**Mayor & Warden’s COVID-19 Economic Recovery Taskforce Report Card**

***Current as of OCTOBER 31, 2020***

The task force is tracking issues and challenges identified by the business community and reporting regularly on these issues. This Report Card will be updated regularly following meetings of the Mayor and Warden’s Economic Task Force and from direct calls with business owners. The Report Card will be posted online at [www.peterboroughed.ca/recovery-plan](http://www.peterboroughed.ca/recovery-plan) and will capture information in three main ways:

1. **Issues**
2. **Actions**
3. **Outcomes**

**Executive Summary**

In April, both City and County Council unanimously approved a [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan](https://peterboroughed.ca/recovery-plan/) for Peterborough & the Kawarthas, which was developed by Peterborough & the Kawarthas Economic Development (PKED) as the lead regional economic development agency for the City and County, in consultation with other local business organizations and the local business community. It includes a series of immediate, mid-term and long-term actions to support regional economic recovery.

The Economic Recovery Task Force being led by the Mayor and Warden includes 43 business leaders in the community representing the City and County of Peterborough covering virtually all sectors of the economy. The status of these actions can be viewed at any time by visiting [www.peterboroughed.ca/recovery-plan](http://www.peterboroughed.ca/recovery-plan).

The purpose of the task force is to:

* Gain first-hand knowledge and input directly from the business community;
* Identify immediate activities that need to be undertaken to help local business to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 and;
* To identify activities and supports needed to adapt and rebuild the Peterborough & the Kawarthas regional economy, in response to this global pandemic.

The task force met regularly from April to September and helped to identify over 50 separate challenges facing local business as a result of COVID-19 impacts. Those challenges have been elevated to various levels of government through economic development associations, Chambers of Commerce networks, industry associations at the provincial and national level, as well as direct calls with elected officials and formal reports to City and County Councils. A detailed overview of the issues, related actions and outcomes can be found in the report card chart following this executive summary

COVID-19 has created chaos in every community and business across the globe. Peterborough & the Kawarthas region is no exception as businesses have been reporting similar challenges – consumer confidence, lack of sales, financial stability, managing demand with limited resources, access to PPE, ensuring safety and compliance measures were correct, supply chain management, recalling employees and childcare availability, all of this has come with the realization that it is unlikely there will be a return to normal for the foreseeable future.

Many of the challenges identified earlier on in the pandemic were responded to and significant relief measures were put in place such as, the Canadian Emergency Business Account (CEBA), the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF).

The province and public health agencies assisted to set out safety guidelines for business re-openings to help with consumer and employee confidence, and the municipalities worked with BIAs to help downtowns open while maintaining physical distancing measures. Public transit was maintained, essential services remained open and businesses adapted their business models to the best of their ability as this pandemic evolved over the last six-month time period.

Moving into Stage 3 allowed most businesses to open and adapt their operations, however, second wave fears and increased case numbers continue to be a concern for business and the potential for long term impacts. PKED issued a third survey in August, to better understand local business capacity and try to determine if businesses are anticipating additional changes to their operations as we move into the cooler weather of the fall and winter seasons. 37% of businesses that responded to the survey indicated that they are currently running at full capacity, while 34.5% responded that they are operating at half capacity and 14% indicating that they are currently unable to open. These same businesses reported that 53% will likely be able to maintain their current levels of service, and 25% indicated the ability to increase service levels to manage increased demand. 12% of respondents indicated that they will need to reduce service levels in the fall/winter and 9.88% indicated that they will need to close.

For those businesses anticipating increased service levels, they indicated the need for additional financial resources to assist with staffing and marketing/promotional efforts. Those businesses that indicated a likeliness to close noted that it was due to a lack of sales.

