



Office of the Chief Planner
Corporate Services Department

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Paul Freeman
Chief Planner

Date: April 14, 2020

Re: **York Region Business Recovery Support Partnership**

Summary

This memorandum highlights the formation of the York Region Business Recovery Support Partnership in response to the Coronavirus crisis (COVID-19). The York Region Economic Strategy Division in collaboration with economic development stakeholders from across the Region have joined forces for a community response to COVID-19.

The York Region Economic Strategy division, in partnership with local municipal economic development offices, Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, the Workforce Planning Board of York Region and ventureLAB have formed the York Region Business Recovery Support Partnership. The charter for the York Region Business Recovery Support Partnership provides an insight into the planned activities of this group. (Attachment 1)

The goals of the partnership are:

- Economic impact assessment
- Streamlined business advisory support
- Business community communications

COVID-19 is causing unprecedented economic and business impacts

According to The Conference Board of Canada, the spread of COVID-19 has created uncertainty in all global markets. This has implications for Canada's economy given people are encouraged to self-isolate, large gatherings cancelled, and closure of non-essential businesses. As Canadians are mandated to stay home, COVID-19 is having a profound impact on economic growth across the country, including York Region.

The magnitude of the impact to York Region is not yet known but the extent of the social distancing measures and the economic shut-down are unprecedented. The Conference Board of Canada has projected two scenarios: a baseline in which social distancing will end in 6 weeks, and an alternate forecast where it will end in 24 weeks (by end of August). Depending upon which scenario plays out the impact to York Region, Ontario and Canada will be very different. Currently Ontario's forecast real GDP growth for 2020 is effectively zero¹ (down from the forecast of 1.6% in the 2019 provincial budget) while for Canada it is expected to be 0.30%². Sectors such as tourism, accommodation and food, entertainment and recreation, oil patch and manufacturing will suffer sharp declines.

Local economic development stakeholders across the Region are responding to the crisis

All nine cities and towns across York Region are independently taking measures to help relieve the burden on local businesses in their communities. These measures range from deferred taxes and service fees, loosening noise by-laws enabling businesses to work outside their normal hours and refocusing economic development communications and advisory services.

The Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, [ventureLAB](#) and the [Workforce Planning Board of York Region](#) have also been working to ensure their members get information about [Federal](#) and [Provincial](#) programs. Collectively the chambers and boards have been in touch with more than 600 of their members through limited surveys and direct outreach.

York Region Economic Strategy is responding by moving all business advisory services including those through the York Small Business Enterprise Centre (YSBEC) to online delivery where possible. Staff has been responding to inquiries from the business community and dedicated COVID-19 business support webpages created on [YorkLink.ca](#) and [Yorksmallbusiness.ca](#). The webpages include a comprehensive list of resources from all levels of government, a webinar calendar, business community updates and an expert advisory blog series on government support programs. Both the York Link and corporate social media channels are being used to amplify support programs and resources and highlight local businesses that are responding.

¹ Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19, March 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update, March 26 2020

² Conference Board of Canada, COVID-19 and its impact on the Canadian and global economies, March 23, 2020

York Region’s Economic Strategy has partnered with local economic development stakeholders

Key economic development stakeholders in York Region have been meeting weekly to share information and develop a coordinated approach and collective response to the crisis. The stakeholders collect information on the concerns of businesses, share best practices and provide “on the ground” input to the Federal government. These activities include:

- Daily calls with federal representatives from Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED)
- Providing business community feedback to the Ministry of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT)
- Participating in GTA-wide economic development COVID-19 working group
- Supporting the York Region Business Coalition – a collaboration with the nine local Boards and Chambers in the Region- to gather concerns of the business community
- Supporting ventureLAB the Regional Innovation Centre, with interactions with the tech start-up and scale-up businesses
- Weekly York Region economic development stakeholder meetings

Through this work, the York Region Business Recovery Support Partnership was formalized.

York Region Business Recovery Support Partnership will provide regional support to the business community in response to the impacts of COVID-19

Economic vitality remains a key priority for Council and is fundamental in maintaining a prosperous Region with a high quality of life for all of York Region’s 1.2 million residents and 54,000 businesses.

York Region Business Recovery Support Partnership will ensure support initiatives across the Region continue to be streamlined, complementary and coordinated.(see Attachment 2) This way the collective economic development activities undertaken by York Region, local municipalities and local business organizations will help make the provincial and federal programs more effective in the local communities and provide a coordinated approach to business support and recovery initiatives across the Region. The core deliverables of the group are:

- Economic impact assessment
- Streamlined business advisory support
- Business community communications

Members of the partnership are:

- York Region's Economic Strategy Division
- Nine local municipal economic development offices
- Nine Chambers of Commerce/Boards of Trade through the York Region Business Coalition
- Workforce Planning Board of York Region
- ventureLAB

Additional members from the ecosystem will be added as required to help with delivery of projects developed. Through this joint approach the work of individual organizations and the reach of messaging around support programs will be amplified.

Four sub-groups were established to identify and lead execution of projects that will be launched from the collaboration. The sub-groups are the Crisis Response Supply Chain, Business Advisory, Agri-food, and Tourism, Arts and Culture.

Industry involvement is important for York Region's Business Recovery Support Partnership

All the sub-groups will have representation from the economic development offices across York Region. The business community will be invited to participate and lead certain activities. Some of these sub-groups are already operating and outreach has started to recruit members for others. The work of the each sub-group and business community involvement is briefly described below.

- **Crisis response supply chain:** Industry led - comprised of industry experts with ability to respond to requests for supplies and supply chain solutions. This group will also help to vet responses that are submitted as a result of calls from the provincial and federal government as well as local public health.
- **Agri-food:** Industry led - comprised of members of the York Region Agriculture and Agri-food Advisory Committee and other industry experts. This group will look at the challenges and opportunities for the agriculture and Agri-food industry in the Region.
- **Business Advisory:** Economic development led - comprised of economic development stakeholders. This group will streamline and deliver business advisory services, conduct business surveys and an economic impact study. It will also explore the development of local programs to assist now and during recovery.
- **Tourism, Arts and Culture:** Industry led - comprised of tourism stakeholders from across York Region. This group will assess impacts on the tourism industry as well as explore the role of tourism, arts and culture in recovery.

York Region, in concert with the provincial and federal governments and other stakeholders, is working hard to minimize the impact of COVID-19 and see an economic recovery take place as soon as possible

The Region, in partnership with local municipalities and other economic development delivery partners, is working collaboratively to support businesses during this crisis with an eye on recovery. All members of the partnership are re-tooling services delivered and continuing to do so as the crisis unfolds.

Staff will continue to report the activities of the York Region Business Recovery Support Partnership to members of Council. For more information on York Region's commitment to economic vitality, please visit the [York Region 2019-2013 Strategic Plan](#), [Yorklink.ca](#) or [York.ca/business](#).

For more information on the Business Recovery Support Partnership, please contact Jonathan Wheatle, Director of Economic Strategy, at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71503. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

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Attachments (2)
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