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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To: Committee of the Whole  
From: Elaine Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer  
Report: #2020-COW-22  
Date: June 10, 2020

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**Subject:**

Regional Recovery Framework and Action Plan

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**Recommendation:**

That the Committee of the Whole recommends to Regional Council:

- A) That the Regional Recovery Framework be endorsed and that the Chief Administrative Officer be directed to further develop and deliver the action plan in cooperation with the Regional Recovery Task Force;
  - B) That staff be directed to continue to work jointly with Business Improvement Area (BIA) members on various recovery projects as opposed to through direct grants as requested through the Notice of Motion to provide immediate financial assistance for BIA members; and
  - C) That the Notice of Motion for a temporary by-law to reduce or refund property taxes for taxpayers in the residential and farm property tax classes whose property taxes have become unduly burdensome due to COVID-19 emergency not be implemented.
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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Regional Recovery Framework and action plan for review and endorsement. Also included in this report are comments and recommendations regarding two previous Notices of Motion presented at the April 29, 2020 Council meeting and referred to staff for reports:
  - a. Requested support for Business Improvement Areas (BIAs). Comments and recommendations are found in section 5 of this report.

- b. A property tax reduction/refund program. Comments and recommendations are found in section 7 of this report.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented change to how we live and work. On March 24, the Region of Durham declared a state of emergency. On April 29, staff provided Regional Council with a detailed review of the actions undertaken to slow the spread of the disease and to support our businesses and residents during these uncertain times. On May 27, staff provided Regional Council with an update on the fiscal impact of COVID-19.

### **Environmental Scan of Reopening and Recovery**

- 2.2 Ontario announced its three-phase reopening plan on April 27 which includes gradually reopening workplaces and public spaces with restrictions on operations to meet public health guidelines, along with safety guidelines for specific types of businesses/activities.
- 2.3 Residents and staff in long-term care homes and retirement homes have suffered disproportionately due to COVID-19. Ontario announced that it will launch an independent commission in July to review the long-term care system to provide guidance on how to improve the long-term care system and better protect residents and staff from any future outbreaks.
- 2.4 Municipalities face uncertainty about the ongoing costs of the pandemic. As revenues have decreased and costs increase, municipalities are assessing their financial options and looking for ways to contain costs, while looking to emergency assistance and stimulus funding from senior levels of government.
- 2.5 Through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), municipalities are advocating for immediate and sustained funding for transit and investment in other areas including economic recovery and housing.
- 2.6 Environmental, academic and clean energy groups are advocating for stimulus funding to be targeted in ways that will shift Canada to a low carbon/clean energy economy. Health and social services advocacy groups are urging the government to rebuild our health care system and social safety nets to close the gaps highlighted by the pandemic. Early indications are that federal stimulus spending may require projects to meet criteria related to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving climate change adaptation, equity and inclusion.
- 2.7 Provincial priorities for stimulus may not be known until the fall budget. It may focus on reducing surgical backlogs in hospitals, addressing long-term care challenges, and changing the delivery of public education. Previous priorities may be delayed given other pressures.

## Regional Recovery Framework and Action Plan

- 2.8 Staff have developed a recovery framework that aligns with Council’s priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan 2020-2024, recognizing that issues related to the virus are expected to continue into 2021 and possibly beyond.
- 2.9 Recovery efforts in the Region of Durham outlined in this report are focused on actions that can be implemented within the next six months. In collaboration with community partners, local municipalities and the business community, the Region is working to address the challenges of the pandemic to recover from this crisis and build resiliency.
- 2.10 The goals of the Regional Recovery Framework include:
- Be responsible partners to continue to “flatten the curve” and protect public health and safety;
  - Enhance services for our residents and businesses;
  - Sustain Durham’s economic and community recovery;
  - Support Regional employees; and
  - Use the Regional Strategic Plan actions as a road map and adjust as needed.
- 2.11 The plan will address key elements of recovery in a holistic way. It considers the health and social impacts of this pandemic on the community, the ability to incorporate lessons learned into new infrastructure and the built environment, the needs of local businesses to support economic recovery and the restoration and enhancement of municipal services. These elements are being considered within the context of the Region’s significant fiscal impacts.
- 2.12 The Recovery Framework is centred on four pillars: Social, Built, Economic and Municipal. A recovery lens has been applied to address priorities—including job creation, community health and safety, restoration / remodelling of services, supports to business, supports to vulnerable residents, sustainability and co-benefits—resulting in a plan that is focused on the most urgent community needs and municipal best practices.
- 2.13 A Regional Recovery Task Force guides the development of the framework and provide strategic direction to the action plan. The Task Force is composed of representatives from key stakeholder groups including Regional senior leadership, healthcare, emergency services, community agencies and the business community. It is chaired by the Durham Region CAO and includes the following members:
- Susan deRyk, Interim President and CEO, Lakeridge Health
  - Ben Earle, Executive Director, Feed the Need Durham
  - Mark Morissette, Superintendent, Durham Regional Police Services
  - Natalie Prychitko, CEO, Whitby Chamber of Commerce

- Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou, Commissioner Social Services
- Nancy Taylor, Commissioner of Finance
- Bill Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit
- Simon Gill, Director of Economic Development & Tourism
- Sandra Austin, Director Strategic Initiatives

- 2.14 The Task Force met on May 21 to review the structure and the four pillars of the Recovery Framework. Their recommendations include prioritizing the focus on short-term actions, recognizing the changing definition of ‘vulnerable’ in a post-COVID environment, and leveraging data and resources available through community partners.
- 2.15 Priorities and 2020 action items have been identified for each of the four pillars of the Recovery Framework. Key action items are described in this report. Additional details for the full set of contemplated action items are provided in Attachment #1.
- 2.16 Unless otherwise indicated, the financial impact of the action items may be covered through existing budget allocations. Staff will report back to Regional Council in fall 2020 with an update on identified actions, an overview of additional longer-term actions, and any additional financial implications.

### 3. Social Recovery Pillar

- 3.1 The response of the Region to the COVID-19 pandemic was immediate and comprehensive. The Health Department mobilized resources to provide case and contact management, surveillance, health information, support and advice, while the Social Services Department implemented changes to protect residents in long-term care homes, support our vulnerable populations and open child care centres to support the needs of essential workers. Durham Regional Police Services has continued to provide core services to keep the community safe while responding to community calls with education about COVID-19 restrictions. Together, these actions have directly contributed to the safety and well-being of residents in Durham Region.
- 3.2 **Key Social Recovery Actions** – Durham has an opportunity to meet community needs through post-COVID recovery planning while advancing plans for social investment and community vitality. The priorities of this pillar include Support for Vulnerable Residents, Quality of Life, Social Investment and Public Health and Safety. Key action items under each of these priorities are described below, with additional details included in Attachment #1.
- 3.3 Supportive Housing
- a. COVID-19 has highlighted the need for all residents to have safe, affordable and suitable housing for their own health and safety and the health and safety of the community. Developing supportive housing options for unsheltered residents is a priority and steps to develop this housing are being expedited.

Housing with supports that can accommodate clients over the long term or act as transitional housing is required.

- b. In 2020, Social Services staff will work closely with Works, Finance and Planning to expedite the development of innovative supportive housing options for vulnerable sectors, with the initial focus on using property owned by the Region. Staff will bring forward a detailed report in July outlining financing options, proposed sites and timelines.

### 3.4 Primary Care Outreach Program (PCOP)

- a. A temporary service redesign of PCOP was required in response to the immediate needs for homelessness services and requirements for Region of Durham Paramedic Services (RDPS) to initiate mobile COVID-19 testing. The PCOP Social Worker is providing counselling and service navigation through the Back-Door Mission Hub as well as mobile outreach to vulnerable clients in collaboration with Canadian Mental Health Association. The PCOP Paramedic is leading the RDPS COVID-19 Mobile Testing teams to address the needs of clients unable to attend COVID Assessment Centres. This has enhanced virtual connections and improved collaborations with other community and health service agencies, thereby enhancing support.
- b. As part of the Regional Recovery, staff will identify gaps/needs within vulnerable sectors following the pandemic and explore outreach mobile models that address social and healthcare needs of marginalized populations for mental health and wellbeing, and health/medical needs. They will also develop innovative collaborations for the delivery of in-person and virtual social and health care offerings.
- c. Short-term investment in technology (iPhone/iPads with wifi) to support virtual assessments and connections will be required. Additional funding may be required for additional staff to increase the hours of service or number of PCOP teams. Funding sources include grants through the LHIN/Ontario Health, other community service funding options and additional financial resources through the 2021 budget process.

### 3.5 Child Care and Support to Families

- a. Reopening of early learning and child care centres will be done, in accordance with provincial guidelines, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, families and staff. Social Services will develop and implement a system recovery plan that supports capacity building within the early learning and child care sector related to human resources, financial stability and programs that promote learning environments that focus on the overall wellbeing of children and families.

### 3.6 COVID-19 Outbreaks

- a. The Health Analytics & Research Team is responsible for epidemiological assessment and surveillance of COVID-19 and reporting to the public through

the COVID-19 Data Tracker. Identification, testing and management of cases and contacts will continue. Epidemiological modeling is being performed and will be refined as new information becomes available. Collaboration is being sought to support the modeling work.

### 3.7 Public Physical Distancing

- a. Health Department staff have been reviewing evidence and recommendations to develop communications, guidance documents and resources for local stakeholders and the public. During the recovery period, education of local partners and residents will continue and will be based on the latest evidence and provincial direction. The Health Department will continue to provide education and enforce public health measures including physical distancing in public until restrictions are lifted. A new toolkit to assist municipalities and businesses in reopening in a safe manner has been developed and shared. Enforcement activities regarding public health measures and physical distancing will continue in conjunction with local By-law Officers and DRPS.