In January 2020, PKED launched the [Future Ready Regional Economic Development Strategy for 2020-2024](https://peterboroughed.ca/future-ready/), and while the plan contemplated the need for flexibility to respond and adapt to ever-changing global economic changes and pressures, it did not anticipate a global crisis to this magnitude. The Board of Directors of PKED recognized that the impacts created by COVID-19 will be felt throughout the duration of this 2020-2024 plan, and that it was appropriate to adapt existing actions and the need to introduce new actions in response to COVID-19. The original Future Ready Plan referred to the need for sustainability, innovation, collaboration and partnerships to grow the economy and it is felt that those key pillars are even more relevant today, as we respond, adapt and pivot this plan to grow the Peterborough & the Kawarthas regional economy into the future.

**Looking Longer Term – Insights and Recommendations from the Task Force**

While the Peterborough & the Kawarthas COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan began to consider how to rebuild this regional economy and overcome the impacts of COVID-19. It was important to acknowledge, that there were pre-existing challenges that already impacted business outside of COVID-19. These challenges are specific to the Peterborough & the Kawarthas region and were intensified during the pandemic and need to be addressed successfully recover the economy.

It is also important to note that the response to COVID-19 impacts is continuously changing, requiring businesses to also anticipate and adapt to respond to these ongoing changes. Some businesses respond well to changes, while others are having difficulties, reinforcing the importance of business resilience and ongoing support.

The following challenges will need to be addressed in the Future Ready Economic Development Plan:

* **Labour Force:** Currently, Peterborough CMA has one of the lowest participation rates in the province. As of May 2020, only 49.5% of individuals 15+ years are participating in the labour force (62.2% in May 2019). The provincial participation rate for the same period was 60.8% (65.1% in 2019). Persons not in the labour force include people who are unable or unavailable to work. It also includes persons who are without work and had not actively looked for work in the past four weeks. While it may be easy to lay blame with COVID-19, this statistic was also true prior to COVID-19.
* **Job Vacancies:** There are many job vacancies within the Peterborough CMA. As of August 17, 2020, there were 840 active job postings in the City of Peterborough that are posted on the [Workforce Development Boards Job Map](https://www.wdb.ca/map/). This job map is updated daily and offers a diverse range of job openings that are actively posted as available in the region.
* **Services and Infrastructure:** As the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 are realized and remote working continues to be an accepted working option, interest in relocating to this region will grow. Ongoing access to robust broadband will be a key component for remote working. The [EORN Gig project](https://www.eorn.ca/en/projects/broadband-phase-2.aspx) will be key in positioning this region competitively for remote workers. As we position this region as a destination of choice, modern services such as high-speed internet and ride-share transportation will be desired.
* **Available Land and Building:** Peterborough & the Kawarthas also currently has limited options for housing for future remote employees as well as shovel-ready, serviced lands in comparison to our competitor communities. As the City and County develop their official plans this issue should be highlighted.

As we consider ways to rebound and grow our economy, these challenges will need to be addressed through regional collaboration over the long term. Meaningful conversations and collaborations are already underway through the Workforce Development Board regarding labour force and job vacancies, and recommendations have been put forth to City and County Council on behalf of the Taskforce for consideration around development and lands related issues. These challenges should continue to be addressed as the region moves through recovery.

PKED will continue to track challenges brought forward by business as well as the efforts being taken to work through these ongoing challenges, in response to COVID-19. These updates will continue to be shared on the [Recovery Portal](https://peterboroughed.ca/recovery-plan/).

