



CHRISTINE ELLIOTT

MPP - Newmarket-Aurora

Aurora Chamber of Commerce – Government and Advocacy Update

January 17, 2022



To the Members of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce,

I wish each of you a safe and happy new year. While this is not the start of the year many of us had hoped for, I want to assure you that our government will continue to be there to support you.

Our local businesses have worked hard to help keep our community safe throughout the pandemic, and I want to extend my deepest appreciation to each of you for rising to the challenge and doing your part to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Our government is taking an all-hands-on-deck approach, working directly with businesses to protect against the Omicron variant as Team Ontario continues to ramp up capacity to administer vaccines. I encourage you to learn more about the criteria to set up an employer-led vaccine clinic to help protect our families and communities.

For businesses that are most impacted by necessary public health measures or capacity limits due to the highly transmissible Omicron variant, our government has introduced new financial supports to help you weather the storm. These supports include the Ontario Business Costs Rebate Program and the Ontario COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant. I'm pleased to share the details about some of these supports in the updates that follow.

I know that it has been difficult, but I have always said that Aurora has some of the best people and businesses in Ontario. Every day our community shows the world that the Ontario Spirit – a spirit of compassion, hard work and resilience – is alive and well.

Once again, thank you for helping to keep our community safe. Together, we will get through this.

Sincerely,

Christine Elliott
MPP for Newmarket-Aurora

Ontario COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant

The Ontario government is providing targeted relief for businesses and people impacted by the current public health measures needed to blunt the spread of the Omicron variant.

As part of a comprehensive plan to support workers and businesses, the government announced an Ontario COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant for small businesses that are subject to closure under the modified Step Two of Roadmap to Reopen. It will provide eligible small businesses with a grant payment of \$10,000.

To receive the grant, a small business must:

- be required to close due to public health orders that took effect 12:01 a.m. on January 5, 2022
- have fewer than 100 employees

Eligible businesses that previously qualified for the Ontario Small Business Support Grant will be pre-screened to verify eligibility and will not need to apply for the new program.

Newly established and newly eligible small businesses will need to apply once the application portal opens in the coming weeks.

Eligible small businesses include:

- Restaurants and bars
- Facilities for indoor sports and recreational fitness activities (including fitness centres and gyms)
- Racing venues, casinos, bingo halls and gaming establishments
- Meeting or event spaces
- Tour and guide services
- Performing arts venues and cinemas
- Museums, galleries, aquariums, zoos, science centres, landmarks, historic sites, botanical gardens and similar attractions
- Conference centres and convention centres
- Driving instruction for individuals
- Before- and after- school programs

Electricity–Rate Relief

The Ontario government is also providing electricity-rate relief to support small businesses, as well as workers and families spending more time at home while the province is in Modified Step Two. For 21 days, starting at 12:01 am on Tuesday, January 18, 2022, electricity prices will be set 24 hours a day at the current off-peak rate of 8.2 cents per kilowatt-hour, which is less than half the cost of the current on-peak rate.

The off-peak rate will apply automatically to residential, small businesses and farms who pay regulated rates set by the Ontario Energy Board and get a bill from a utility and will benefit customers on both Time-of-Use and Tiered rate plans.

Ontario Business Costs Rebate Program

The government is introducing the new Ontario Business Costs Rebate Program to support businesses that are most impacted by public health measures in response to the Omicron variant.

Under the Rebate Program, eligible businesses required to close for indoor activities, such as restaurants and gyms, will receive a rebate payment equivalent to 100 per cent of their costs. Those required to reduce capacity to 50 per cent, such as smaller retail stores, will receive a rebate payment equivalent to 50 per cent of their costs.

Online applications will open on January 18.

Payments to eligible businesses will be retroactive to December 19, 2021.

Improving cash flows for Ontario businesses

As part of its plan to provide targeted relief to small businesses, the government is also improving cash flows for Ontario businesses by providing up to \$7.5 billion through a six-month interest- and penalty-free period starting January 1, 2022 for Ontario businesses to make payments for most provincially administered taxes. This supports businesses now and provides the flexibility they will need for long-term planning.

The six-month period will begin on January 1, 2022 and end on July 1, 2022.

This measure will provide up to \$7.5 billion in relief to help approximately 80,000 Ontario businesses. Businesses will have the option to delay their payments for the following provincially administered taxes:

- Employer Health Tax
- Beer, Wine and Spirits Taxes
- Tobacco Tax
- Insurance Premium Tax
- Fuel Tax
- International Fuel Tax Agreement
- Gas Tax
- Retail Sales Tax on Insurance Contracts & Benefit Plans
- Mining Tax
- Race Tracks Tax

Reconnect Ontario Program Open For Applications

The government is investing \$20 million through the Reconnect Ontario program to provide support to municipalities and festival and event organizers that are creating innovative, exciting ways to help Ontarians reconnect with their communities once it is safe to do so.

Reconnect Ontario supports festivals and events that deliver innovative and safe experiences, while creating opportunities that encourage Ontarians to safely reconnect and experience all our local communities have to offer.

Funding may be used for expenses such as programming and production, promotion, mobile applications and website development, and implementation of health and safety measures.

**The 2022 application period is now open.
Applications will be accepted until
5:00 p.m. on February 2, 2022.**



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