

## Chamber, Town look at ?Bridge to the Future?

The Aurora Chamber of Commerce, the Town of Aurora, and local business leaders are developing strategies to support local businesses through these difficult times and prepare for the gradual return of business openings.

This week, the Aurora Chamber of Commerce will launch a new program dubbed ?A Bridge to the Future? which will look at how businesses can make ends meet as we wait for a return to normalcy.

?As a task force, we're looking at what more we can do for our businesses, what are the issues that our businesses are facing and we're trying to see what we can do to support them in any way,? says Sandra Ferri, President & CEO of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. ?In terms of the rent situation, we have reached out to both the tenants and the landlords to have them work together to try and come to a solution and we're looking at the Bridge to the Future program to bring together a panel of experts to talk about scenarios our businesses are experiencing now.

?We will have a lawyer, an accountant and a financial planning expert on the panel, and insolvency professionals, who can provide some insight into what supports are out there for these businesses that are struggling. The idea behind Bridge to the Future is to help our businesses be there when this is all over. It is important now that we help them find strategies to keep their businesses going through this time so there is a brighter future ahead.?

One such initiative already being spearheaded by the Chamber to ensure local businesses can count on returning customers once this is all over is a new gift certificate program facilitated by Fan Saves.

The program is designed to support local businesses that have been temporarily forced to close.

Once a gift certificate is purchased online through the FanSaves Helps website ([fansaveshelps.ca/collections/aurora-chamber-of-commerce](http://fansaveshelps.ca/collections/aurora-chamber-of-commerce)), the purchaser will receive a digital gift certificate with the proceeds of each sale transferred directly to the business.

Once doors re-open, buyers can print out their gift certificates and bring them to their favourite local businesses for products and services.

?We set up the Shop from Home Aurora website for the businesses that still had goods and services they were offering during the pandemic, and then we felt we needed to do something for the businesses that actually had to shut their doors and weren't able to provide services or products,? explains Ms. Ferri. ?This is a way for our community to buy gift

certificates where the money goes directly into the company's bank account now for future goods and services, hoping it will help them pay their bills over this period and then be there when everything goes back to normal.

?This is an opportunity for people who love their stores in Town to offer them some support at a time when they do not have customers coming through the door. It is a way to make sure that business is still there when all of us go back to shopping and they will still have the stores they love as part of Aurora. It gives the businesses an infusion of cash to help pay their bills. The feedback has been good. We have had quite a few businesses sign up for it.?

Participating businesses so far include Air Riderz Adventure Park, Aurora Athletic Club, Bent Ridge Winery, Bent Nail Brewery, Best Climate Heating & Cooling, Drummer's Hangout, Eco Choice Windows & Doors, Fast Signs Newmarket, Fraktals Chocolate, Kroma Salon, Kumon Math & Reading Centre of Aurora, Living Assistance Services, Locale Restaurant, Lori Pedersen Home Staging + Styling, Lynteriors, M2 Services Group, Maple Teahouse & Bake Shop, Omars Shoes, Spar-Clean, Spine Stretch Studio, TapAlly, the Yoga Nest, VR Impulse, and Warner Roofing.

?It is really important that we all support our local businesses in any way we can,? says Ms. Ferri. ?Whether that is going to the local ShopFromHomeAurora.ca website or purchasing goods from our local vendors where possible, instead of going to the Big Box stores, or whether it is buying a gift certificate for a store that has had to close down completely, I think whatever we can do as a community to help these businesses get through the next month or two would be very much appreciated by our businesses.?

**By Brock Weir**