**COVID-19 Task Force Issue Tracking**

**Status Key**

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| **⭘** | **Item in discussion/investigation phase** |
| **⚫** | **Progressing well, no barriers to provide outcomes or solutions** |
| **⚫** | **Progressing with some minor challenges impeding a positive outcome or solution** |
| **⚫** | **Stalled, unable to find outcome or solution to the issue or challenge, not resolved** |
| **✓** | **Resolved** |
| **Issue** | **Programs Available to Assist** | **Task Force Recommendation** | **Status** |
| **Workforce/Labour Force Related Issues** | December 2020 Status Update: The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) is being extended through June 2021. Support will be available at a rate of 65% until December 19, 2020.Note: This work is included in the Future Ready Economic Development Strategy | That PKED and the Labour Force Task Force develop programming to address recruitment and workforce challenges in Peterborough region. | **⚫** |
| **Financial Relief for SME’s** | * Canadian Emergency Business Account,
* Regional Relief and Recovery Fund
* Energy Assistance Program [**oeb.ca/CEAP**](http://oeb.ca/CEAP).
* [Canada United Fund](https://www.gocanadaunited.ca/)
* Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS)
* One time $1000 grants for PPE to small business
 | That ongoing relief measures be considered as second wave continues to impact business operators. | **⚫** |
| **Development/ Construction industry support measures** | The County and the City have agreed to hold initial meetings with the Development/Construction | That the City and County municipalities adopt these recommendations from PKHBA.And further, that a working group be established consisting of City/County Planning staff, elected officials, Development Industry (residential and commercial) and economic development staff to be mandated to find ways to create shovel-ready sites and streamline the development approvals process.  | **⚫** |
| **Access to financial support and increased marketing and promotion to drive sales** | * Canadian Emergency Business Account (CEBA)
* Regional Relief and Recovery Fund Programming
* Digital Main Street Program
* Support Local Campaigns
 | That ongoing support be continued to help SMEs to drive sales. | **⚫** |
| **Commercial Rent subsidy**  | Canadian Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS)Legislation to enact these measures has been presented and now requires approval in the House of Commons and Senate.The program if approved will provide rent and mortgage support until June 2021 for qualifying businesses. | That this concern be elevated to MP and MPP as well as to Ontario Chamber of Commerce requesting that this program be amended and assist Tenants and Landlords. | **⚫** |
| **Cost increases in business insurance** | Letters of support from City Council and County Council have been written and sent to the Province.Chambers of Commerce, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario and Ontario Restaurant Hotel Motel Association are also lobbying government to assist on this issue. | That City and County Council write letters and send to the Premier asking for assistance in this matter in support of business. | **⚫** |
| **Concerns over disparity between tourism-based businesses who are following the rules vs. those who are not/Ambiguity around guidelines. Hotels/Resorts vs Short Term Rentals such as Air BnBs** | Letter of Support from the County has been sent to the Province requesting province-wide rules and regulations for Short Term Rental accommodations. | That the City of Peterborough, County of Peterborough, Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, Kawartha Chamber of Commerce and Tourism write letters of support to encourage the province to provide provincial wide standards to address AirBnB style accommodations, to ensure that are operating fairly with licensed accommodations such as inns, motels, hotels and resorts. | **⚫** |

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| **Potential loss of students in the fall** | Lower enrolments will continue into the winter season as post-secondary institutions provide on-line learning modules | That the Student Working Group continue to address the loss of students in the community | **⚫** |
| **Prohibition of Large Group Gatherings** | This will continue to be a challenge moving into 2021.  | That the Large Venue Working Group continue to meet to address this ongoing challenge. | **⚫** |
| **Potential downturn in commercial real estate as companies move to remote work environments.**  | This continues to be a concern. There are opportunities for repurposing traditional spaces, increased need for warehousing, e-commerce fulfillment etc. | That PKED continue to track underutilized space and create an inventory of spaces to respond to inquiries. | **⚫** |
| **Preparedness for potential resurgence of cases in the fall** | As cases rise, there is ongoing concern about stricter measures and the ability of business to adapt.  | Businesses are encouraged to create contingency plans and consider alternative service delivery options in the event of a future shutdown. PKED has business plan templates to use. | **⚫** |
| **Issues of racism regarding migrant workers is happening across Ontario in the agriculture industry** | This is an ongoing social concern. | That Peterborough & the Kawarthas as a region continue to work with partners at the New Canadian Centre to become a more tolerant, inclusive and welcoming community.  | **⚫** |
| **HST Relief Measure Extensions** | HST Relief was extended and allowed all businesses to defer, until June 30, 2020 any HST payments or remittances that become due. No further extensions have been permitted. | That additional extensions be made available. | **⚫** |

