

City Council**Motion without Notice**

MM27.35	ACTION			Ward: All
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Helping Main Street Survive Until the Vaccine Arrives - by Councillor Paula Fletcher, seconded by Councillor Joe Cressy

** This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair.*

** This Motion is not subject to a vote to waive referral. This Motion has been added to the agenda and is before Council for debate.*

Recommendations

Councillor Paula Fletcher, seconded by Councillor Joe Cressy, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Ontario Government to provide greater financial supports in an easy to access format to businesses that are required to reduce hours or shut down as part of measures implemented to reduce the spread of COVID-19 to help those businesses remain solvent and re-open; and consider the request of Toronto Business Improvement Areas that they increase to the Main Street Relief Grant to be a \$2,500 monthly infusion - with a one-time application process - to be ongoing through the pandemic.

Summary

Toronto's retail streets are at the heart of local neighbourhoods but they are being devastated by the economic fallout of this pandemic. The lockdown restrictions in Toronto needed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 mean small retail stores and restaurants business operations are severely restricted.

Small shops cannot allow in-person shopping and restaurants cannot allow indoor dining. Many feel there is an uneven playing field that favours big-box stores over the smaller independently-owned small businesses that do so much to bring life to our City streets.

The Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas warned in November that "COVID-19 and the lockdowns are changing the shopping streets to the point where they will be a mere shadow of their former selves regardless of what relief might be made available now, and recovery will take many years, if it occurs at all."

Toronto's Business Improvement Areas have been asking the Province for more support to try keep as many businesses open and the possibility of a post-pandemic recovery alive as we see in the distance the hopeful light of a vaccine roll-out. The Ontario Government has provided some important aid including a grant program to help with the extra costs associated with running a business in a manner that helps stop the spread of COVID-19 including personal

protective equipment costs, cleaning costs, extra staff costs for meeting public health requirements.

Several Toronto Business Improvement Areas have launched a campaign with some specific asks to try to improve those programs and Council should add their voice to this campaign. They advise, for example, that many businesses report difficulty navigating through the current application system and either giving up due to multiple errors with unknown issues in the system or they are unable to understand the requirements being asked.

The survival of our main streets will be critical to Toronto's economic recovery and livability.

Reason for Urgency: Many Toronto small businesses need help urgently in order to survive the latest round of lockdown measures.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM27.35