### 3.8 Enhanced Routine Public Health Inspections.

- a. Routine public health inspections will be enhanced in 2020 to ensure premises that the Health Department inspects are following public health advice. Inspection criteria will be expanded to include additional public health measures identified through the pandemic, which will be incorporated into the existing green, yellow or red colour posting.

3.9 Additional actions under the Social Pillar include the provision of health and social support, provision of virtual counselling / mental health services, and examination of service delivery in long-term care homes.

## 4. Built Recovery Pillar

4.1 The Region's 2020 capital program supports community well-being and advances objectives for economic development and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Most of our capital projects for the year are underway and will continue with safety measures in place to protect workers and the public. These projects are creating local jobs and supporting essential services.

4.2 COVID-19 requires the Region and others to rethink how we safely use, operate and renovate/refurbish existing facilities, infrastructure and equipment and how to plan, design, procure and operate new assets.

4.3 Infrastructure projects are favoured in economic recovery periods for their potential to create jobs and take a "build back better" approach in which we build for future conditions, not the past. The recent Council declaration of a climate emergency and likelihood of federal criteria for recovery stimulus funding to include greenhouse gas emission reductions underscore the need to focus on environmental sustainability.

- 4.4 Given the financial and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Regional revenues and expenditures, some capital projects may be deferred to alleviate current financial pressures. Work on financial stability being advanced under the Municipal Recovery Pillar will advise on the recommended fiscal strategy for the Region during the recovery period and beyond.
- 4.5 The next few months may provide a unique window to pilot new ideas or undertake projects that would otherwise be more difficult to complete. The plan includes projects with potential to attract stimulus funding based on the goals including climate resilience, job creation, safety and social inclusion.
- 4.6 **Key Built Recovery Actions** – The priorities of the Built Recovery Pillar include progress on a Modern Rapid Transit System, Active Transportation, Community Vitality, Transformative Projects and Sustainability. Key action items under each of these priorities are described below, with additional details included in Attachment #1.
- 4.7 Rapid Transit Infrastructure
- a. Priority transit infrastructure projects include the Highway 2 Bus Rapid Transit, Simcoe Street Rapid Transit and the Lakeshore GO East extension, which will create jobs and support the transit goals of the Region. The work will be managed by a Regional Transit Oriented Development (TOD) / Rapid Transit Implementation (RTI) Office to be established in 2020. Regional staff will advance the Preliminary Design Business Case for Hwy 2 to ensure that the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) funding is realized. The ICIP represents \$174 million in funding from senior levels of government and a \$103 million Regional contribution.
- 4.8 Building Transit Ridership
- a. As a result of COVID-19, Durham Region Transit (DRT) ridership is down approximately 70 per cent. The pandemic is expected to have a long-term impact on ridership given on-going concerns with community transmission, work from home arrangements, reduced traffic congestion and increased parking availability, and increased online education and service delivery options. In 2020, staff will engage with customers and track emerging ridership patterns and preferences as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.
- b. The monthly fiscal impact is approximately \$2 million in the absence of fare collection and continued reduced ridership. In the fall, potential loss of UPass revenue may add to this. By resuming fare collection on July 1, taking appropriate service adjustments to meet ridership levels, and other budget efficiencies, the DRT deficit is projected to be reduced to \$6.8 million. Short term actions will ensure that DRT has taken the measures necessary to mitigate the risk of community transmission and remains a safe transportation option for customers, and operational improvements will demonstrate commitment to enhancing the competitiveness of public transit. These actions

will include enhanced communication and marketing efforts to instill customer trust and confidence in the safety and service of DRT.

#### 4.9 Durham Region Transit Sustainability Initiatives

- a. DRT's e-bus strategy and sustainable bus stops will include the advancement of the e-bus pilot and purchase of renewable energy technology to support infrastructure lighting, signage and passenger amenities.

#### 4.10 Transformative Projects

- a. The Regional Recovery Framework proposes to initiate timely transformative projects that involve Regional staff developing concepts, plans, programs and funding proposals in 2020. These initiatives include the Durham Forest Centre for Innovation and Resilience—a unique opportunity to replace an aging facility to develop a net energy positive centre to test and demonstrate zero carbon technologies along with outdoor recreation and education opportunities. In the short-term staff will work with partners to develop a concept for the Centre and seek funding.
- b. A strategic approach to the redevelopment and improvement of existing community housing and other Region-owned sites will be developed. Revitalization, regeneration, and recommendations for the development of housing and community service hubs where supportive services may be offered is a post-COVID focus for 2020.

#### 4.11 Environmental Sustainability

- a. Environmental sustainability is widely considered to be central to pandemic recovery plans. Staff in the CAO's office will complete various projects in 2020 that contribute to Regional recovery, including: developing a Durham Home Energy Savings Program (Report 2020-A-12), preparing a low carbon corporate fleet strategy, completing the Corporate Climate Change Master Plan and setting GHG emission reduction targets, expanding tree planting programs across the Region, and undertaking climate adaptation vulnerability and risk assessments to identify and prioritize vulnerable structures, areas of urban flood risk and public health risks. Each of these items will support the Region's ability to "build back better" and strengthen community resilience.

4.12 Additional 2020 actions include those related to active transportation by updating the Regional Cycling Plan and expanding the Regional Cycling Network, promoting active transportation in the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) and the development of a Community Improvement Plan.

### 5. Economic Recovery Pillar

5.1 Since early March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the local economy of Durham Region. Many local businesses have closed, some permanently; thousands of staff have been laid off.



- 5.2 To respond in a meaningful way to the rapidly evolving challenges of the pandemic, the Region's Economic Development and Tourism Team formed the Durham Economic Task Force (DETF) to provide support and guidance to the local business community. Details of the many actions taken to date are included in Attachment #2.
- 5.3 The goal of the projects identified in the Economic Pillar of the Recovery Framework is to re-position the Region for economic prosperity, with the overall objective to build a strong and resilient economy that maximizes opportunities for business and employment growth, innovation and partnership.
- 5.4 **Key Economic Recovery Actions** – The Economic Recovery priorities include supporting local Durham Region businesses in resuming operations, improving vital business infrastructure requirements, ramping up business attraction and looking at opportunities for continued investment attraction through Smart Durham initiatives. Key action items under each of these priorities are described below, with additional details included in Attachment #1. Additional 2020 actions related to the activities of the Durham Economic Task Force are outlined in Attachment #2.
- 5.5 Buy Local Campaign
- a. To support small businesses, the Downtowns of Durham initiative forms the basis of the Region's Buy Local campaign. This website includes business listings and service levels of downtown businesses to showcase the local businesses in each of the downtown areas within the project. It is a two phased project: Phase 1: Website launched with business listings and service levels. Phase 2: Continue to update website content and provide the opportunity for community members to contribute to the Downtowns of Durham 'stories' section.
  - b. [Emergency support for business also includes an online intake form](#), a 1-800 number for personalized, one-on-one live support and business resources at [investdurham.ca/covidresponse](http://investdurham.ca/covidresponse).
- 5.6 Improved Infrastructure for Businesses
- a. Completing a jurisdictional scan of urban infrastructure reuses elsewhere will be the first phase of improving access to downtown and business areas to further enhance infrastructure for businesses, to drive customers and revenue to small businesses.
  - b. Internet service in many areas of Durham is slow, unreliable, and expensive. Business surveys through the COVID-19 pandemic have continued to highlight the strong need for broadband in underserved areas of our business community. In 2020 staff will conclude the broadband survey to generate a more granular map of where critical support is needed, continue to advance high-priority action items from the broadband strategy, advocate for broadband funding, and work with internet service providers to

advance/accelerate the installation of fibre to under-served areas of the region.

#### 5.7 Post-COVID Business Attraction

- a. The continued pre-servicing of employment lands (proceeding with the planning, permitting, design and construction of high-priority sewer and water servicing projects for employment designated lands), cluster development around Durham's key sectors including Energy, Environment and Engineering, and promoting programs to upskill and retrain the workforce to adapt to the "new normal" will all be advanced in 2020 to support business attraction.

#### 5.8 Automated Shuttle Pilot

- a. DRT is partnering with the Town of Whitby, SmartCone Technologies, Pacific Western Transportation and others to launch Canada's first autonomous electric shuttle pilot project aided by smart transportation infrastructure. The pilot will be the longest operation of its kind in Canada, both in terms of duration (12 months) and route length (six kilometres). The shuttle will operate on a loop between Whitby GO station and the Port Whitby area.

#### 5.9 Innovation and Collaboration

- a. To increase post-secondary student engagement and promote innovative solutions to municipal priorities across the Region, staff in the CAO's office are formalizing a partnership with post-secondary institutions under the CityStudio collaboration model. A smart city framework is also being developed to launch projects that support innovation, modernization and efficiency objectives. The Region will continue to develop a culture that encourages and welcomes innovation.

### **Report Back to Council – Business Improvement Area (BIA) Funding Request**

- 5.10 Regional Council, at their meeting on April 29, 2020, referred the Notice of Motion to provide immediate financial assistance for Business Improvement Area (BIA) members to staff for an analysis and report back. The Notice of Motion proposed a grant in the amount of 25 per cent of the 2020 BIA levies to provide relief to BIA members. The value of the requested grant is estimated to be \$287,609.
- 5.11 In response to this referral, Regional Finance and Economic Development staff have considered this request, discussed it with area municipalities and offer the following assessment.
- 5.12 Under the *Municipal Act*, the local municipality in a two-tier system has the authority for BIAs. In accordance with the *Municipal Act*, BIAs have responsibility for two main functions. The first is overseeing the improvement, beautification and maintenance of municipally-owned land, buildings and structures within the BIA

area and beyond that provided at the expense of the municipality. The second is to promote the area as a business or shopping area. This often includes coordinating and funding special events and festivals within the BIA boundaries. Some of the BIAs within Durham have recently approved a reduction in their previously approved 2020 budget to reflect, in part, the cancellation of their 2020 events as a result of COVID-19 and the current provincial emergency orders, limiting public gatherings.

