

Tariff threats could change the way Town does business

An eleventh-hour agreement between Canada and the United States on Monday led to a 30-day delay in imposing ?devastating? tariffs on Canadian goods going across the border ? but the threat could lead to a shift in how the Town of Aurora does business.

A trade war between the two nations was averted ? at least temporarily ? at the start of the week following talks between Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Donald Trump which led to additional measures to secure the border.

?Canada is implementing our \$1.3 billion boarder plan ? reinforcing the border with new choppers, technology and personnel, enhanced coordination with our American partners, and increased resources to stop the flow of fentanyl,? said Trudeau in a statement on Monday afternoon. ?Nearly 10,000 frontline personnel are and will be working on protecting the border.

?In addition, Canada is making new commitments to appoint a Fentanyl Czar, we will list cartels as terrorists, ensure 24/7 eyes on the border, launch a Canada-U.S. Joint Strike Force to combat organized crime, fentanyl, and money laundering. I have also signed a new intelligence directive on organized crime and fentanyl and we will be backing it with \$200 million.?

The delay in tariffs came after a fraught weekend when Trump threatened to impose them this week.

His intentions sparked a flurry of responses from all levels of government.

Had a deal not been reached on Monday, Ontario Premier Doug Ford announced the Province intended to bar American companies from bidding on Provincial contracts, remove U.S.-produced beer, wine and spirits from LCBO shelves, and ?rip up? Ontario's contract with Elon Musk's Starlink to bring high-speed internet to more remote parts of Ontario.

?We have temporarily averted tariffs that would have severely damaged our economy, giving time for more negotiations and time for cooler heads to prevail,? said Ford on Monday. ?Thank you to the countless workers, union leaders, businesses and every day proud Canadians who rallied together to make this happen. With the U.S. pausing tariffs, Ontario will pause retaliatory measures. If President Trump proceeds with tariffs, we won't hesitate to remove American products off LCBO shelves or ban American companies from provincial procurement.

?Make no mistake, Canada and Ontario continue to stare down the threat of tariffs. Whether it's tomorrow, in a month or a year from now when we're renegotiating the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, President Trump will continue to use the threat of tariffs to get what he wants. We're already feeling the impact. So long as our trading relationship with our largest trading partner is up in the air, we will continue to see many potential projects frozen and projects that were already under way put at risk.?

Here in Aurora, as the tariffs loomed, Mayor Tom Mrakas said he would bring forward a motion to amend the Town's Procurement Bylaw to reflect a ?Canada First? policy.

?In response to the anticipated U.S. tariffs that will have devastating consequences for the Canadian economy, local jobs, and our community, I am bringing forward a motion to Aurora Town Council to review the merits of amending the Town's Procurement Bylaw to implement a ?Canada First' policy,? said Mayor Mrakas in a statement. ?This amendment will prioritize Canadian businesses in our procurement processes, supporting both local and national industries. By investing in Canadian companies, we can fortify our economy, protect jobs, and build a more resilient future for Aurora and Canada.

?Additionally, I will be convening a Mayor's Economic Taskforce in the coming weeks, bringing together business and community leaders to hear their concerns, identify solutions, and ensure I can effectively advocate on their behalf. Government action must be swift, strategic, and substantial to shield jobs, stabilize industries, and safeguard our local economy.?

He also encouraged residents to ?shop local and choose Canadian wherever possible,? noting that ?in uncertain times, every

purchasing decision matters.?

As Canada faced down the economic threat, The Auroran reached out to candidates vying to represent Newmarket-Aurora and Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill at Queen's Park following the February 27 Provincial election to weigh in on both the threat from the U.S. and homegrown retaliatory measures.

?The implementation of Trump's tariffs is a major concern for workers, businesses, and families across Ontario and here in Newmarket-Aurora. The response from both the Federal and Provincial governments must be strong, strategic, and unwavering in its commitment to protect jobs and local industries,? said Newmarket-Aurora Ontario Liberal candidate Chris Ballard. ?At the federal level, the government has taken initial steps to push back against these tariffs, including imposing countermeasures and engaging in diplomatic efforts. While these are important steps, we need to go further. We must ensure that affected industries receive direct support, including financial assistance to mitigate the impact on workers and businesses, and that we continue to build trade partnerships to reduce our dependence on the U.S. market. At the provincial level, the Ford government must do more than just offer political soundbites. Ontario must take decisive action to support workers and industries directly affected, including targeted tax relief, investment incentives, and a robust strategy to support local manufacturing and exports. We should also work closely with municipalities to ensure that economic development plans align with the changing trade landscape. Any provincial initiatives must not make matters worse for Ontario residents.

?Newmarket-Aurora's economy has deep ties to the auto sector, and the impact of these tariffs could be devastating if we do not act wisely and quickly. Families who rely on good-paying jobs in manufacturing and supply chain industries deserve a government that fights for them. If elected, I will work closely with industry leaders, unions, and all levels of government to ensure that Newmarket-Aurora businesses have the support they need to weather this storm.?

It's also time, he added, to address inter-provincial trade barriers.

These sentiments were shared by Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill Ontario Liberal candidate Jason Cherniak, who said, ?the fight is not over; it's merely delayed.?

?A coordinated response by the provinces and the federal government will have the might to fight back against Trump. Donald Trump will be negotiating with Canada's Prime Minister, not with Doug Ford,? said Cherniak, adding the Liberals will establish a Fight Tariffs Fund which will provide Ontario businesses with cheap interest rates for costs or capital investments to ?help keep workers or hire new ones as they grow.?

?Aurora's economy is deeply tied to the auto sector and the impact of tariffs could be devastating,? continued Cherniak. ?We as Canadians ? as Ontarians ? have to fight like hell to protect our economy. Part of that is focusing on what we can control right here in Ontario, making life more affordable for everyone. That includes cutting income taxes and dropping the HST on home heating and hydro bills; cutting hidden taxes on new home construction; and phasing in rent control.?

Responses from Progressive Conservative candidates Dawn Gallagher Murphy (Newmarket-Aurora) and Michael Parsa (Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill) had not been received by press time. Pending their input, this story will be updated online at www.theauroran.com.

By Brock Weir