

The Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes

Economic Recovery Task Force Report

Report Number ERTF 2020-001

Meeting Date: July 7, 2020

Title: Recommendations from Working Groups Session 1

Description: An overview of the first round of Working Group meetings and recommendations to the Economic Recovery Task Force from those Working Group meetings

Ward Number: All

Author and Title: Rebecca Mustard, Manager of Economic Development

Recommendation(s):

That Report ERTF2020-001, **Recommendations from Working Group Session 1**, be received; and

That the Economic Recovery Task Force provide direction on how to proceed with Working Groups and the information that the Task Force receives going forward, including the schedule and topics requiring collaboration.

Background:

At the Economic Recovery Task Force (Task Force) Meeting of June 16, 2020, the Task Force endorsed the Draft Engagement Strategy to address the consultation responsibilities as outlined in the Terms of Reference. The Draft Engagement Strategy included both a proposed Working Group structure organized by sector, and the Jump In Kawartha Lakes online platform for broader engagement.

The Terms of Reference state that:

Working Groups will be established by the Taskforce to address specific economic response and recovery needs. These Working Groups will include representation from local Chambers of Commerce, Business Improvement Area, sector and industry associations.

At the discretion of the Taskforce, Working Groups may be organized in various ways, including by; community, sector (including agriculture and food, construction, arts/culture/heritage, manufacturing, retail, services, and tourism) associations (including Chambers of Commerce, Business Improvement Associations, industry associations, and Team Kawartha Lakes), and public interest.

At the meeting, the Task Force requested that Working Groups be struck immediately with an open invitation for businesses to participate and that input from the first round of Working Groups be brought forward to the next meeting.

This report provides feedback from the first round of Working Group meetings, Session 1. It should be noted that input to the Task Force is ongoing and will be brought forward at each meeting.

Rationale:

Overview of process:

A total of 10 Working Groups sessions were held virtually between Monday June 22, 2020, and Monday June 30, 2020. The sessions were promoted through the Economic Development newsletter (approx. circulation of 3,000 recipients), Jump In Kawartha Lakes engagement platform, and circulated to Team Kawartha Lakes and local business organizations. Direct invitations were sent to businesses that completed the Kawartha Lakes COVID-19 Business Survey as well as business leaders that regularly participate in Economic Development programming.

Working Group Sessions:

Restaurants Monday June 22 9-10:30am

Tourism Tuesday June 23 10:30am-12pm
Small Business Wednesday June 24 10:30am-12pm
Culture Wednesday June 24 2-3:30pm
Construction Wednesday June 24 8-9:30pm
Retail Thursday June 25 8:30-10am
Manufacturing and Food Processing Thursday June 25 11am-12:30pm
Agriculture and Agri-Business Thursday June 25 8-9:30pm
Innovation Friday June 26 9am-10:30am
Downtowns Tuesday June 30 8:30am-10am

All sector Working Group Sessions had participation, most with the anticipated 8-12 participants. In general, businesses expressed interest in participating and felt their contribution was valuable. Interest in participation was greater than the actual number of participants due to various matters. This included the timing of the meetings so close to the Canada Day public holiday, retailers were not able to join, and the short notice of meetings was a deterrent for others. Similarly, other sector participants, particularly in the Small Business sector also stated reasons for not participating included operating with less staff due to distancing in the workplace so could not step away from work, child care issues, and contractors were working on job sites. The seasonal nature of the Kawartha Lakes economy also makes Summer time consultations challenging for many businesses.

Working Group Recommendations:

The Working Group discussions were robust. All participants expressed that the pandemic has had significant impacts on their business, however the scope of the impact differs between businesses and industries. This follows the findings of the Kawartha Lakes COVID-19 Business Survey findings.

The Restaurant, Tourism and Culture working group participants discussed at length the importance of the City putting out a new tourism marketing campaign targeted at encouraging visitors back to Kawartha Lakes. The fears and hesitations felt by some residents and business owners was discussed, however, participants in these three (3) working group expressed a need to attract tourists despite these concerns from some residents/businesses. A similar discussion on the importance of marketing was had in the Downtown and Small business groups regarding shop local initiatives and infrastructure to support small business development.

