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**TO:** GENERAL COMMITTEE

**SUBJECT:** COVID-19 BARRIE BUSINESS RECOVERY PLAN – FRAMEWORK AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

**WARD:** ALL

**PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT:** S. SCHLICHTER, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT, EXT. 5036  
D. HYDE, MANAGER, SMALL BUSINESS CENTRE

**SUBMITTED BY:** S. SCHLICHTER, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

**GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL:** A. MILLER, GENERAL MANAGER OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL:** M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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**RECOMMENDED MOTION**

1. That the Framework and Consultation Process for the COVID-19 Barrie Business Recovery Action Plan attached as Appendix “A” to Staff Report ECD004-20 be received.
2. That staff in the Economic and Creative Development Department report back to General Committee with a proposed Recovery Action Plan for Barrie Businesses that includes recommendations reflective of business and Council input from sector consultation and surveys, public feedback, business service organizations and thought leaders.

**PURPOSE & BACKGROUND**

Report Overview

3. The purpose of the report is to provide Council with the framework and consultation process that will guide the development of an action plan to support and accelerate business recovery for local business post-isolation.
4. Impacts on local businesses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have been deep and severe. All levels of Government have been working to deliver programming and supports to alleviate the fiscal impacts to both business and individuals.
5. The Economic and Creative Development Department (Invest Barrie and Small Business Centre), have approached response to business and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through addressing immediate needs, followed by a thorough consultation to inform recovery response actions.
6. All of the immediate response actions have been completed in collaboration with the Mayor’s Economic Support Task Force and our business service organizations. The Barrie Business Response Action Plan was presented in correspondence to Council on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

7. The recovery plan will consult and gather intelligence and ideas from key sectors, stakeholders, the broader public and members of Council to develop a set of recommended action items for City implementation. The Actions will support the acceleration of local businesses re-opening post-isolation, as well as bring employees and customers back into local establishments safely and efficiently.
8. The role of City Council can support the formulation of the plan through engagement and consultation with businesses in their Ward and broader sector consultations. Councillors will be supported in this outreach with the survey tools and questions to guide their discussions, and can be assisted by staff in the Mayor's Office and/or Invest Barrie.
9. In addition to consultation, staff will continue to collect data, information, and best practices from industry associations and other municipalities (locally and globally).
10. As outlined in Appendix 'A', it is anticipated that consultations will take place the weeks of May 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. A working group consisting of staff, thought leaders and stakeholder organizations will then work to distill the information into a working recovery plan document by May 29<sup>th</sup> that would be targeted to be presented to General Committee in June.
11. The initial Recovery Action Plan is intended to focus on short-term support that will support the re-opening of business post-isolation. It is expected that long-term actions will also be identified and will also evolve through the recovery process.
12. Upon endorsement of the Recovery Action Plan by Council, regular reporting on implementation, success and longer-term strategies will be identified.

## **ANALYSIS**

13. Several sectors have been targeted based upon the size of the sector within Barrie, the severity of impact of the pandemic and the sector's impact on accelerating economic recovery. Key sectors include manufacturing, tourism, arts & culture, downtown, construction, and service-based businesses.
14. The Plan is intended to identify meaningful actions that the municipality can undertake within their realm of governance and would include:
  - a) Advocacy to Federal and Provincial Governments for policy and business support needs.
  - b) Municipal Policy Development that are conducive to business recovery and business innovation.
  - c) Municipal service levels that are responsive to the needs of business.
  - d) Connectivity & collaboration to build capacity, continuity, and development of community business supports and programs, including support for the accelerated adoption of new or emerging business models that can thrive in a post-COVID environment.
  - e) Marketing campaigns, events, or other collaborations that can stimulate recovery.

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## **ALTERNATIVES**

15. The following alternatives are available for consideration by General Committee:

**Alternative #1**

General Committee could select an alternate method to approach COVID-19 recovery planning for the City.

This alternative is not recommended as staff have been actively engaged with business and business service organizations to respond to their needs. Staff believe a holistic approach to consultation will ensure comprehensive community feedback and unique and innovative ideas that will provide a set of meaningful recommendations that the City can practically implement in support of business and the economy.

## **FINANCIAL**

16. There are no costs associated with the consultation and development of the action plan, beyond staff time.
17. Recommendations will be evaluated and assessed from several aspects including overall economic impact and fiscal requirements. Any net new fiscal impacts to the City would be identified along with potential funding sources.
18. Staff will identify where opportunities exist to leverage existing allocated budgets, other governmental funding sources, and strategic partnerships to deliver on recommendations.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT MATTERS**

19. There are no environmental and/or climate change impact matters with this recommendation.

## **LINKAGE TO 2018-2022 COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN**

20. The recommendation(s) included in this staff report support the following goals identified in the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan:
- Growing Our Economy
21. Conducting consultation with key sectors and stakeholders will ensure comprehensive community feedback and unique and innovative ideas that will provide a set of meaningful recommendations that the City can practically implement in support of business and the economy as part of a Business Recovery Plan.

