

Updated information and resources for businesses

To support our local business community, the Town of Orangeville's Economic Development & Culture office aims to provide updates about the measures being announced by all levels of government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the many resources for business owners have also been included here to help businesses enhance their ability to respond now and plan for the future.

Federal Government – Canada Emergency Response Benefit announced March 25, 2020

To support workers and help businesses keep their employees, the Canadian government has proposed legislation to establish the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). This taxable benefit would provide \$2,000 a month for up to four months for workers who lose their income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The CERB would be a simpler and more accessible combination of the previously announced Emergency Care Benefit and Emergency Support Benefit.

The CERB would cover Canadians who have lost their job, are sick, quarantined, or taking care of someone who is sick with COVID-19, as well as working parents who must stay home without pay to care for children who are sick or at home because of school and daycare closures. The CERB would apply to wage earners, as well as contract workers and self-employed individuals who would not otherwise be eligible for Employment Insurance (EI).

Additionally, workers who are still employed, but are not receiving income because of disruptions to their work situation due to COVID-19, would also qualify for the CERB. This would help businesses keep their employees as they navigate these difficult times, while ensuring they preserve the ability to quickly resume operations as soon as it becomes possible.

The portal for accessing the CERB would be available in early April. Canadians would begin to receive their CERB payments within 10 days of application. The CERB would be paid every four weeks and be available from March 15, 2020 until October 3, 2020.

This benefit would be one part of the Canadian government's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan.

Provincial Government – Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19 (March 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update) announced March 25, 2020

The Ontario government's action plan is a first step in its response to COVID-19 and includes \$7 billion in additional resources for the health care system and direct support for people and jobs. It also will make available \$10 billion in support for people and businesses through tax and other deferrals to improve their cash flow, protecting jobs and household budgets.

Specific measures to help businesses include:

- Supporting more affordable electricity bills for eligible residential, farm and small business consumers, by providing approximately \$5.6 billion for electricity cost relief programs in 2020-21. Further support includes setting electricity prices at the lowest rate, known as the off-peak price, 24 hours a day for 45 days to support ratepayers in their increased daytime electricity usage as they respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Cutting taxes by \$355 million for about 57,000 employers through a proposed temporary increase to the Employer Health Tax (EHT) exemption.
- Making available \$6 billion by providing five months of interest and penalty relief for businesses to file and make payments for the majority of provincially administered taxes.
- Deferring the upcoming June 30 quarterly municipal remittance of education property tax to school boards by 90 days, which will provide municipalities the flexibility to, in turn, provide property tax deferrals to residents and businesses.
- Making available \$1.9 billion by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) allowing employers to defer payments for up to six months.

Essential Workplaces identified by Government of Ontario

To further contain the spread of COVID-19, the Ontario Government ordered the mandatory closure of all non-essential workplaces effective Tuesday, March 24. The province has launched a toll-free number to provide support to Ontario businesses and clarify essential workplaces. **Call 1-888-444-3659 with questions.**

Town of Orangeville Relief announced March 24, 2020

Orangeville Council has passed a number of measures to help alleviate some of the immediate financial pressure that Orangeville residents and businesses are experiencing. The economic relief package includes:

- Waiving of all fees and interest related to late payment of property taxes, for residents and businesses, for a three-month period
- Penalties on overdue water fees are also waived for 90 days
- Orangeville Hydro has suspended account collection activities including late payment interest on incremental balances and the provincial winter disconnect ban has been extended by an additional three months. The province is also assisting with energy costs by switching to the evening and weekend price of 10.1 cents per kilowatt hour for the next 45 days.
- Orangeville Transit fares are waived for 90 days. Riders, except those with need accessibility assistance, are encouraged to board from the rear door to reduce the risk to transit operators and further support physical distancing.
- Winter parking restrictions have been lifted with respect to on-street parking effective immediately.

Tools and Resources available to help business owners

For some businesses, this situation may present an opportunity to update their business plans, enhance their digital presence, or investigate ways to improve operations upon re-opening. There are many resources available for support including:

- The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) is the only financial institution devoted exclusively to entrepreneurs and provides a wide selection of [online templates, webinars, and learning tools](#).
- For businesses looking to open an online store or enhance their digital presence, Shopify is offering resources including [an extended 90 day free trial](#).

- Facebook announced a Small Business Grant Program with \$100 million in cash grants and ad credits for up to 30,000 eligible small businesses in over 30 countries.
- The Digital Main Street Program offers tools to help businesses adopt digital technology. Although grants are no longer available through this program, the resources are available for business owners.
- The Orangeville & Area Small Business Enterprise Centre continues to be available for free one-to-one consultations for business owners looking for individualized support.