The Construction and Manufacturing and Food Processing sector participants suggested that they need little to no direct support from the City to respond to the pandemic but have other concerns that they feel would help the sector better contribute to the local economy and stimulate investment. The Innovation sector participants concurred with many of these sentiments as well as citing the importance of initiatives such as the Innovation Cluster Pilot Project.

The Agriculture and Agri-Business participants expressed a desire for the City to continue working on the initiatives that are currently underway. The sector has experienced some disruption in supply chain, but for the most part, as an essential service industry that is primarily influenced by Provincial and Federal policy levels, has continued as much as possible on a regular, seasonal schedule. The discussion aligned with the recommendations of the Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2020- 2024 that was adopted by Council in 2019.

Each Working Group provided a list of recommendations to the Task Force and were asked to rank the top (3) three issues they felt would have the greatest impact on the success of their sector locally. The full list of recommendations is included in Attachment 1.

A number of recommendations were common across multiple Working Groups these include;

Broadband: Recommendation discussions focused on the improvement and availability of broadband services across Kawartha Lakes. This is to support the transition of businesses to increasingly online platforms as well as supporting the growing number of workforce working from home.

This further supports the direction of the municipality and partner organizations to improve broadband in Kawartha Lakes.

Business development, resources and training: Recommendation discussion included the value of workshops, training and resources to support businesses transitioning to the conditions of the pandemic. This included actively creating space for businesses to collaborate and create local solutions as well as knowing how to operate safely to encourage consumer confidence.

The municipal Economic Development and Kawartha Lakes Small Business and Entrepreneurship resources are addressing several of the recommendation listed here. The recommendations also relate to the work of Team Kawartha Lakes organizations and can support the initiatives of this group.

Communications: Recommendation discussion included the importance of clear and regular communications from the City. Although a Health Unit area, regulations and requirements related to the pandemic were identified as important to communications.

Development process: Recommendation discussion included issuing approvals more quickly, electronic process. Emphasis on encouraging business expansions and new business investment in Kawartha Lakes. This discussion was supplemented by suggestions that the City clearly define the type of investment it needs and this will help industries in the City grow.

This discussion further informs the Task Force work in this area.

Marketing: Recommendation discussion included both tourism marketing and shop local campaigns. Of particular note were discussions focused on the need to encourage increasing the number of physical shoppers in Kawartha Lakes. A strong emphasis was the importance of 'open and safe' messaging. Marketing was identified as an important activity in a number of Working Groups.

The Tourism Marketing campaign and the Shop Local campaign, which are both in development, address the Marketing recommendation discussions. The input from the Working Groups to 'open and safe' messaging is, and will be, incorporated into the creatives.

Municipal financial support: Recommendation discussion included suggestions for direct financial support to businesses and organizations including operating and marketing contributions, providing space for businesses to operate from, and deferring tax and water bills.

Municipal infrastructure and services support: Recommendation discussion included the importance of public infrastructure to support businesses and industries as they re-open. This included the availability of public washrooms, garbage receptacles, patio space and signage. A tie was made to public space as a component of the tourism draw.

Workforce: Recommendation discussions focused on workforce retention issues, such as access to childcare, and attraction of labour. The attraction of labour included both filling the skills gap in existing workforce and positions available as well as attracting new residents and workforce to Kawartha Lakes. The attraction of new businesses to Kawartha Lakes was also discussed as important for increasing the number of jobs locally to support growing the available labour force. The intentional development of diverse housing and amenities to support a new resident labour force were also noted.

The municipality recently received Provincial funding for a Manufacturing and Agriculture Skills Advance Ontario Program. This will help address labour shortages and skills gap in these two sectors. An overview of the program will be shared at an upcoming Task Force meeting.

The discussion regarding the attraction of business investment also ties to the development process focus of the Task Force.

Next Steps for Working Groups:

The Working Groups, along with the Kawartha Lakes COVID-19 Business Survey (completed) and Jump In Platform (ongoing input), provide information to the Task Force for decision making purposes. The Working Groups also fulfil a unique need, *to address specific economic response and recovery needs.*

Moving forward, it is the recommendation of Staff that in general the Working Groups be organized to assist with further understanding the issues and working together towards local solutions. There is value in continuing to structure Working Groups by sector as well as introducing topic based discussions.