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APPENDIX "A"

**COVID-19 Barrie Business Recovery Action Plan  
Framework and Consultation Process**

**Purpose:**

To develop a community and Council endorsed COVID-19 Business Recovery Action Plan. The Action Plan will be a result of consultation, intelligence gathering and ideas from key sectors, stakeholders, the broader public and members of Council. Further, it will provide a set of recommended action items for City implementation. The Actions will support the acceleration of local businesses re-opening post-isolation, as well as bring employees and customers back into local establishments safely and efficiently.

**Proposed Critical Path:**

- May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 - Report to General Committee presenting Business Recovery Program Framework and Consultation Process.
- Week of May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 - Invest Barrie prepares surveys with consultation of key stakeholders, identifies sector invitations and confirms consultation dates.
- Week of May 11<sup>th</sup>
  - Sector online surveys opened for data gathering
  - Public feedback email made available for data submission
- Week of May 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>
  - Consultation sessions with industry (through key stakeholders) to discuss recovery opportunities and solutions completed
- Week of May 18<sup>th</sup> - Working Group of stakeholders and thought leaders created.
- Week of May 25<sup>th</sup> - Data analysis and Working Group reviews and prioritizes recommendations and actions by sector.
- May 29<sup>th</sup> – First draft of Recovery Plan completed
- Week of June 1<sup>st</sup> – Validate Recovery Plan by sector with stakeholders
- Presentation to General Committee – Targeted mid-June

**Consultation Input:**

Given the broad cross-sector impacts of COVID-19, input is being sought from stakeholders, businesses and the public.

**Stakeholders**

Invest Barrie has been working with several business service organizations on response actions and will continue to engage with the Chamber of Commerce, BIA, Sandbox, Henry Bernick Entrepreneurship Centre, Tourism Barrie, Barrie Construction Association and Barrie Homebuilders Association as part of the recovery plan.

In addition to business service organizations, other key stakeholders to be consulted will include:

- City of Barrie Council
- Members of Parliament and Members of Provincial Parliament
- Employment Ontario Representatives
- Thought leaders within the community

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**Members of the Public**

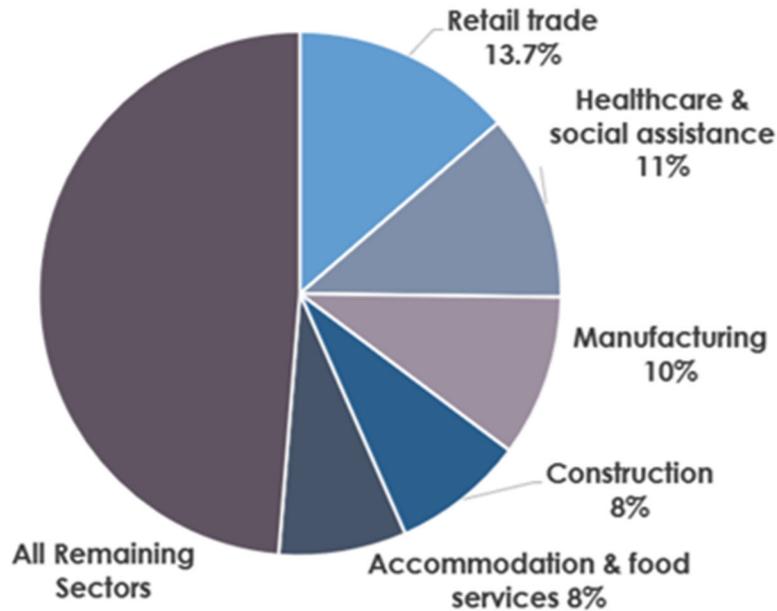
In addition to sectors and stakeholders, a call for recovery ideas from the community may net new concepts, viewpoints on policy, and market positioning that can be included in the Business Recovery Action Plan.

**Target Sectors**

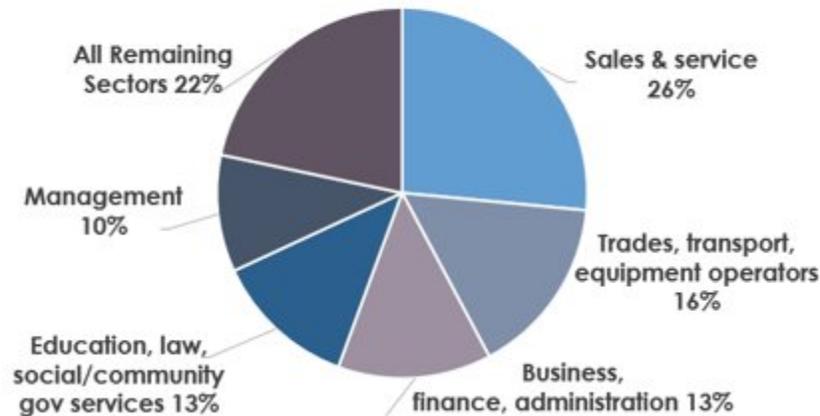
Several sectors have been targeted based upon the size of the sector within Barrie, the severity of impact of the pandemic and the sector's impact on accelerating economic recovery.

