



**MEDIA RELEASE
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Smiths Falls makes modifications to CIP program and patio bylaw to support businesses

Smiths Falls – The Town of Smiths Falls is moving forward with recommendations from the Mayor’s Task Force on Economic Recovery to support businesses struggling with the impacts of COVID-19.

Among the recommendations was a proposal to provide businesses with financial assistance for COVID-19 related upgrades by temporarily modifying the Community Improvement Plan (CIP), as well as recommended changes to the Outdoor Patio Bylaw. Both recommendations were approved by Council on June 1.

The Town of Smiths Falls has been proactive in implementing changes to support both residents and business owners during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Mayor’s Recovery Task Force was created to support the economic recovery of Smiths Falls and assist the Smiths Falls’ business community with mitigating the impacts of COVID-19.

“We’ve been exploring any and all avenues available to support our residents and businesses who are struggling due to COVID-19. These recommendations are yet another tool we can use to support our businesses during this time,” said Mayor Shawn Pankow.

Provincial guidelines for Stage 1 business re-opening in Ontario require businesses to ensure physical distancing is maintained for both employees and customers. Changes to the CIP program will offer businesses access to cost sharing to offset some of the costs related to COVID-19 modifications to ensure approvals are delivered quickly and efficiently.

Recommended changes to the CIP program involve lowering the minimum application value under Program 2 to \$500 for COVID-related improvements. At a cost matching of 50 per cent, this would mean projects of \$1,000 or more would qualify for funding.

COVID-19-related upgrades or improvements applicable for the CIP funding include plexiglass or other barriers, physical distancing signage, floor decals, hand sanitizer stands, infrastructure of outdoor spaces such as patios, and alterations to interior space to accommodate changes due to social distancing requirements.

Changes will also speed up the CIP application process by delegating authority for applications of \$4,000 or less. Applications can be found on the Town of Smiths Falls' website: www.smithsfalls.ca/business/economic-development/community-improvement-plan/.

The Mayor's Recovery Task Force also recommended waiving fees associated with outdoor patios and outdoor merchandise signage and displays for 2020. At such time as provincial guidelines are released for the re-opening of restaurants, it's anticipated that utilizing patios and outdoor spaces will become one avenue of reducing risk of spreading COVID-19.

"Spending time outside has been brought forward as a good way to ensure physical distancing, and we've been looking at how best to support restaurants so they can open patios and continue serving customers through the summer months," said Pankow. "By waiving fees we're offering every support we have at our disposal."

About the Mayor's Recovery Task Force

Created in response to the COVID-19 and the current state of emergency, the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery works in partnership with Smiths Falls business and not-for-profit communities with a goal of sustaining, developing, and maintaining the robust local economy. The task force is comprised of council representatives as well as members of key industries within the Town of Smiths Falls.

"As we move forward with re-opening of our local economy, businesses are encountering challenges in complying with provincial guidelines," said Mayor Shawn Pankow. "The goal of the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery is to mitigate the impacts to businesses as much as possible. We are pleased with Council's approval of these recommendations and see it as an important step forward."

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