The virtual Working Group discussions were a good size for robust discussion and fair participation. The structured nature of the discussions with pre-circulated set questions was helpful in leading productive discussions. The participation of Task Force members in the meetings was well received by participants.

The frequency of meeting should be determined based on the input needs of the Task Force, with the following exceptions:

- The restaurant working group participants requested continuing working group meetings for business to business collaboration;
- Local Chambers and BIA should meet as a dedicated Working Group to support organizational alignment between their activities and that of the City

The next round of discussions topics is at the discretion of the Task Force, however, Staff suggestions include; Re-launching events (suggest Health Unit participation), Development process from a customer perspective, Marketing implementation (engagement with the business community as the program is delivered), Cultural organization support in line with the Cultural Master Plan.

Draft Recommendation:

That Working Groups meet by sector on a set schedule every two (2) months for the remainder of the year to provide regular input to the Task Force on the state of the local economy and their needs;

That Working Groups be organized by sector, or cross-sector, on specific topics as determined by the Task Force.

It is also recommended that the Task Force regularly update the local business community on progress on action items. This will help overcome the challenge of working with businesses while This can be achieved through the Jump In Kawartha Lakes platform, press releases, Economic Development Newsletter and the Economic Development social media accounts.

Other Alternatives Considered:

At the June 16, 2020 Meeting, the Task Force had recommended that Working Groups meet regularly with greater frequency in the immediate term and becoming less as time goes on. The Task Force could request Staff to continue regular meetings with Working Groups, however this is not recommended. This is

a busy season for a large portion of the business community and it would be best to use their time to advance the implementation of action items.

Alternative recommendation:

That Working Group sessions continue to be held on a frequent and regular basis with input provided at each Task Force meeting.

The Task Force could also suggest a different approach in- keeping with the Terms of Reference.

Relationship of Recommendations To The 2020-2023 Strategic Plan:

The recommendation of this report support the following strategic priorities from the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan:

- A Vibrant and Growing Economy
- Good Government

The Working Groups supports a vibrant and growing economy by providing recommendations for supporting business recovery from the economic impact of the pandemic. It supports the priority of good government by focusing on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.

Consultations:

Director of Development Services
Economic Development Division

A total of 64 people participated in the Working Groups. The full list of participants is listed in Attachment 2.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Working Group Recommendations
Attachment 2: Working Group Participants

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Phone: 705-324-9411 ext. 1395

Department Head: Chris Marshall, Director of Development Services

Attachment 1: Working Group Session 1 Recommendations

All of the recommendations are listed for consideration by the Task Force with the top issues as identified by each Working Group is bolded at the top of each list;

Restaurants

- **Communication from City to the public about health standards and expectations (physical markings on sidewalks, signage, promotions etc) Include enforcement options**
- **Advocate for wage subsidy program expansion beyond August**
- **Deferring property tax or sewer/water rates**
- **Information, policy training on best practices for front line staff and employer legal advice**
- Restaurant Forum group to encourage ongoing connection between restaurants
- Marketing Campaign encouraging staycations
- Support for workforce retention and attraction
- Kent Street construction deferred another year (Lindsay)
- Allowing use of public infrastructure: picnic tables, fencing
- Public washrooms and garbage cans in Downtowns

Tourism

- **City infrastructure –washrooms, garbage cans**
- **City signage directing to what is open (beaches) and to assets (boat launches) etc.**
- **Tourism Marketing Campaign – promotion of all that can be experienced safely (cottage rentals, boat rentals, window shopping etc)**
- Creation of Blogs, lists, of what can be experienced.
- Opening of City Facilities(Chamber of Commerce)
- Consistent messaging and marketing from the City to the public
- Business protocols and procedure certifications to support consumer and resident confidence
- Support for businesses to be able to communicate with all levels of government (health unit, municipal, provincial, federal etc)
- Advocate for support for staffing challenges
- Virtual Event platform

Small Business

- **Continue to offer business workshops and business mentoring**
- **Improve internet structure**
- **Facilitate peer to peer meeting for strategic alliances. Introductions, connections, network for partnerships**
- **Need advocacy. Promote KL as a safe place to visit and shop**

- Provide low cost flexible spaces for businesses to rent for short term
- Messaging has been confusing about resources available . Need for 1 source of information.
- Incentive for homeowners to do home improvements.