Information from the 2016 Census provides a breakdown of the City business composition by employment and by occupation:

**Top 5 Employment Industries**



### Top 5 Occupation Types



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census Data

Based on employment and occupation data, combined with impact assessments and early survey data regarding businesses impacted by COVID-19, the following sectors have been identified for targeted consultation:

**Tourism** – In addition to accommodation and attractions, this sector also includes food service and retail establishments. This sector has been severely impacted by COVID-19. A survey of tourism sector businesses conducted by the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, April 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 found that more than 21% of tourism businesses are at risk of closing permanently in 3 months' time and nearly 60% are at risk of closing temporarily in 3 months' time.

**Manufacturing** – This sector has been a long-standing economic driver for Barrie, boasting employment growth over the past decade. Some manufacturers have been able to re-tool to meet immediate medical supply needs, shifting some employment from those having to downsize. In the long-term, this sector is anticipated to be impacted by reduced work volumes, economic shifts in automotive and aerospace, supply chain shortages and access to working capital. Manufacturing is in the top three sectors for Barrie employment.

**Construction** – Growth in Barrie and surrounding Simcoe County has kept this sector strong. Across Canada, construction accounted for 15% of Canada's total economic output in 2019. Recent projections for housing starts are expected to drop from 200,000 in 2019 to 70,000 in 2020. Projections for the industrial/commercial sector are more stable. Through consultation, understanding the local impact to planned development and infrastructure will inform the local landscape.

**Downtown** – The downtown is the heart of the City. Many merchants are independent owner/operators and are heavily reliant on foot traffic and seasonal surges from residents and tourists for survival. The combined effects of COVID-19 and the improvements to Dunlop Street have left many downtown Barrie businesses facing an uncertain future.

**Arts and Culture** – The creative sector is a growing sector in Barrie. A significant portion of this sector relies on live production and events as their key source of revenue. In a recently held survey of Barrie creative business owners and organizations, 75% have closed their practices with an additional 5% closing

soon. Arts and culture organizations and individual artists themselves have all been severely impacted by COVID-19.

**Service-Based Businesses – A** significant portion of the remaining 49.3% sectors that encompass the City's employment base are included in this category. The County of Simcoe in partnership with the City of Barrie and City of Orillia, conducted a survey of businesses on the impacts of COVID-19. It was found that 53% of respondents had laid off staff and 76% had reduced staff hours after March 31st. Survey respondents indicated an average of 70% revenue lost compared to their normal for this time of year, and 58% are concerned that they will need to permanently close their business within 3 months.

In addition to the key sectors identified above, Invest Barrie will seek to identify emerging sub-sectors for additional in-depth consultation on key needs for recovery post-isolation.

### **Consultation Process:**

Online group consultation, by sector, will be driven through the Mayor's Economic Support Task Force Members, their membership and sector businesses:

- Selected Industries
  - Tourism – Lead: Tourism Barrie
  - Manufacturing – Lead: Chamber
  - Downtown – Lead: BIA
  - Construction – Lead: BCA/Homebuilders Association
  - Arts & Culture – Lead: Invest Barrie
  - Service Based Businesses – Lead: Sandbox

Invest Barrie will be the support lead in all sectors, by providing consultation framework, collecting data and participating in all consultations. Stakeholders, including members of Council, will be invited to participate.

In addition to online group consultation, businesses will have the opportunity to provide input and feedback through a survey.

Key questions for consultation and online survey feedback will focus on gathering key data and insights on how businesses are adapting their business models, their post-isolation recovery plans, obstacles and drivers of their recovery, and opportunities where the City can support and champion recovery.

Responses will be aggregated and shared with Council as part of the overall report back.

### **Public Input**

To ensure ideas are received from the broader community, an online platform will be created on the City's website for the public to participate.

### **Recovery Action Plan Report**

Upon completion of data collection and intelligence gathering, a working group consisting of staff, thought leaders and stakeholder organizations will distill the information into a working recovery plan document.

The Recovery Action Plan will identify meaningful actions by sector that the municipality can undertake and would include:

- a) Advocacy to Federal and Provincial Governments for policy and business support needs.
- b) Municipal Policy Development conducive to business recovery and business innovation.

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- c) Municipal service levels that are responsive to the needs of business.
  - d) Connectivity and collaboration to build capacity, continuity, and development of community business supports and programs, including support for the accelerated adoption of new or emerging business models that can thrive in a post-COVID environment
  - e) Marketing campaigns, events, or other collaborations that can stimulate recovery

Examples of actions could include:

- Accelerating development approvals
- Marketing programs
- Advocacy for infrastructure investments
- Opportunities to advance the Downtown Patio Program
- Programming to develop online business capacity, and helping companies build more resilient business models.