- 5.13 Funding of BIAs rests with the local municipality and is outside of the purview of the Region. In accordance with the *Municipal Act*, the local municipality is required to approve the BIA's annual budget. The net budgeted funds are raised through a separate property tax levy that is set in a by-law approved by the local municipality and levied by the local municipality on all business properties within the BIA boundary.
- 5.14 Not all municipalities within Durham Region have a BIA and as such a grant of this type would result in a redistribution of Regional property taxes. In accordance with the *Municipal Act*, BIAs are funded by business properties within their geographic boundaries. A Regional grant is shifting funding responsibility from the business properties that benefit directly from the work of the BIAs to the Regional tax base, including businesses not benefitting from BIA marketing and events.
- 5.15 Vibrant, strong, and culturally diverse downtowns with an active arts and culture community are critical to the success of the Regional economy, and BIAs contribute to growing these attributes of downtowns.
- 5.16 The Region is pursuing options to support the work of Durham BIAs by working jointly with them on various recovery projects, through the Durham Economic Task Force. Staff have been working jointly with the BIAs to develop and launch the 'Downtowns of Durham' website project, and Durham Economic Development and Tourism have been funding the full cost of this joint project. Staff are also in the early stages of planning an eCommerce project with the BIAs and, through the Regional funding of this project, plan to directly support the work of the BIAs while achieving broad Regional benefit.
- 5.17 Staff have considered the motion, and while the Region recognizes the severe impacts on small businesses and the Region's downtowns, and while the BIAs are excellent and valuable partners, it is recommended that the Region support the BIAs through the initiatives outlined in the Region's Recovery Plan as opposed to through direct grants.

## **6. Municipal Pillar of Recovery**

- 6.1 As a result of the COVID-19 emergency, Regional and local municipalities have suffered severe financial impacts due to the increased costs of delivering services and decreased revenues. Transit for example, was deemed an essential service, and continued to operate while temporarily suspending fare collection to support social distancing requirements.

- 6.2 Those Regional services directly engaged in managing COVID-19, such as public health, paramedics and long-term care, have experienced extra costs for personal protective equipment, additional cleaning and staff resources.
- 6.3 Many municipal buildings have been closed and to the extent possible, services were rapidly moved to online delivery. Because so many municipal services are essential services, the sector has experienced fewer layoffs than other sectors of the economy.
- 6.4 During the recovery period, services will be restored with adjustments to safeguard staff and the public. This is an opportunity to review and enhance our service delivery models. As part of this process, the Region will continue to review, refine and expand online delivery options as part of our service modernization initiatives.
- 6.5 During the pandemic, Regional staff demonstrated their capacity to undertake substantial and rapid change. The recovery period is an opportunity for the Region to build on this momentum and reinforce an enhanced philosophy of innovation and modernization.
- 6.6 **Key Municipal Recovery Actions** – The Municipal Recovery Pillar priorities include developing a restoration framework to return staff to work, modernization of Regional facilities and services, improved performance of IT through implementation of the Digital Durham strategy and strengthening Durham’s emergency response. Key action items under each of these priorities are described below, with additional details included in Attachment #1.
- 6.7 Restoration of Regional Services
- a. The restoration of services supports the Regional response to emerging orders and directives, intended to protect against the ongoing transmission of COVID-19 as staff return to work. Staff will continually review the work environment to identify health risk and risk reduction activities, ensure compliance; identify best practices and provide training to staff, develop policies and procedures to promote a healthy workplace, including for staff working from home, and identify leading health and safety indicators.
  - b. Durham Emergency Management (DEM) established a planning framework for the orderly restoration of Regional functions, services and activities halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes a standardized approach to scaling-up of services and the return of staff to regional facilities. The framework promotes: continued teleworking where possible, adoption of process and procedure improvements, and identification of lessons learned. Coordination during the transition to the “new” post-pandemic state will ensure that: shared resources such as IT and facilities are used effectively and physical distancing of both staff and visitors is incorporated into all restoration plans. Formal After-Action Reviews will also be undertaken to highlight and learn from the successes and challenges encountered throughout the COVID-19 response.

## 6.8 Financial Sustainability

- a. Finance staff are working with all departments (including DRPS) to continue to refine COVID-19 financial implications based on emerging information in a very fluid environment. Staff are continuing to develop financial mitigation actions including cost containment and project deferral as appropriate to mitigate the projected financial implications of COVID-19.
- 6.9 As part of its ongoing modernization initiatives, the Region will incorporate lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis into its ongoing customer experience service projects including the creation of a 311 service for Durham, review of public front counters and receptions, and recommendations to improve public facing services through a 36-month project entitled the Customer Experience Services Program. A detailed report on the project will be presented to Council in July. The workplace modernization project to address space challenges will leverage technology and the tele-working lessons learned during the COVID-19 crisis into the design and use of Regional Headquarters.
- 6.10 As part of the Digital Durham 2023 strategy, the Information Technology team continues to enhance the Region's network and infrastructure, including moving to more mobile devices, cloud-based technology and upgrade of legacy applications.

## 7. Financial Impacts of Recovery

- 7.1 As outlined in the 2020-F11 report to Council on May 26, Regional staff have been actively monitoring and managing the known and anticipated financial impacts to Regional programs and services, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes exploring opportunities for cost savings while not impacting essential service levels. Staff also are working with municipal associations and the provincial and federal government to advocate for financial assistance and legislative changes to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic as the situation continues to evolve.
- 7.2 As reported to Council in May, the financial impacts of COVID-19 incorporates loss of revenue, some additional subsidy, expenditure increases and expenditure savings totaling approximately \$40.5 million based on assumptions at the time of writing the report. Unknown subsidy allotments to the Region yet to be disclosed will assist in mitigating some of the social services and health impacts. Decisions to be addressed by Council with respect to waiver of development charges indexing that have been incorporated into that estimate will have an impact on the final outcome. Additionally, some impacts being experienced relate to significant loss in interest earnings that will affect future reserve fund balances available for capital investment in future years but will not affect the current financial capacity of the Region. The focus in the near term will be cost containment measures to mitigate the balance of implications that remain. This will include expenditure controls and reductions as well as potential deferral of capital projects as examples.

**Report Back to Council – Property Tax Assistance**

- 7.3 On March 25, Regional Council approved that a special meeting of Council be convened to consider a temporary tax forgiveness program for homeowners that have lost their jobs as a result of being employed in a company forced to shut down and businesses that have been forced to shut down.
- 7.4 On April 8, Regional Council, through Report 2020-COW-14 directed the Commissioner of Finance/Treasurer to work with Durham Local Treasurers to monitor the impacts of the property tax deferral measures being implemented and report back to Regional Council as required on any identified needs for further property tax supports.
- 7.5 On April 29, Regional Council referred the motion for a temporary by-law to reduce or refund property taxes for taxpayers in the residential and farm property tax classes whose property taxes have become unduly burdensome due to the COVID-19 emergency to staff for a report to be presented to a future meeting. The operative clauses of the notice of motion are as follows:
- a. “Durham Region approve in principle a temporary by-law under Section 365 of the *Municipal Act*, and which would make available from its reserves up to \$25 million in total for residential and farm taxpayers who have been approved by their respective lower tier municipality for temporary tax relief;
  - b. The portion of the Durham Region tax bill which would be eligible for a rebate would be up to 50 per cent for the duration of the emergency; and
  - c. Region staff be directed to establish a uniform program with any local municipalities participating by June 30, 2020.”
- 7.6 The *Municipal Act, 2001* outlines the various roles and responsibilities of the upper-tier (Region) and lower-tier (local municipalities) with respect to property tax policy, property tax billing and property tax assistance programs. The *Municipal Act, 2001* provides very limited authority for municipalities to forgive or write-off property taxes. Under Section 365, “the Council of a local municipality may, in any year, pass a by-law to provide for the cancellation, reduction or refund of taxes levied for local municipal and school purposes in the year by the council in respect of an eligible property of any person who makes an application in that year to the municipality for that relief and whose taxes are considered by the Council to be unduly burdensome, as defined in the by-law.” Under this Section, eligible properties are limited to properties in the residential, farm, and managed forest property tax classes, properties in the commercial, industrial or multi-residential property tax classes are not eligible for assistance. The upper-tier municipality may pass a similar by-law to provide a similar cancellation, reduction or refund of taxes levied for upper-tier purposes if a local municipality has passed a by-law.
- 7.7 The Commissioner of Finance/Treasurer meets weekly with the Durham local Treasurers to discuss various financial matters resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic including potential property tax assistance to Durham residents and

businesses. To date no local municipalities within the Region have adopted a by-law under Section 365 (1) of the *Municipal Act, 2001* and provided the Region with notification. As such the Region is not in a position to adopt a by-law under Section 365 (2) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*. The Municipality of Clarington's Council is contemplating a similar motion regarding a property tax reduction/refund program under Section 365 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, at its June 15, 2020 meeting.