Culture

- **Tourism Marketing Campaign to encourage visitation and showcase what is open**
- **Landing page on the website where everything that is open can be listed as well as what to expect when you arrive**
- **Marketing dollars given to businesses for their marketing**
- **Operational funding for cultural facilities**
- **Streamline City regulations to support outdoor performances and activities**
- Increase broadband and cellular service in Kawartha Lakes
- Reactivating Cultural Hub activities to support arts

Construction

- **Change the tenor of the planning and building process to increase efficiency and issue permits/approvals more quickly**
- **Introduce electronic permitting including an electronic application process and internal electronic tracking and approvals**
- **Increase communication from the City on the building/planning processes in general and to individual applicants as the pandemic progresses**

Retail

- **Campaign promoting KL is a safe place to shop and that measures are in place for public safety for locals and visitors**
- **Promotions to cottagers that they are welcome back.**
- **Looking for ways to increase daily store visitor numbers by encouraging people to shop local**

Manufacturing and Food Processing

- **Tax increase to be shared residential/non-residential not just on business**
- **Building process improvements to LOCATE & expand businesses in KL**
- **Employee/resident attraction (to increase labour force)**
- Find space for businesses to move into (existing buildings not ok)
- Expand space for patios into the street
- More industry/businesses (to retain workers)
- Child care solution/Support
- Support working from home/ in office transitions

Agriculture and Agri-Business

- **Address needs for labour force (including support in finding good, qualified employees and filling vacant and under filled jobs which aligns with the SAO project and direct supports to the ag sector by VCCS)**
- **Address issues with the local food processing sector (including addressing diversity of processing options to maintain a safe/secure processing capacity in the food chain, supporting small and medium businesses needing to provide processing locally when capacity becomes an issue for large corporations)**
- **Support direct to consumer sales**
- **Improve rural broadband services**
- Continue to emphasize the importance of local agriculture
- Setting up protocols and processes for the changing state of the agriculture industry
- Continued communication and direct support for accessing funding and programming opportunities
- Implement tariff system on imports to promote buying local products

Innovation

- **Developing new partnerships and relationships with communities**
- **Define who the City wants to be (and build/design/invest from there)**
- **Increase and ensure accessibility to technology and rural internet**
- Companies and municipality facilities available to test new technology/ commercialize/ Use and support local businesses to develop new technologies
- Address shortages in the local labour market (attraction/ repatriation)
- Create services and opportunities to attract talent to Kawartha Lakes
- Provision of employment grants for companies to innovate
- Address shortages in local housing for new workers (diversity of stock)
- Provide opportunities for students to understand and experience being in the workforce
- Incentives to help people work innovatively at home

Downtowns

- **City to increase municipal services to support downtown businesses - garbage cans, public washrooms, signage**
- **Shop Local campaign and marketing should include open and safe messaging**
- **Clear communications for the revised funding programs to support the downtown business community post -COVID i.e. million dollar makeover, digital main street**
- Increase communication from the municipality to downtown organizations
- City to take lead on Health and Safe measures

Closing roads to support physical distancing measures

Attachment 2: Working Group Participants

Restaurants

Laurie McCarthy – City of Kawartha Lakes
Carlie Arbour – City of Kawartha Lakes
Andy Letham– City of Kawartha Lakes
Bjorn Alfredson – Task Force
Julia Kirby - Original Just for the Halibut
Nicki Dedes - Olympia
Wesley Found - Hobarts
Erastus Burley - Pie Eyed Monk
Vinh Mac - Fenelon Falls Brewery
Heather - Murphy's Lockside Pub

Tourism

Laurie McCarthy – City of Kawartha Lakes
Donna Goodwin – City of Kawartha Lakes
Bjorn Alfredson - Task Force
Chris Marshall - Task Force
Jill Quast - Happy Days Houseboats/Task Force (phone)
Denise Benning-Reid - Bobcaygeon Chamber of Commerce
Carly Poole - Buckeye Marine/Impact 32
Candace Buckley - Days Inn & Suites Lindsay (phone)
Mary Lee Boston - Fenelon Falls Chamber of Commerce
Harry Stoddart - LEX
Danielle French - South Pond Farms
Karen Haagsma - Pigeon Lake Resort

