

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

Attention: Richard Freymond, Commissioner of Corporate and Legislative Services
Mayor Therrien and Council

RE: Report to Council in May on Measures of Relief because of COVID-19

As City staff develop a long-term Covid-19 plan to bring forward to councillors, we emphasize the importance of a plan that recognizes that each ward is home to more than 550 businesses.

A Taskforce consisting of a group of business owners and organizations encourages councillors to consider several principles:

1. Immediate Business Relief Measures
2. Addressing Budgetary Issues
3. Applying an Economic Lens

Immediate Business Relief Measures

Property tax measures that were put in place during the March 30 council meeting, for payments March 31 and May 31, were appreciated and will provide some relief in conjunction with measures in place and anticipated from the provincial and federal governments.

Noise by-law relaxation, in accordance with the provincial order, and transit measures to ensure employees are able to get to work at essential businesses are also appreciated.

There are a few more areas where the city could provide some immediate relief.

1. Waiving parking permits – many employees are not using their permits for city-owned lots and waiving of this fee would help
2. Waiving any costs associated with the licensing, development or building permits would encourage developers to work on projects for the future even while their cash flow may be limited right now
3. Continue to accept and process development and planning applications in accordance with provincial orders so that when the recovery is given the green light, construction on projects can begin immediately. This would also help staff manage a potential backlog in the future when developers will want to be building.

Addressing Budgetary Issues

The Task Force openly recognizes that the budget approved in January of 2020 is a document pre-COVID. While we are aware there will be challenges, there will also be an opportunity for expenditures to focus on a strong comeback.

As the long-term financial plan is developed we encourage staff and councillors to understand that the burden is one that is born by all in recovery.

1. The City of Peterborough requires a strong social, environmental, cultural and economic response. If recovery expectations are not balanced and equal, the City will struggle.
2. We understand there will be a budgetary impact because of unpaid commercial taxes as a result of the policy to waive late fees, we ask that these amounts be interest-free and applied over a 24-month time frame. This would avoid a larger lump sum being applied as a business starts to recover.
3. Consider a program for rent required on city-owned properties that is reflective of the situation of the tenant. For example: Stagger back the payments as not everyone will be back in business at the same time.

Applying an Economic Lens

We are aware that there is a great partnership and reliance between the public and private sectors.

1. When considering projects and priorities consult with the business community through PKED, the Chamber, the DBIA and others to assess the impact of decisions on business before they are implemented
2. Ask where the private sector, not-for-profit can help and be a partner in building the road of recovery
3. Approve the creation of the Mayor and Warden's Task Force for Economic Recovery and the PKED Economic Recovery Plan so that this plan to support economic recovery can be implemented.

The business community operates in all wards of the City of Peterborough. Building the road of recovery will take all hands-on deck approach as businesses search for stability in a time of instability. During this time, we've seen a lot of collaboration between businesses and with government to get the word out about programs and assistance. The Task Force appreciates that the City communications team has helped foster the pathway for businesses looking for help by adding a TeamPTBO link on their COVID-19 page on the peterborough.ca website.

The business community, many of which are small businesses, thanks council for consideration of the measures proposed above.

Thank you.

Please note these recommendations were developed and are being submitted by:

Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce

Peterborough DBIA

Peterborough & the Kawarthas Economic Development

Community Futures Peterborough

Innovation Cluster Peterborough and Kawarthas

Sam McKnight, McKnight's Flowers on behalf of a number of business owners who have been meeting regularly.