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| **Challenges navigating all the programs - need a local advisor to help access provincial and federal programs. Programs are confusing and difficult to manage.**  | This is an ongoing issue. Staff at Ministry Economic Development Job Creation and Trade and other ministries have provided some assistance to business to navigate various programs.Provincial hotline has been created to assist business. | PKED should continue to be familiar with programs and connect businesses to resources to assist them through Business Retention and Expansion programming | **⚫** |
| **Consumer & employee confidence: Challenge to instill confidence in workers that the work environment is safe and maintaining operations while 6ft apart, challenge to instill confidence in consumers that businesses are safe places to visit** | This has been a challenge for the duration of the pandemic. Peterborough Public Health has created infographics to help show measures being undertaken.Programs such as Safe Travels Stamp have been introduced to give travelers comfort that safety measures have been maintained. | Businesses are encouraged to post their procedures in a visible location for customers to show their COVID compliance measures.Businesses in the tourism industry, it is recommendation that businesses apply to obtain the Safe Travels Stamp. | **⚫** |
| **Municipalities trying to manage with increased costs and decreased revenues. Many orgs that rely on municipal funds. Municipalities cannot run a deficit** | Provincial funding has been provided to municipalities to help offset COVID related expenses such as transit. | No further recommendations at this time | **⚫** |
| **Restaurants/Patios/Access to Storefronts on Main streets** | The City of Peterborough created active space in the downtown core to permit additional space for patios and storefront sales while allowing for physical distancing. | No further recommendations at this time. | **⚫** |
| **Seasonal businesses in general (construction) have a limited time frame to generate revenue.** | This was an early challenge during the first shutdown. Construction, agriculture and tourism businesses are impacted by closures that cannot be deferred. Businesses were able to open and operate with guidelines in place. | No further recommendations at this time. | **⚫** |
| **Need advance notice to prepare when each sector is given the option to open.**  | This was an early concern when reopening during Phase 2.  | No further recommendations at this time. | **⚫** |
| **Increased Costs and Decreased Revenues for Farmers’ Market Vendors** | RRRF Funding was available to help offset costs. Municipalities also worked with Farmers Markets to create more manageable terms to operate. | No further recommendations at this time. | **⚫** |
| **Testing turnaround times to assist businesses with quickly identifying positive cases.**  | Ongoing and continuous improvements have been made to address this issue. Peterborough Regional Health Centre, Peterborough Public Health and Peterborough County-City Paramedics have responded and met these demands | No further recommendations at this time. | **⚫** |
| **Training for businesses who are not set up with e-commerce – many small businesses not currently using e-commerce**  | Many programs have been introduced to support small business with e-commerce platforms.* Digital Main Street
* Digital Main Street SHOPHERE
* Bring Your Business Online program
 | Businesses are encouraged to consider e-commerce platforms to help boost sales. | **✓** |
| **Space at Farmers’ Markets Producers require access to space, public land etc. to effectively sell while maintaining physical distance guidelines** | The municipalities worked with local Farmers’ Markets to allow additional space. | No further recommendations at this time. | **✓** |
| **Restaurants/Patios – challenges with licensing** | This was an early concern, the province streamlined the licensing challenges. | No further recommendations at this time. | **✓** |
| **Seasonal accommodations are unclear what is permitted** | Early concern. The Province and Peterboorugh Public Health have created clear guidelines for business to follow. | No further recommendations at this time. | **✓** |

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| **Agriculture - has very short growing season - opportunity for physical distancing but Pick Your Own (PYO) is required for some producers.**  | This was an early concern. Pick Your Own was permitted during the 2020 season. | No further recommendations at this time. | **✓** |
| **Access to reliable and consistent information on business reopening protocols and procedures and resources to open safely** | While recovery portals have been created at many organizations. The Province of Ontario has created a [centralized information portal](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/).  | No further recommendations at this time. | **✓** |