Small Business

Diane Steven – City of Kawartha Lakes
Sandy Greenburg – City of Kawartha Lakes
Bjorn Alfredson - Task Force
Chris Marshall - Task Force
Tammy Adams – Silver Lights Senior Services
Debra Kemp – Kawartha Mediums
Denise Benning-Reid – Bobcaygeon Chamber of Commerce
Mark Imrie - Imrie Group
Lisa Vehrs - Recovered Treasure Upholstery
Marylee Boston – Fenelon Falls Chamber of Commerce
Jennifer Bain- Kawartha Lakes CFDC

Culture

Laurie McCarthy – City of Kawartha Lakes
Donna Goodwin – City of Kawartha Lakes
Bjorn Alfredson - Task Force
Chris Marshall – City of Kawartha Lakes /Task Force

James Barrett - Globus Theatre + Lakeview Arts Barn
Tim Wisener - Colborne St. Gallery
Lesley Drummond - Kawartha Lakes Art Council
Erastus Burley - Pie Eyed Monk
Craig Metcalf - Academy Theatre
Robert Plummer - Bobcaygeon Music Council
Barbara Doyle - Olde Gaol Museum
Darlene Mann- Kinmount Artisans Guild + Kinmount Artisans Marketplace

Construction

Carlie Arbour – City of Kawartha Lakes
Kelly Maloney – City of Kawartha Lakes
Pat Murphy
Tim Wisener
Mike Barkwell
Bjorn Alfredsson - Task Force

Retail

Sandy Greenburg – City of Kawartha Lakes
Diane Steven – City of Kawartha Lakes
Chris Marshall – City of Kawartha Lakes
Bjorn Alfredsson – Task Force
Larry McCaw – Canadian Tire
Colleen Collins - Lindsay Chamber

Manufacturing and Food Processing

Rebecca Mustard – City of Kawartha Lakes
Kelly Maloney – City of Kawartha Lakes
Caley Ferguson - Northern Casket
Scott Wilson - MITY Inc. (Holsag)
Raphael Dube - Cardio Med
Vinh Mac - Fenelon Falls Brewing
Bruce VandenBerg - Mariposa Dairy
Carolyn Puterbough – OMAFRA
Bjorn Alfredsson - ER Task Force

Agriculture and Agri-Business

Kelly Maloney – City of Kawartha Lakes
Emily Turner – City of Kawartha Lakes
Guy Masters – Masters Farm
Michelle Murphy-Ward – Wards Farm
Rebecca Parker – Middle Kingdom Farm
Matt Pecoskie – Alliance Agri-Turf
Mark Torrey
Alice VanVught
Andrew Veale – City of Kawartha Lakes /ERT Task Force
Chris Marshall – City of Kawartha Lakes /ERT Task Force

Bjorn Alfredsson - ERT Task Force

Innovation

Rebecca Mustard – City of Kawartha Lakes
Emily Turner – City of Kawartha Lakes
Joanne Ilaqua – Mamasoup Inc
Wesley Found – Linborough Property Corp
Paul Tamlin – Dapagee Industrial IOT
Graeme Barrie - Netmechanics
Mike Perry – Kawartha Lakes Community Foundation
Dennis Geelen – Zero In
Ryan Oliver – Pinnguaq Association
Dan Kitchen – Invent Art Inc
Tom Phillips - ERT Task Force
Bjorn Alfredsson - ERT Task Force

Downtowns

Carlie Arbour – City of Kawartha Lakes
Donna Goodwin – City of Kawartha Lakes
Andrew Veale – City of Kawartha Lakes Council
Chris Marshall – City of Kawartha Lakes
Bjorn Alfredsson – ERT Task Force
Marylee Boston – Fenelon Falls Chamber
Wesley Found – Hobarts Restaurant, Lindsay Downtown
Lynn Manning - DRAC, Fenelon
Melissa McFarland - BIA, Lindsay
Denise Benning Ried – Bobcaygeon Chamber
Vinh Mac – Fenelon Brewery
Carolyn Puterbough - OMAFRA
Hayley Pheonix - Coboconk Chamber