

RENFREW COUNTY ECONOMIC TASK FORCE

Problem Statement

It has become increasingly apparent that there will be economic impacts to individuals, businesses, and communities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. In many areas of the Province, and around the globe, recovery efforts from such emergencies typically see the creation of Recovery Committees tasked with looking at all elements of recovery from human needs to finance and infrastructure. At this time the County of Renfrew as a region should begin thinking about what our individuals, businesses, and communities will need to not only recover from the pandemic, but to stabilize while it is ongoing. The overall intent is to minimize effects of the pandemic on business, and respond to programs that will enable recovery efforts in a timely fashion.

Therefore, the County of Renfrew will be striking the “Renfrew County Economic Task Force” to address the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our business community.

Background

The “Renfrew County Economic Task Force” will use these key points to guide actions of the group moving forward:

1. Phase of Efforts. Three phases of efforts are being proposed that will need to be considered by the Taskforce:
 - i. Stabilization Phase (ST)
 - ii. Rebuilding Phase (MT)
 - iii. Growth Phase (LT)
2. Core Economic Sectors. The work of the Task Force should focus on six of our core economic sectors of the Renfrew County economy:
 - i. Manufacturing
 - ii. Forestry and Value-Added Wood Products
 - iii. Tourism
 - iv. Agriculture / Agri-business
 - v. Entrepreneurship / Small Business (Service / Retail)
 - vi. Construction and Development
3. Stakeholder Audiences. The Task Force will engage many that are already working on local economic development and tourism team(s). Those audiences that should be considered to be engaged in any of the work of the Task Force are:
 - i. Small Business Community (including individuals / employees)

- ii. Local Stakeholder Coordination (i.e. municipalities, Chambers, BIA's, etc.)
- iii. Advocacy Stakeholder Coordination (how to elevate local issues to regional, Province or federal stakeholders to address, i.e. local political leaders)

To date, the upper-tier governments (federal, provincial) have not indicated that there will be one clear set of recovery programs that is available for use, although individual programs have been set up to mitigate some of the economic damage. Regionally, we remain unaware of the totality of the harm that the pandemic has caused. As a start to develop baseline data, an environmental scan will be required to develop a focused starting point for the Task Force to concentrate its efforts.

Task Force Details

The Task Force is proposed to consist of County of Renfrew Economic Development and Tourism staff, alongside local Business Stakeholders impacted by COVID-19, being cognizant of the vast geography of Renfrew County. Support to the Task Force will come from various organizations as outlined below; as well as local municipal Economic Development professionals, CAO's, Clerks, and Treasurers to support the implementation of various recommendations.

The Renfrew County Economic Task Force's immediate priorities are to:

- Undertake an Environmental Scan of all that is possible to support the business community.
- Investigate business supports that can be implemented by various levels of government, implementing those tools at our collective disposal.
- Provide resources and information about business supports available from various levels of government.
- Work with other levels of government and stakeholders to develop and implement support programming for business owners, affected employees, and their families, who are experiencing financial impacts as a result of COVID-19.
- Provide direct support to help guide small businesses through the process of accessing emergency financial assistance and programming from all levels of government.
- Work with local BIA's and Chambers to collectively promote small businesses that are still open.
- Advocate for the urgent needs of our business community to local, regional, provincial and federal Governments.

Task Force Membership

In contemplating membership to the Task Force, it is important to note that the core membership will be held by those directly impacted by COVID-19 and those that work in an Economic Development capacity. Additional resources will be considered in order to support the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force.

Committee Support (11)

- Local Economic Development Officers (EDOs)
- Finance, Local Treasurers
- Local Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs)
- Local Clerks
- Local Business Improvement Associations (BIAs)
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- Renfrew County Community Futures Development Corporation (FCCFDC)
- Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
- Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
- Ontario Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO) – Regional Tourism Organization 11 (RTO-11)

Committee (16) – Role/Function

- Chair (*Director of Development and Property*)
- Deputy Chair (*Manager of Economic Development and Tourism*)
- Member, Tourism (2)
- Member, Retail (2)
- Member, Services (2)
- Member, Food/Beverage (2)
- Member, Agri-business (2)
- Member, Manufacturing (2)
- Member, Political (2) (Warden, Chair of Development & Property Committee)