7.8 The following factors should be considered when contemplating adopting a property tax reduction or refund program:

- a. Targeted assistance is being provided by senior governments to assist individuals and businesses impacted by COVID-19. The Region, through the Regional Recovery Plan, is providing support to residents and businesses through various initiatives that are targeted at improving the overall quality of life for residents, enhancing local economies and improving environmental conditions.
- b. The Region has historically partnered with local municipalities on specific tax assistance programs where all local municipalities have adopted similar programs. This ensures similar taxpayers across the Region are treated equitably.
- c. One challenge in developing a property tax assistance program under Section 365 (1) of the *Municipal Act* is the requirement to define criteria that can be objectively applied to assess the "unduly burdensome" requirement. This is further complicated by co-ownership of many residential properties and availability of timely household income data for the time-period of the COVID-19 pandemic. A property tax assistance program that cancels, reduces or refunds property taxes is a form of income redistribution. Provincial and federal governments, based on their revenue streams are better positioned to develop, determine eligibility, and fund income redistribution programs.
- d. A portion of the Region's residential property taxpayers pay their property taxes indirectly through either their mortgage payments or through their rent. Under a property tax reduction or refund program developed under Section 365 of the *Municipal Act*, any property tax relief would be provided to the owner of the property (not the tenant). There is no direct mechanism to ensure that the property tax relief is passed on to the homeowner in a timely manner when property taxes are remitted to the municipality by the mortgage company.
- e. There would be administrative costs for the municipality in developing and administering a program of this complexity. While the majority of these administrative costs would be the responsibility of the local municipality, the Region would incur additional administrative costs in reconciling and reporting on property tax remittances.
- f. The Region is responsible for delivering key essential services in response to COVID-19. Incremental costs and lost revenue are significant and are currently estimated at approximately \$40.5 million for 2020 (Report 2020-F-11). The fiscal impact to the Region differs from the local municipal impacts

based on the different services and programs provided by the different levels of municipal governments. Current provincial legislation restricts a municipality's ability to carry deficits. Under the *Municipal Act*, municipalities are either required to fund in-year deficits through reserves and reserve funds or raise property taxes in the next year to cover the prior year deficit. Regional reserves and reserve funds are key to providing Durham Region with the flexibility to respond to an in-year deficit and to minimize future property tax increases.

- g. Use of the Region's reserve funds for a property tax assistance program impacts the Region's ability to address future Regional capital needs including responding to future federal/provincial stimulus programs that may be introduced as part of a recovery program to stimulate the economy and create jobs and advance municipal infrastructure needs. In addition, the Region's reserves and reserve funds have been and continue to be impacted by lower interest revenue resulting from the 1.5 per cent reduction in the Bank of Canada rate and the deferral of property tax remittances.
- 7.9 Through the weekly discussions with the local treasurers, all Durham local municipalities have adopted relatively consistent property tax assistance measures for residents and businesses including:
- a. Waiving of various property tax service fees including NSF (non-sufficient funds) charges and fees associated with making adjustments to pre-authorized payment plans;
  - b. Deferring collection activities;
  - c. Waiving interest and late payment charges for 60 days; and
  - d. The deferral of the due dates for both the third and fourth property tax instalment dates by 30 days by the majority of the local municipalities in Durham.
- 7.10 To provide greater flexibility during the COVID-19 emergency, Regional Council on March 27, 2020, through By-law 17-2020, delegated authority to the Regional Chair and/or CAO acting together with the Commissioner of Finance/Treasurer to modify and/or defer the Regional property tax remittance dates set out in both the Interim Levy and Final 2020 Property Tax Levy By-laws. Pursuant to this authority, the Commissioner of Finance has worked with local municipalities to adjust the timing of property tax remittances to the Region to ease the cash flow pressures that may arise as a result of the local municipalities actions to defer property tax due dates.
- 7.11 Staff have considered the development of a property tax reduction or refund program under Section 365 of the *Municipal Act* and for the reasons outlined above the development and implementation of this type of program is not recommended at this time. As noted elsewhere in this report, the Economic Development division of the Planning Department has done extensive work with the business community and should be commended for their ongoing commitment to the recovery of Durham's businesses.



**8. Next Steps**

- 8.1 Staff working groups will continue to develop the action items outlined in this report. A follow-up report will be provided to Council in fall of 2020 to identify longer-term action items and any additional financial implications.

**9. Prepared by**

- 9.1 Alison Burgess, Manager, Corporate Initiatives, 905.668.7711 ext. 2089 and Sandra Austin, Director, Strategic Initiatives, 905.668.7711 ext. 2449

**10. Attachments**

Attachment #1: List and Description of Recovery Projects

Attachment #2: Phase I, II and III Activities of the Durham Economic Task Force

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer

## Attachment #1 – Detailed description of Recovery Action Items

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Each of the action items below includes:

- Lead department
- Brief project description
- Short-term action items (to be completed in 2020); and
- Financial implications of the action item

Note that longer-term action items will be presented to Regional Council in fall 2020

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### **Social Recovery Pillar**

Currently Health Department staff remain fully focused on the COVID-19 response and restoration. Additional health action items including the Durham Opioid Response Plan, Seniors Dental Care, awareness of food insecurity and health equity in schools, have been identified and will be included in the fall 2020 report to Council

#### **1. Priority: Support for Vulnerable Residents**

##### 1.1 Action Item: Supportive Housing

Lead Department: Social Services

Description: COVID-19 has highlighted the need for all residents to have safe, affordable and suitable housing not only for their own health and safety but for the health and safety of the community. Developing supportive housing options for unsheltered residents is a priority and steps to develop this housing are being expedited. Housing with supports can accommodate clients over the long-term or act as transitional housing.

Short-term actions: Expedite the development of innovative supportive housing options for vulnerable sectors.

Financial implications: Federal and provincial funding (Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative-OPHI) will be maximized but development will require Regional investment and operating costs. Support costs can be funded in full or in part through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) and Reaching Home (RH). Resources will be requested through the normal budget process once options have been identified. Advocacy is required for further federal/provincial capital dollars for development and support costs.

##### 1.2 Action Item: Primary Care Outreach Program (PCOP)

Lead Departments: Social Services and Health

Description: A temporary service redesign of PCOP was required in response to the immediate needs for homelessness services and requirements for RDPS to initiate mobile COVID-19 testing. The PCOP Social Worker provided counselling and service navigation through the Back-Door Mission Hub and collaborated with CMHA to provide mobile outreach to vulnerable clients. The PCOP Paramedic led the RDPS COVID-19 Mobile Testing teams to address the needs of clients unable to attend COVID Assessment Centres. The temporary redesign has enhanced virtual connections and improved collaborations with other Community and Health Service agencies thereby enhancing support.

Short-term actions: Identify gaps/needs within vulnerable sectors following the pandemic. Explore outreach mobile models that address social and healthcare needs of marginalized populations for mental health and wellbeing and health / medical needs. Investigate innovative collaborations for the delivery of in-person and virtual social and health care offerings.

Financial implications: Short-term investment in technology (iPhone/iPads with wifi) to support virtual assessments and connections will be required. If additional staff are required to increase the hours of service or number of PCOP teams, funding will be required. Funding sources include grants through the LHIN / Ontario Health, other community service funding options and additional financial resources through the 2021 budget process.

### 1.3 Action Item: Health and Social Support

Lead Department: Social Services

Description: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Social Services department is participating in the Mission United partnership. The Back Door Mission serves as the centralized location for various social service agencies. This includes a medical clinic with doctors and nurses on site, crisis counselling, harm reduction, withdrawal management, and a calming rest centre. Additional partners include the Canadian Mental Health Association, Durham Mental Health Services, AIDS Committee of Durham Region, Lakeridge Health, Carea Community Health Centre, John Howard Society and other community partners.

Short-term actions: Explore building on the Backdoor Mission Hub model for homeless / unsheltered.

Financial implications: Any costs for the project that exceed potential federal/provincial flow through funding will go through the 2021 budget process.

## 2. Priority: Quality of Life

### 2.1 Action Item: Counselling / Mental Health Services

Lead Department: Social Services

Description: Family Services Durham (FSD) provides barrier-free and accessible counselling, mental health, intimate partner violence response, and case management services. Services are accessed by residents who are often marginalized, struggling financially, and who do not have access to mainstream mental health and counselling services. Attention is focused on individuals, couples and families who are considered 'hard to serve' and who face multiple barriers to employment and community inclusion.

Short-term actions: Expand online and virtual services to be part of counselling and mental health service delivery under the Adult Community Support Services Program and the Partner Assault Response (PAR) programming. Establish outreach collaborations (virtual, online and in-person) serving working poor and marginalized populations (supporting families, parents, youth).

Financial implications: Short-term investment in technology (laptops) to support virtual service delivery is being managed through the 2020 budget. Additional costs may be incurred for a virtual platform(s) that supports ease of use and confidential and secure exchange of information and potential Client Information System enhancements to reflect added service delivery models. The Ministry of the Attorney General is reimbursing some COVID-19 related PAR expenses through a one-time transfer. Further direction from the Ministry relating to costs for PAR program redesign is required.

## 2.2 Action Item: Change to Service Delivery in Long-Term Care Homes

Lead Department: Social Services

Description: Residents of long-term care homes are vulnerable to viruses and other contagions by virtue of medical needs for daily living. In order to enhance continuity of care to residents, avoid transfers to hospital emergency departments and strengthen safeguards for a reliable and strengthened workforce, LTC will explore innovative solutions for medical care and various models of staffing.

Short-term actions: Explore expansion of virtual care within LTC to allow for more complex care to residents and to avoid emergency room transfers and hospitalization. Identify immediate long-term staffing needs that can be supported from within the department. Review LTC staffing model to increase workforce stability and enhance continuity of care delivery.

Financial implications: Marginal implications include a need for dedicated mobile devices in resident home areas and staff time to review and ensure compliance with digital health strategies. This may require Regional IT supports. Costs of virtual services are part of OHIP billing model for care provision. Possible additional benefit costs associated with maximizing the number of FT staff in the division, but these may be offset by reduction in the total number of PT staff.

## 2.3 Action Item: Child Care and Support to Families

Lead Department: Social Services

Description: Explore flexible options for quality early learning and child care programs by investigating affordable part-time and flexible licensed child care options for families with shift work and rural schedules to use as required. Seek opportunities to expand access to EarlyON services by increasing the hours and locations that programs are offered so families can still attend in person with physical distancing in place and working families are able to access evening and weekend programs with their children as well.

