released in mid-May to assess the impact on businesses now that the COVID-19 timeframe has been extended and government funding announcements have been made.
- In collaboration with economic development staff across the region, work has started to develop the Terms of Reference for an Economic Recovery Plan and the identification of resources that will be needed going forward.

Operational Outlook

1 month

- Continue to monitor government funding announcements and promote to the business community. Work will be underway on the development of an Economic Recovery Plan working in collaboration with the 6 economic development offices and regional stakeholders. Data and information from the second Business Impact Survey will be incorporated into economic recovery planning and used to inform advocacy plans and implementation.

3 months

- Economic Recovery Plan will be completed.

6 months

- None

Respectfully submitted and signed by,

Valerie Kuhns
Acting, Director
Economic Development