

Town, Chamber team up on Business Continuity Task Force

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended operations for countless businesses ? large and small ? across the country, and, here at home, business leaders are lending their expertise to help businesses make sure they can open their doors again once normalcy returns.

The Town of Aurora and the Aurora Chamber of Commerce have announced the establishment of the Aurora Business Continuity Task Force, which will bring together business professionals with global, national and local experience to ?help find creative ways to assist Aurora's small businesses.?

?I recognize these are challenging times for our local businesses and we are committed to actively helping our residents and businesses during this pandemic,? said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. ?The Town has already announced tax and water bill deferral programs for those in need to ease demands on the community. While this is a small offering during a time of great need, it is something that we can do quickly and within our local authority.

?This pandemic will likely be impacting us for several weeks and businesses will need support from community leaders to steer them through this uncharted territory. To that end, with the support of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, we will be assembling a task force of business and community leaders to focus on our local economy and the small businesses that are the backbone of Aurora. As a group, we will be looking for creative and innovative ways to support local businesses and help them through these challenging times.?

These were sentiments echoed by Sandra Ferri, President & CEO of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.

?I am pleased to launch this much-needed task force within the Town of Aurora to support our local businesses through this global health crisis. The Chamber and the Town recognize the challenges that local businesses are facing and we have made it a priority to ensure this task force looks at all possible supports available to businesses. We care about the health and welfare of our business community and by collaborating together we are a stronger voice on behalf of local businesses.?

Membership in the Aurora Business Continuity Task Force includes:

- Aaron McCarthy, Executive Vice President & Chief Human Resource Officer, Magna - Al Wilson, Vice Chair, Aurora Chamber of Commerce - Debra Wilson, Chair, Aurora Chamber of Commerce - Councillor Harold Kim - Joanne Russo, Chair, Aurora BIA - Marilee Harris, Vice Chair, Economic Development Corporation - Nicolas Fidei, President, Treasure Hill - Raz Khamissa, Business Owner, Omars Shoes and Clothing - Sam Palmerio, Manager ? Government Relations, Desjardins - Sandra Ferri, President & CEO, Aurora Chamber of Commerce - Tim Hammill, Chair, Economic Development

Corporation - Mayor Tom Mrakas

?I just want to give the perspective of an independent, small retailer,? says Mr. Khamissa. ?I think having that voice is good for people to realize our side of the story. There are a lot of companies that are able to send their workers home and they can still get things done. Little guys like us can't send everybody home because that is who we are. I am hoping that by being added onto this task force that I can give a different perspective that some people might not necessarily have.?

The Task Force is expected to meet regularly by video conference and members of the public can also get involved by providing feedback directly to Mayor Mrakas at tmrakas@aurora.ca.

?Every idea is worth considering, no matter how small or large the potential impact,? says the Town.

For more information, visit aurora.ca/business/taskforce.

By Brock Weir