Short-term actions: Explore the expansion of hours and locations of the EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Durham Region. Sustain provisions for virtual support to families. Explore virtual learning opportunities for RECE and Early Learning staff.

Financial implications: None

#### 2.4 Action Item: Life Stabilization

Lead Department: Social Services

Description: Due to COVID-19, Social Services have transitioned to providing virtual support for clients in the Ontario Works programs.

Short-term actions: Explore virtual wraparound case management services to clients. Explore delivery of virtual and in-person programs.

Financial implications: Refurbished laptops and assistance with internet costs for clients will be required once above services are fully functional.

### 3. Priority: Social Investment

#### 3.1 Action Item: Strengthen Community Capacity

Lead Department: Social Services

Description: The not-for-profit community is critical to meeting the needs of vulnerable populations. Community leaders are being engaged to ensure a coordinated response to needs in the community, ensuring funding allocation are informed by available data and service provision decisions are based on demonstrated need.

Short-term actions: Engage community leaders / agencies for COVID-19 response relating to identified priorities.

Financial implications: None

#### 3.2 Action Item: Early Learning and Child Care Community

Lead Department: Social Services

Description: Develop and Implement a system recovery plan that supports capacity building within the early learning and child care sector related to human resources,

financial stability and programs that promote learning environments that focus on the overall wellbeing of children and families.

Short-term actions: Support health and safety education and recovery plan implementation in the early learning and childcare community.

Financial implications: None

### 3.3 Action Item: Poverty Prevention

Lead Department: Social Services

Description: Mitigate the risks of long and deep poverty by expediting efforts to promote virtual free tax filing options for low income residents, raise awareness around eviction prevention strategies and credit counselling opportunities.

Short-term actions: Mobilize Community Volunteer Income Tax Preparers through the Durham Community of Practice to fully operationalize virtual and alternative tax filing options, develop and promote an inventory of eviction prevention and credit counselling strategies.

Financial implications: None

### 3.4 Action Item: Community Social Investment Framework

Lead Department: Social Services

Description: A Community Social Investment Framework is required for allocation of social services investments to community non-profits serving residents facing the greatest needs and barriers. The framework will use an outcomes-based approach to funding local social service agencies supported by a transparent and accountable methodology.

Short-term actions: Undertake an analysis and review of the current process for community investment allocations to non-profit community sector in Durham Region. Develop a Community Social Investment Framework that supports and aligns with the Durham Region Community Investment Grant Policy (2019 F-33).

Financial implications: None

## **4. Priority: Public Health and Safety**

### 4.1 Action Item: COVID-19 Outbreaks

Lead Department: Health

Description: The Health Analytics & Research Team is responsible for epidemiological assessment and surveillance of COVID-19 and reporting through the COVID-19 Data

Tracker. Epidemiological modeling is being performed and will be refined as new information becomes available. Collaboration is being sought to support this work.

Short-term actions: Provide surveillance and epidemiological modeling to support early identification, testing and management of cases and contacts.

Financial implications: None

#### 4.2 Action Item: Public Physical Distancing

Lead Department: Health

Description: Health Department staff has been reviewing evidence and recommendations to develop communications, guidance documents and resources for local stakeholders and the public. During the recovery period, education of local partners and residents will continue and will be based on the latest evidence and provincial direction.

Short-term actions: Provide education and enforce public health measures including physical distancing in the public until restrictions are lifted. Enforcement activities regarding public health measures and physical distancing will continue in conjunction with local By-law Officers and DRPS.

Financial implications: None

#### 4.3 Action Item: Enhanced Routine Public Health Inspections

Lead Department: Health

Description: Public health inspectors conduct routine inspections of facilities and shared spaces such as food premises and provide a green, yellow or red colour posting. COVID-19 has resulted in a need for additional public health measures in premises such as physical distancing. The Health Protection Division will enhance the current inspection criteria to include the additional measures identified through the COVID-19 pandemic and incorporate additional inspection criteria in the existing green, yellow or red colour posting.

Short-term actions: Enhance routine public health inspections criteria to ensure premises inspected by the Health Department are following public health advice.

Financial implications: None

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### **Built Recovery Action Items**

#### **5. Priority: Modern Rapid Transit System**

##### 5.1 Action Item: Priority infrastructure Projects

Lead Departments: Works, with Planning and Durham Region Transit

Description: The priority transit infrastructure projects including the Bus Rapid Transit, Simcoe Street Rapid Transit and the Lakeshore GO East extension, will create jobs and support the Region's transit vision.

Short-term actions: Advocate to advance Preliminary Design Business Case for Hwy 2. ICIP funding to be applied. Develop TOD/RTI office. RTI component and coordination with Regional Road system projects. Establish and implement policies for the GO East Extension.

Financial Implications: anticipated total project cost: \$360 million (\$173 million ICIP funding and \$103 million approved Regional contribution). New dedicated staff are required to support a Regional Transit Office, along with additional staff in Real Estate, Legal and Construction.

## 5.2 Action Item: Building Transit Ridership

Lead Department – Durham Region Transit (DRT)

Description: During the pandemic, DRT ridership is down approximately 70 per cent. The pandemic is expected to have a long-term impact on ridership given on-going concerns with community transmission, work from home arrangements, reduced traffic congestion and increased parking availability, and increased on-line education and service delivery options. In 2020, staff will track emerging ridership patterns and preferences as COVID restrictions are lifted.

Short-term actions: Work to instill customer trust and confidence that DRT has taken the measures necessary to mitigate the risk of community transmissions and remains a safe transportation option for customers, and transit priority operational improvements will demonstrate commitment to enhancing the competitiveness of public transit.

Financial implications: The monthly fiscal impact is approximately \$2 million in the absence of fare collection and continued reduced ridership. In the fall, potential loss of UPass revenue may add to this. By resuming fare collection July 1, making appropriate service adjustments to meet ridership levels demand, and other budget efficiencies, DRT deficit for 2020 is projected to be reduced to \$6.85 million.

## 6. Priority: Active Transportation

### 6.1 Action Item: Update the Regional Cycling Plan and expand the Regional Cycling Network

Lead department: Planning

Description: This sustainable transportation strategy will implement a comprehensive, region-wide cycling network. Cycling demand is growing as a convenient, accessible and inexpensive option to connect people to jobs, education and services, and during the pandemic, offers safe physical distance.



Short-term actions: Update the Regional Cycling Plan and expand the Regional Cycling Network as part of the annual capital plan. Identify infill segments to close gaps in cycling network if stimulus funding is available.

Financial implications: Updated plan will recommend cycling routes, identify and address gaps, improve implementation and identify future associated costs. Operation and maintenance costs will be provided. New ways of working with Durham area municipalities to help share the cost of new infrastructure will be explored.

## 6.2 Action Item: Active Transportation Promotion

Lead Department: Planning

Description: Promote active transportation as it supports a variety of long-term Regional policy goals. Active transportation is low-cost, equitable, and sustainable, and can help people practice physical distancing while promoting health and well-being. Smart Commute Durham works with employers to promote sustainable commuter options. The project links to the Active and Sustainable School Travel Initiative that will promote increasing the number of children using active modes of travel to get to school, and to reduce congestion around schools.

Short-term: Implement programs for active and sustainable modes of travel to support physical distancing, healthy activity and GHG reductions.

Financial implications: Costs are within Planning and Economic Development 2020 budget.

## 7. Priority: Community Vitality

### 7.1 Action Item: Community Improvement Plan

Lead Department: Planning

Description: A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is an incentive-based financial tool that allows municipalities to implement policy objectives within a defined project area

Short-term actions: Consult on and develop a Regional Community Improvement Plan framework to support the delivery of affordable housing and transit-oriented development.

Financial implications: Financial impacts and risk analysis of candidate programs will be coordinated by Finance, with input from a project consultant. Additional costs will go through the 2021 budgets.

## 8. Priority: Transformative Projects

### 8.1 Action Item: Durham Forest Centre for Innovation and Resilience

Lead Department: Works

Description: The Durham Region Forest was established in 1926 in partnership with the province to provide flooding and erosion protection. Today, it provides recreation activities, outdoor education (Durham District School Board), research, wildlife habitat, filming and special events. The proposed demolition of an aging house on the property offers a unique opportunity to repurpose this area with the Durham Forest Centre for Innovation and Resilience (the Centre). The Centre would be designed and constructed as a net energy positive facility to test zero carbon technologies. The Centre would be a demonstration site for innovation in green design, and training on, installation, maintenance and operation of a variety of energy efficient, zero carbon technologies.

Short-term actions: At this early stage, 2020 actions include developing the concept, plans, programs and preparing funding proposal with partners.

Financial implications: Construction costs are currently estimated at \$6 million for a 5,000 square foot facility. Operating costs will depend on the measures implemented. Partnership opportunities will be explored.

## 8.2 Action Item: Community Development - Housing and Service Hubs

Lead Department: Planning

Description: A strategic approach to the redevelopment and improvement of existing community housing sites and other Region-owned sites will be developed. The Region is committed to revitalizing its community housing portfolio using an evidence-based strategy and improving assets in response to increasing costs. Opportunities for revitalization, and/or regeneration (redevelopment) will be explored, while ensuring that tenants are protected, local needs are addressed, and community-building objectives are maximized. This will include recommendations for the development of community hubs, where supportive community or other services may be offered, on appropriate sites.

Short-term actions: Undertake due diligence and develop a strategy for various Region-owned properties for new affordable housing and community-building. Present strategy to Regional Council and area municipal representatives.

Financial implications: may include the retention of consultants, disposal and/or acquisition of land.

