



Office of the Warden on behalf of the Middlesex Economic Resiliency Task Force
399 Ridout Street North, London, Ontario N6A 2P1
cburghardtjesson@middlesex.ca

Monday, April 19, 2021

Mr. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1
premier@ontario.ca

RE: April 2021 Middlesex County Business Survey Results and Recommendations

Dear Premier Ford:

Without question, these are challenging times for the Province of Ontario. While across the province we have quite correctly placed our priority on measures to battle COVID-19, we cannot forget the devastating impact that these measures are having on our economy.

In the early days of the pandemic, Middlesex County brought together leaders from our business community. We formed the Middlesex Economic Resiliency Task Force to better understand both the current challenges and the challenges ahead. Recently the Task Force reconvened for a special meeting to discuss the economic fallout effects of this third wave and to prepare for recovery. In that effort, Middlesex County commissioned a revealing survey of our business community that identified a number of key findings. In my view, these findings will assist us in collectively responding to their needs through targeted and efficient support.

For your review, I have attached an infographic summary of some of the key issues. Of particular interest to me are the thoughts on what our business community needs to be successful coming out of this pandemic and the recommendations relating to provincial restriction measures that have been difficult for our businesses to navigate through during these unprecedented times.

I am confident that we can use the information that we have gathered and the lessons learned from the pandemic to collectively build back a stronger economy for the province of Ontario and Middlesex County. This report is an important first step in understanding how we can achieve our collective goal.

I thank you for your consideration of the survey findings. I look forward to discussing these issues with you and to working with you to put supports in place that allow Ontario to safely and effectively conduct commerce and restore faith within the business community.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cathy Burghardt-Jesson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Cathy Burghardt-Jesson
Warden
Attachment

cc. Victor Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
Monte McNaughton, MPP, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex
Jeff Yurek, MPP, Elgin-Middlesex-London

COVID-19 BUSINESS CHECK-IN SURVEY SUMMARY

*Report based on 130 total collected survey responses

LEVEL OF AFFECT ON BUSINESSES

80% of local businesses reporting decreased revenue



5% of local business reporting no impact due to covid-19



96% of local business reporting challenges - losses, inability to grow, workforce, personal demands



10% of local businesses reporting increased sales



WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

No Employees



25%

Retained or Increased Employees



35%

Layoffs or Reduced Hours



38%

Wish to Re-Employ if Given Opportunity



100%

*Many impacted workers have lost faith in the government, and in their employers

MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS



Tourism & Hospitality



Personal Services



Female Led



Restaurants



Main Street Retail



Internationally Dependent

WHAT OUR BUSINESS COMMUNITY NEEDS

- Vaccination clarity, consistency, supply and access
- Clear guidelines that are easy to follow and do not complicate an already complicated situation
- Restrictions geared towards activities that are known to spread the virus
- Tax breaks and easy to access grants; not loans
- Access to Professional services to help pivot businesses
- An end to shutdowns
- Reduction in bureaucracy - delays in licensing; access to international markets
- Access to high speed internet



WHAT THE COUNTY HAS INVESTED IN THAT IS WORKING

SHOP LOCAL CAMPAIGNS
Resources and Education
SIMPLIFIED GRANT OFFERINGS
Local Food Movement
Increased Communication
#MIDDLESEXSTRONG

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to offer marketing and training supports to Middlesex businesses
- Advocate for immediate vaccination reform - consistent with the best practices of other health units - mobile/multiple sites; supply; open access for Phase 2 groups who need and wish to be vaccinated
- Advise province on catastrophic impacts of targeting and imposing restrictions on trade and commerce; particularly on small business and the workforce that is keeping the economy churning, following protocols, and not known to be contributing to the spread
- Advocate for tax breaks and simplified grants over complicated programs and borrowing
- Seek support from regional groups such as SCOR, WOWC and OCC to champion these causes