## 9. Priority: Sustainability

### 9.1 Action Item: Low Carbon Corporate Fleet Strategy

Lead department: CAO's Office

Description: In response to Regional Council's January 29th Climate Emergency Declaration, development of a Low Carbon Corporate Fleet Strategy is underway. The Strategy will analyze existing patterns of fleet use and age, equipment replacement schedule, technology advancements and opportunities, against fueling and facility needs. External funding opportunities together with provincial and federal policy will help to

expedite this practice. The results will feed into the Corporate Climate Change Master Plan.

Short-term actions: Study corporate fleet needs and identify opportunities to convert to a lower carbon (e.g. electric, RNG) Regional fleet. Prepare strategy to guide transition.

Financial implications: The development of the Low Carbon Corporate Fleet Strategy will be funded through the 2020 operating budget.

## 9.2 Action Item: Sustainable transit

Lead department: Durham Region Transit

Description: COVID-19 has significantly impacted transit ridership. These efforts will promote and showcase transit as a mode of sustainable travel. Sustainable transit initiatives include the DRT electric bus (e-bus) project and the sustainable bus stop project. DRT will continue to advance the e-bus pilot program through 2020 for up to eight e-buses and the required depot-based charging infrastructure. Further, DRT will increase the number of solar powered shelters, introduction of solar powered digital media signs, review of customer furnishing amenities, environmentally friendly de-icing products, development of a bus stop standard to guide asset planning.

Short-term actions: Identify e-bus and charging system requirements. Deploy renewable energy technology to support infrastructure lighting, signage and passenger amenities at bus stops.

Financial Implications: Funding for the e-bus project has been secured for capital purchases and grant application to fund dedicated project management support has been approved. For sustainable bus stops, solar technology is less expensive to install (than grid electricity) with no ongoing power costs. Annual operating cost impact of the improvements and the life cycle of the concrete pads will be considered for capital budget and the asset management planning. DRT will work with our colleagues in Works to create a business case if required, which will go through the regular budget process.

## 9.3 Action Item: Durham Home Energy Savings Program

Lead department: CAO's Office

Description: This residential retrofit program to transform the energy efficiency of existing buildings is a key element of the Durham Community Energy Plan (DCEP). The program is being designed in partnership with local electricity utilities to deliver a region-wide home-energy literacy campaign, supported by an interactive website.

Short-term actions: Develop home energy retrofit program. Financial Implications: Involves initial capital outlay of ~\$350-400K to support program start-up costs and first 4 years of program implementation. See June 2020 Council report for more details. Funding to support the EV Strategy is being sought through federal funding programs.

#### 9.4 Action Item: Corporate Climate Change Master Plan

Lead department: CAO's Office

Description: In response to Regional Council's January 29th Climate Emergency Declaration, preparation of a Corporate Climate Change Master Plan and Strategic Framework (CCMP) is underway. The CCMP will: include development of a detailed 5-year implementation plan (2021-2025). Develop a strategic framework that integrates a climate change lens for all Corporate decisions. Creates an opportunity to embed sustainability and resilience across the Corporation and throughout the community.

Short-term actions: Develop Corporate Climate Change Master Plan (2020-2030) with GHG targets for Regional Council report in late fall 2020.

Financial Implications: Although the CCMP will not have direct financial implications, the recommended actions will have financial implications that will be approved through annual operating and capital budget or through the Climate Change Reserve Fund.

#### 9.5 Action Item: Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Deployment Strategy

Lead department: CAO's Office

Description: Emerging from the Durham Community Energy Plan (DCEP), the EV Strategy is focused on increasing the availability of EV charging stations across the Region, for public use as well as for workplace charging and (municipal) corporate fleets. Regional staff are coordinating applications to federal funding programs. This project complements the Region's Low Carbon Corporate Fleet Strategy.

Short-term actions: Expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the Region.

Financial Implications: Funding to support these projects is being sought through federal funding programs.

#### 9.6 Action Item: Nature-based Climate Solutions Program

Lead department: CAO's Office

Description: Durham's Community Climate Adaptation Plan identified the need to build climate resilience by enhancing natural capital in both urban and rural landscapes. Many studies also note that natural areas support our mental and physical health. The adaptation plan highlighted the need for stewardship and outreach programs to encourage tree planting and wetland restoration projects on both public and private lands, which support ecosystem-based carbon sequestration and stormwater management. Such an initiative would complement existing programs, including the LEAF Backyard tree planting program and Trees for Rural Roads, among others.

Short-term actions: Develop a strategy to expand tree planting programs across the Region.

Financial Implications: Regional capital investment of approximately \$500K would be needed to help leverage funding from partners, including non-profit sector as well as senior levels of government. Federal government stimulus funding is expected to prioritize green infrastructure and nature-based solutions. Regional contributions to be funded from within existing budget allocations.

#### 9.7 Action Item: Climate Adaptation Vulnerability and Risk Assessment

Lead department: CAO's Office

Description: Through this project, the Region will be better prepared to make investments that increase the climate resilience of critical infrastructure systems and the communities that those systems support.

Short-term actions: Work underway to identify and prioritize vulnerable structures, areas of urban flood risk and public health risks and to outline plan of changes required.

Financial Implications: Combined investment of ~\$150K to be funded from within the 2020 approved budget to deliver these adaptation vulnerability assessments in 2020, which will enable prioritization of future mainstreaming of capital investment in regional infrastructure and services.

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## Economic Recovery Action Items

### 10. Priority: Small Business Support

#### 10.1 Action Item: Buy Local Campaign

Lead Department: Planning and Economic Development

Description: The Downtowns of Durham initiative forms the basis of our buy local campaign. This website includes business listings and service levels of downtown businesses to showcase the local businesses in each of the downtown areas within the project. This is a two phased project beginning with launching a website with business listings with full support local Mayors and the Regional Chair. The second phase will provide an opportunity for community members to apply to become a contributor to the Downtowns of Durham 'stories' section.

Short-term actions: Build and maintain awareness of downtowns and main-street businesses, increase traffic and revenues for downtown business, develop a foundation to build longer term strategies to build community.

Financial implications: Website and content development costs are included in 2020 budget.

#### 10.2 Action Item: Emergency Support Programs

Lead Department: Planning and Economic Development

Description: To provide one-on-one assistance to Durham Region businesses, the Economic Development and Tourism team launched an [online intake form](#) and published a 1-800 number at [investdurham.ca/covidresponse](http://investdurham.ca/covidresponse).

Short-term actions: Continue providing a central point of contact for accurate and timely information for small businesses and a local resource to connect businesses to other partners.

Financial implications: none

## **11. Priority: Infrastructure Support for Business**

### 11.1 Action Item: Improved Access to Broadband Across the Region

Lead Department: Planning and Economic Development

Description: Internet service in many areas of Durham is slow, unreliable, and expensive. Many communities do not have adequate broadband infrastructure and hence do not have access to fast and reliable internet service. Business surveys through the COVID-19 pandemic have continued to highlight the strong need for broadband in our business community. It is no longer a luxury to have high speed internet, it has become a right for residents and businesses.

Short-term actions: Complete the broadband survey to obtain a more granular understanding of where critical support is needed, continue to advance high-priority action items from the broadband strategy, advocate for broadband funding, work with internet service providers to advance/accelerate the installation of fibre to under-served areas of the region.

Financial implications: Potential to incur cost of professional services for future feasibility reports. Developing broadband infrastructure will require funding but cost estimates are not known at this time.

### 11.2 Action Item: Improved Access to Downtown and Business Areas

Lead Department: Planning and Economic Development

Description: The scope of the first phase is a jurisdictional scan on urban infrastructure across the GTA, Canada and internationally. The jurisdictional scan will be desktop based through online research that will identify key themes and insights from other jurisdictions.

Short-term actions: The development of a report outlining the results of the jurisdictional scan.

Financial implications: None

## **12. Priority: Business Attraction**

### **12.1 Action Item: Pre-servicing of Employment Lands**

Lead Department: Planning and Economic Development

Description: The servicing of well-located and vacant employment lands has been identified as one of Council's highest priorities to stimulate economic growth and job creation in Durham Region. This will be important for economic recovery from COVID-19. At present, the Region has less than 150ha of serviced employment lands that have been defined as 'market ready'.

Short-term actions: Obtain 2020 Council approval.

Financial implications: The financial business case will be developed for each proposed project to identify costs.

### **12.2 Action Item: Cluster Development Around Durham's key sectors**

Lead Department: Planning and Economic Development

Description: Durham Region has a unique opportunity to continue to build and market the Energy, Environment and Engineering industry cluster as a means of investment attraction. Industry clusters are groups of similar and related firms in a defined geographic area that share common characteristics and draw a competitive advantage based on proximity to key stakeholders including suppliers, competitors, academia and the Public Sector. As every municipality within the Region currently has a stated focus on Energy, Environment and/or sustainability, the Economic Development team will prioritize cluster development to continue to build this sector.

Short-term actions: Collate existing assets, align stakeholders and get agreement in principle, create information assets and landing page on investdurham.ca, work with stakeholders to determine the viability of a cluster and create next steps.

Financial implications: Costs to develop materials and webpage content included in the 2020 budget.

### **12.3 Action Item: Post-secondary Retraining Programs**

Lead Department: Planning and Economic Development

Description: The Economic Development and Tourism team will continue to work with post-secondary partners in the Durham Region to promote their current and new post-secondary programming to up-skill and retrain workforce to adapt to the 'new normal' of our changed economy.

Short-term actions: Leveraging Invest Durham branding on social media to share relevant information with stakeholders, continuing to provide feedback to post-secondary institutions on feedback from businesses with respect to skills/worker shortages

Financial implications: any costs are included in the 2020 budget

### **13. Priority: Smart Durham**

#### 13.1 Action Item: Smart City Framework

Lead Department: CAO's Office

Description: The Region is working with the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) to develop a Smart City framework. To inform the development of this framework, CUI has gathered examples of best practices and hosted focus groups with key staff and external stakeholders to ensure our smart city initiatives connect to the Region's strategic plan.

Short-term actions: Completion of the Smart City framework and launch of projects to support innovation, modernization and efficiency objectives.

Financial implications: Costs for initial work was approved in the 2020 budget.

#### 13.2 Action Item: Launch CityStudio Durham

Lead Department: CAO's office

Description: The Region is formalizing our partnership with the local post-secondary institutions by adopting the CityStudio model. CityStudio Durham will increase student engagement, promote innovative solutions and leverage projects from across Regional services

Short-term actions: Establish web-portal. Begin 10 projects in collaboration with the local postsecondary institutions. Host first showcase event (virtual, if required) to highlight regional collaboration and innovation.

Financial implications: Funding for CityStudio subscription agreement is included in the 2020 budget.

#### 13.3 Action Item: Automated EV Shuttle Pilot

Lead Department: Durham Region Transit

Description: DRT is partnering with the Town of Whitby, SmartCone Technologies, Pacific Western Transportation and others to launch Canada's first autonomous electric shuttle pilot project aided by smart transportation infrastructure. The pilot will be the longest operation of its kind in Canada, both in terms of duration (12 months) and route length (six kilometres). The shuttle will operate on a loop between Whitby GO station and the Port Whitby area.

Short-term actions: To provide a new customer experience and contribute to the rebuild of transit ridership, the automated shuttle pilot project from Whitby GO Station will be launched.



Financial Implications: All costs for the pilot are included in the 2020 budget.

#### 13.4 Action Item: Innovation Community

Lead Department: Planning and Economic Development

Description: The Economic Development and Tourism team is committed to assisting the growth of small businesses and the innovation ecosystem in the Durham Region. The goal is to continue to develop a culture that encourages and welcomes innovation.

Short-term actions: Participation in Collision (June 23-25), continued sponsorship of 1855 Masterclass Sessions, continued participation in Spark Centre Pioneers Program (June 15),

Financial implications: Costs for 2020 are included in the 2020 budget.

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### **Municipal Recovery Action Items**

#### **14. Priority: Restoration Framework**

##### 14.1 Action Item: Health and Safety

Lead Department: Corporate Services - Human Resources

Description: This work supports the Regional response to emerging orders and directives, intended to protect against the ongoing transmission of COVID-19 as staff return to work.

Short-term actions: Continually review the work environment to identify health risk and risk reduction activities, ensure compliance; identify best practices and provide training to staff, develop policies and procedures to promote a healthy workplace, including for staff working from home, and identify leading health and safety indicators.

Financial Implications: Potential costs for the supply of ergonomic equipment / furniture for employees working from home. Potential WSIB costs if not done properly.

##### 14.2 Action Item: Financial Sustainability

Lead Department: Finance

Description: In the short-term (2020), Finance staff are working with all departments (including DRPS) to continue to refine COVID-19 financial implications based on emerging information in a very fluid environment. Staff are continuing to develop financial mitigation actions including cost containment and project deferral as appropriate to mitigate the projected financial implications of COVID-19. Staff also are working with municipal associations and the provincial and federal government to advocate for financial assistance and legislative changes to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.

Short-term actions: Continue to refine COVID-19 financial implications and develop financial mitigation actions (e.g. cost containment, project deferral, new funding sources) as appropriate.

Financial Implications: Staff continue to update and refine the projected financial implications of COVID-19.

#### 14.3 Action Item: Restoration of Regional Services

Lead Department: CAO's Office – DEM

Description: Durham Emergency Management (DEM) established a planning framework for the orderly restoration of Regional functions, services and activities halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes a standardized approach to scaling-up of services and the return of staff to Regional facilities. The framework promotes: continued teleworking where possible, adoption of process and procedure improvements, and identification of lessons learned. Coordination during the transition to the “new” post-pandemic state will ensure that: shared resources such as IT and facilities are used effectively and physical distancing of both staff and visitors is incorporated into all restoration plans. Departments have submitted their restoration plans and DEM staff are providing strategic advice and developing a master schedule (dependent on provincial orders).

Short-term actions: Cross-departmental Emergency Management-led initiative that examines timing, coordination and lessons learned related to re-opening of Regional workplaces and restoration of services halted due to the pandemic.

Financial Implications: Departments are being asked to track revenues lost, generated, overtime incurred, etc

#### 14.4 Action Item: Legislative Changes

Lead Department: Corporate Services – Legal

Description: Project includes review of the existing Delegation By-laws in relation to the updated Budget Management Policy and Purchasing By-Law. Review of all by-laws as they relate to conducting electronic meetings, delegations etc. Draft Report and By-Law to be presented to Department Heads on June 1 and brought to Council for the July session.

Short-term actions: Examine administrative and other related changes made to respond emergency quickly.

Financial Implications: None

#### 14.5 Action Item: Staffing

Lead Department: Corporate Services – Human Resources

Description: Action includes review of existing training programs to determine which ones can be delivered virtually, and for the rest, what changes will be required for classroom training. Continued virtual recruitment with staff working remotely and alternative hours. Assess types and design of positions now required in the organization due to changes in the way services are being delivered in the service restoration period and beyond in relation to the public service modernization program. Changes in work requirements will need to be resolved with the unions.

Short-term actions: Perform assessment to determine post-COVID staffing needs. Open recruitment. Continue use of virtual recruitment.

Financial Implications: TBD.

## **15. Priority: Modernization**

### 15.1 Action Item: Public Service Modernization

Lead Department: Corporate Services – Information Technology

Description: Using funding from the Provincial Audit and Accountability initiative, the Region reviewed its Call Centre setup and analyzed it with a view to creating a 311 service for Durham. A 36-month project has been designed to integrate and implement the recommendations of these three reviews to modernize these areas.

Short-term actions: Launch the recommended 36-month project by end of 2020.

Financial implications: A report will be presented to Regional Council at their July meeting.

### 15.2 Action Item: Workplace Modernization Project

Lead Department: Works

Description: The Workplace Modernization Project seeks to address space challenges faced by our growing organization. Teleworking success during the COVID-19 crisis, acceleration of the digitization of Regional records, and innovative process improvements will directly affect how space is configured and used. A modernized workplace will defer or eliminate the need to expand Regional Headquarters which directly impacts the Region's environmental footprint, ongoing energy usage and the capital costs to build and maintain additional facilities.

Short-term actions: Ensure workplace modernization plan considers workplace changes due to COVID-19.

Financial implications: Original estimates considering only space reconfiguration were estimated at \$17.9M. This amount will be influenced by post-pandemic workplace standards (currently unknown), the scope and breath of workplace modernization

initiatives such as teleworking, digitization of records, and the incorporation of other building system improvements not part of the original scope.

## **16. Priority: Digital Durham 2023**

### 16.1 Action Item: Baseline Performance

Lead Department: Corporate Services - Information Technology

Description: As part of the Digital Durham 2023 strategy, the Information Technology team is enhancing the infrastructure and maturity of the support network for Regional staff. The first step was documenting the existing infrastructure and environment. This will be the basis for a plan to move the organization forward. Several advancements have been made to move the organization to the Cloud, and several security pieces were put in place however work still needs to be completed.

Short-term actions: Baseline the overall performance of Corporate Services – Information Technology to build upon the maturity of the department.

Financial Implications: Departmental budgets will need to account for the replacement of all desktop equipment to move them to more mobile devices and cloud-based applications. Several applications are legacy based and will need to be upgraded.

### 16.2 Action Item: Platform for Analytics

Lead Department: Corporate Services – Information Technology

Description: Part of the Digital Durham 2023, this project will review the various functions and software options to select a software suitable for delivering the Corporate Dashboard by reviewing the organization's requirements to display data internally or externally or both. In addition to the display of the information related to the Regional Strategic Plan, other key management indicators need to be presented to Senior Management on a regular basis.

Short-term actions: Promote the use of analytic tools to support departments and enable them to serve our citizens using evidence-based decision making.

Financial Implications: Software acquisition, data mapping and presentation.

## **17. Priority: Improve Emergency Response**

### 17.1 Action Item: After-Action Review

Lead Department: CAO's Office – Durham Emergency Management

Description: The project will establish a framework for Regional departments to undertake formal After-Action Reviews (AARs) of their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. AARs are a critical tool used after an emergency to highlight and learn from the successes and challenges encountered throughout the response. Identify ways to sustain the things that

went well and develop recommendations on ways to overcome obstacles encountered in the response. DEM has begun an AAR related to Phase 1 response of the Emergency Management team's roles and functions. A corporate approach to AAR will highlight co-benefits across departments. Durham Region may also be invited/compelled to participate in a public inquiry, ministry-led After-Action Reviews and the recently announced Independent Commission into Ontario's long-term care system. This process will support that participation.

Short-term actions: Monitor lessons learned as identified in departmental restoration plans. Establish a framework for conducting a Regional After-Action Review (AAR)

Financial implications: TBD

## DETF Composition and Background

- 1.1 Led by the Economic Development and Tourism team, the Durham Economic Task Force (DETF) was formed on March 12, 2020 in response to the quickly evolving impacts to Durham Region businesses related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.2 Economic Development and Tourism staff assembled key partners and stakeholders from across the Region to collaborate and develop plans to respond to the emerging situation. Since its formation, the DETF has been in constant communication, collaborating to provide updates to the business community on newly announced municipal, provincial and federal programming, and to advocate on behalf of the business community who are experiencing impacts due to the crisis. The task force is comprised of:
  - Durham Economic Development & Tourism
  - Area Municipal Economic Development,
  - Business Advisory Centre of Durham (BACD),
  - Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA),
  - Durham Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, and
  - Durham Business Improvement Areas (BIAs).
- 1.3 The priorities of the Task Force include:
  - Advocate for the urgent needs of Durham's business community to the provincial and federal governments.
  - Provide resources and information about financial support available from all levels of government.
  - Directly guide small businesses through the process of accessing emergency financial assistance and programming from all levels of government.
  - Develop and implement support programming for businesses that are impacted by COVID-19.
  - Promote Durham small businesses that are still open, particularly local food and agri-businesses who are offering safe, no-contact delivery and pick-up options.
- 1.4 Since early March, the Durham Region Economic Development & Tourism Division has pivoted to providing business support and recovery-focused programming exclusively.
- 1.5 A core objective of DETF was to ensure coordinated communications across all members in delivering consistent messaging to the business community. This included a [press release on the DETF](#) and a press release on the [agriculture community](#), an early [video letter to businesses](#) and a [highlight reel](#) demonstrating

the innovation and kindness across the Durham Region business and post-secondary communities.

### **DETF Phase I Activities: React**

- 1.6 DETF has structured activities in three phases. The first phase were activities to “react” to the crisis, the second phase was to ‘respond’, and the third phase is to look towards supporting ‘recovery’.
- 1.7 Through the DETF, Regional staff have spearheaded a variety of initiatives to support the local business community and the overall Durham Region economy. Activities to-date are listed below.
  - a. COVID-19 Business Survey #1: March 12 – 18
    - The initial survey launched by the DETF highlighted a rapidly evolving situation. Summary reports were generated daily, and the survey was closed with a total of 262 responses. Survey analysis was led by the Region’s Economic Development & Tourism staff and was distributed to all DETF members to inform the development of a collaborative plan of action.
    - This first survey found that a third of respondents did not have business continuity plans in place, or the ability to create such a plan. 75% of survey responses were small businesses with less than 20 employees, and overwhelmingly (approximately 90%) of the respondents indicated that they were concerned about decreased demand and financial implications even in the early days of the crisis.
  - b. Advocacy to Provincial and Federal Government
    - Feedback from Survey #1 was shared with Durham MPs and MPPs and was used to craft the DETF’s initial advocacy strategy.
  - c. Central Webpage
    - The first survey clearly indicated the type of data that businesses required, and as a result, Regional Economic Development staff, with the support of the DETF, launched a central webpage for COVID19 information for businesses.
    - To act as a single point of information for the business community, the Invest Durham website was quickly updated to include a page with resources and information for businesses in Durham Region.
    - The webpage, [investdurham.ca/CovidResponse](https://investdurham.ca/CovidResponse) is updated multiple times daily by Regional staff with input from the DETF, to provide information regarding [government programs, services and supports available](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - d. Local Food Page

- A dedicated webpage was launched to help [residents access local food](https://investdurham.ca/LocalFood): [investdurham.ca/LocalFood](https://investdurham.ca/LocalFood). This page contains information about farms offering locally-produced food products in a safe, no-contact manner. The interest in and success of this page has provided significant support to Durham's local agri-business community.
- e. Emergency Loans to Chambers and Boards of Trade
- At the March 25 Regional Council meeting, the Region approved making 0%-interest loans available to local Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade up to a total cumulative amount of \$1M, who have demonstrated a financial need. This was due to the critical role that the Chambers and Boards are currently playing, and will continue to play, in helping our business community navigate through the COVID-19 crisis. It was recognized that this emergency financial assistance would allow those organizations with reduced cashflow to retain full staffing so that they may continue to deliver this critical one-on-one advice, programming, and support services to businesses in need.
  - The funds will be used for core operational costs (salary, rent, utilities, etc.), and will not be disbursed to other businesses or organizations. While a loan remains open, the Chamber/Board would respond to all inbound requests for assistance accessing COVID-19-related governmental resources.
- f. Assisted with Provincial and Federal Appeal for Medical Supplies
- DEFT has provided one-on-one help to Durham businesses upon request, and particularly those that needed help responding to the provincial and federal appeals for healthcare supplies and equipment.
  - DETF connected companies with components to other companies with manufacturing capabilities, as well as assisted local manufactures and tech companies to navigate the application process on the Ontario Together portal. There are many local companies who are now making face shields, hand sanitizer, and hygienic shields, and those using their tech experience to craft online applications to assist in the efforts of flattening the curve.

### **DETF Phase II Activities: Respond**

- g. COVID-19 Business Survey #2: March 22 – 26
- With a need for more detail and sector-specific impact, including data on the supports and initiatives required by the business community, the DETF launched a second survey, the Durham Region Business Impact Survey, on March 22. When closed on March 27, the survey had received over 870 responses. The survey responses highlighted the sectors hardest hit by COVID-19, the number of employees laid off and the estimated amount of



time businesses felt it would take for them to fully recover from this pandemic.

- In total from both surveys, over 1,100 survey responses were received, the data from which is driving our collaborative economic response strategies across the Region.

h. Converted COVID-19 Webpage into a Portal

- The initial webpage launched quickly grew to include several types of business support information and, as a result, staff developed and launched a more comprehensive web portal. The portal provided increased functionality and created a user interface that was much easier to navigate.
- Key information updates to the portal include:
  - (a) Frequently Asked Questions
  - (b) “Contact us for help” - Intake Portal
  - (c) Webinar Calendar
  - (d) Broadband Survey
  - (e) Local Food
  - (f) PPE Marketplace
  - (g) Recent Updates listing (announcements and updates from all levels of Government)

i. Business Intake Portal for Individual Support

- It was clear from survey feedback that businesses overwhelmingly needed one-on-one help to access financial resources, advice, and programming.
- Led by Durham Region’s Economic Development & Tourism team and supported by Regional staff, both an online intake form and a 1-800 number were launched for businesses looking for live, one-on-one assistance. Through the intake form, businesses are connected to a Regional staff member who can assist them in meeting their immediate needs and information is then shared with the local DETF member to provide continued support.

j. Supporting Small Business and Sharing Good News Stories

- The DETF has launched a ‘support-local / buy-local’ social marketing campaign, for businesses offering no-contact/delivery products. Staff continue to work on promoting local business through the Downtowns of Durham dedicated website and marketing campaign.

k. Webinars and Sector Roundtables with Business Community

- Using survey data from both Survey 1 and 2, the DETF identified opportunities to provide specialized management training sessions and are working with local partners to develop and deliver that information in webinar format. Topics include cybersecurity and transitioning from bricks

and mortar storefronts to eCommerce platforms. In addition, DETF delivered a series of sector-specific roundtables to offer the business community a chance to provide feedback on what efforts and programs are required for business recovery. These roundtables also offered the business and not-for-profit community an opportunity to share ideas and best practices among one another.

- DETF developed a webinar calendar for the business community, compiling online training sessions from all available sources across the Region, the Province, and Canada. This calendar provides an easy-to-search listing of useful training sessions across a variety of topics.

I. Continued Advocacy to Province and Federal Government

Through letters and calls with provincial Ministers, MPPs, and MPs, the DETF and Regional staff have advocated for the urgent needs of our business community, calling on the provincial and federal governments to implement programs and policy changes that are desperately needed. Advocacy issues included suggestions for closing programming gaps for very small owner/operators and securing commercial rent relief for small businesses. DETF continues to advocate strongly on behalf of the business community.

### **DETF Phase III Activities: Recovery**

a. Business Recovery Survey #3: May 5 – 19

- As planning has commenced for economic recovery, a third survey was launched to solicit feedback from the business community regarding priorities for recovery programming. Key questions included:
  - Estimated time to recovery
  - Barriers to recovery
  - Perspectives on and priority of Regional projects to stimulate the economy
  - Perspectives on the current provincial recovery framework
  - The survey received approximately 400 responses from Durham Region businesses.

b. Local PPE Supplier Listing

- Businesses must source PPE in order to meet provincial compliance requirements in order to re-open, and it was identified that many businesses did not know where to source these materials. Regional staff compiled a list of local, Durham-based PPE manufacturers and supplies and, with support from the DETF, continues to grow the list.
- This PPE Marketplace was launched on the Invest Durham COVID business portal on May 5, and rapidly became one of the most popular pages on the portal. The listing provides the opportunity for local suppliers to be featured and for local organizations to easily find needed PPE. The supplier listing continues to be maintained by Regional staff with input

directly from businesses through the intake portal and through collaboration with DETF members.

c. Downtowns of Durham Project

- The Downtowns of Durham Project is a joint initiative of the Durham Region Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) and Durham's Economic Development and Tourism Division. While it is intended to promote the small businesses in our 'main street' areas to endure a difficult period economically, it is also intended to help them recover through the medium to long term. As our doors open and our isolation ends, this resource will help revitalize our downtowns, encouraging residents of Durham Region- and beyond-to rediscover the #DowntownsofDurham.
- This project raises the profile of the thirteen distinct downtowns of Durham Region. From historic storefronts, to culturally diverse independent restaurants, from contemporary hair salons to law offices, from espresso-to-go to dog groomers. These businesses are in urgent need of customers and revenue, so that they can recover to full strength. This website will [promote these thirteen downtowns](#) and form the foundation for continued 'shop local' campaigns. [www.downtownsofdurham.ca](http://www.downtownsofdurham.ca).

d. Scanning for Best Practices

- As the pandemic has affected all areas of the world, the DETF is constantly scanning other jurisdictions to identify best practices and initiatives that can be adopted locally. Taking part in a GTA COVID-19 Working Group, staff have gained insight on economic recovery activities from across the GTA. In addition, staff are engaged in researching recovery efforts for other jurisdictions which have begun to reopen their economies, to help plan programming to plan for the 'new normal' for our business community.

e. Planning for Economic Recovery

- The DEFT is working on an economic recovery and strategy plan, engaging with post-secondary institutions, the innovation community, and the local business community.