

# Northumberland Economic Recovery

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS • FINAL REPORT



July 16, 2020

# Vision

*Task Force efforts aligned with Northumberland County's Vision 'To bring together people, partnerships and possibilities for a strong and vibrant Northumberland.'*

## Introduction

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on Northumberland businesses. The Northumberland Economic Recovery Task Force launched in May 2020 as an industry-led initiative to support the community through this crisis.

As local business owners and leaders, Task Force members are invested in Northumberland's economic recovery. In collaboration with local government and industry stakeholders, Task Force members developed focused recommendations to help local businesses rebuild.

Recommendations are being addressed by industry, as well as shared with municipal councils, federal and provincial officials, and the Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee consultations to inform local, provincial and federal planning and action.

## Priorities

The work of the Task Force was structured around the following three priorities:



**Collect data** about business owner financial and operational challenges and needs arising from COVID-19



**Identify and support implementation** of actions, programs and services in response to local conditions to support businesses facing the impacts of the pandemic



**Advocate** with all levels of government to support effective recovery measures

# Messages from Our Co-Chairs



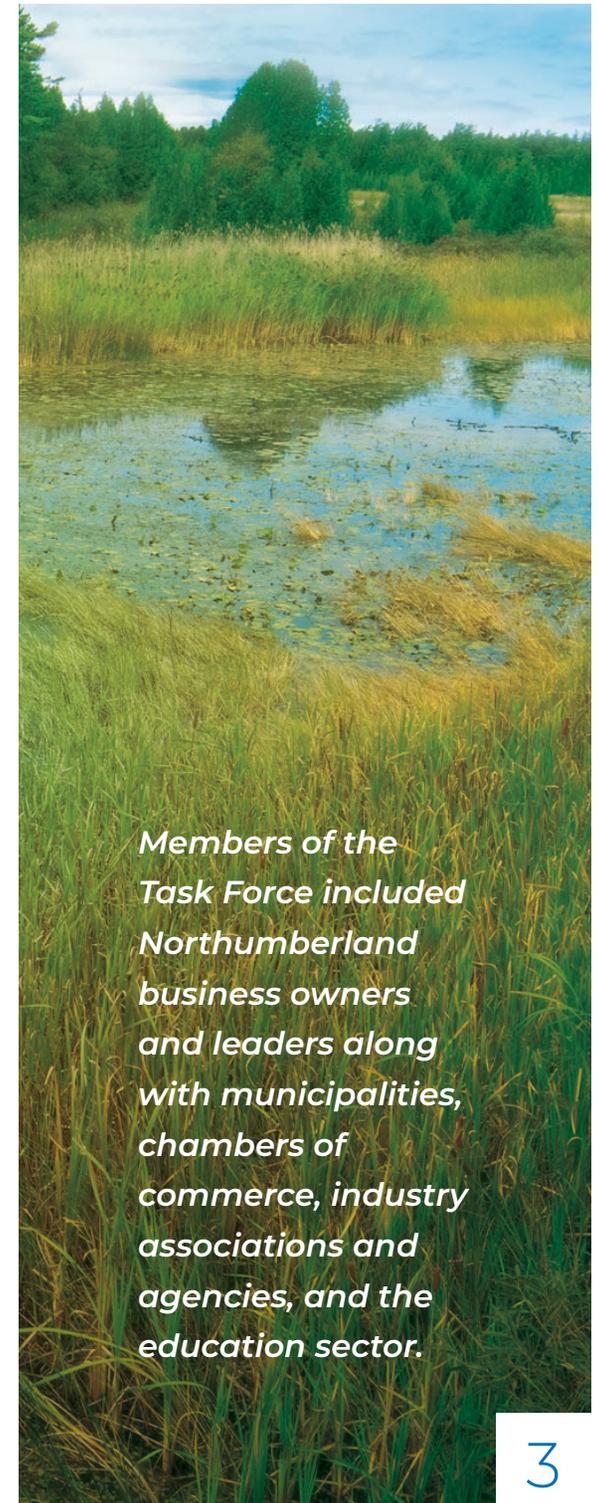
**Brendan Cunneen**

“With employee and community health and safety being of foremost importance, our local businesses continue to do their part to follow government and health authority direction during COVID-19. As we move in the direction of restarting our economic engines, this grass-roots collaboration has established recommendations that reflect the direct impacts of the pandemic on the Northumberland business community. By generating locally-developed actions that respond to local conditions the Task Force has provided vital insight for local, provincial and federal economic recovery plans that drive meaningful outcomes.”



**Dan Borowec**

“This Task Force brought a wealth of expertise and perspective to bear on the unprecedented operational and financial challenges currently facing local businesses. By leveraging valuable insight from stakeholders about the definitive economic impacts of the pandemic, the Task Force has developed an action plan of tools and advocacy to support our local businesses as they navigate the current environment. Northumberland County is pleased to have supported this important effort. We will continue to collaborate with local businesses and stakeholders, neighbouring communities and government to advance a shared vision for economic stabilization and sustainability. Our community is resilient. We will move together in the direction of recovery and renewal.”



*Members of the Task Force included Northumberland business owners and leaders along with municipalities, chambers of commerce, industry associations and agencies, and the education sector.*



# Data Insights

## From Weekly Ipsos Canada

Tracking Report #11  
May 21, 2020



**of Canadians are worried about losing their job.**

This perception is higher in Ontario with 50% of Ontarians being worried about losing their job.



**of Canadians are continuing to buy local, and show preference to Made in Canada products.**

## From RBC

*'Small Business, Big Pivot'*  
June 11, 2020

**Small firms have recorded almost double the rate of job losses as mid-sized and larger firms.**

Small firms in five sectors are most vulnerable:



**Accommodation & Food Services**



**Arts & Entertainment**



**Non-essential Retail**



**Mining / Oil & Gas Services**



**Commercial Real Estate Leasing**

## From RBC

'8 Ways COVID Will Transform the Economy and Disrupt Every Business', May 22, 2020

### New economy trends:



#### How We Travel

More local,  
more modest,  
more active.

Once the  
pandemic ends:

**63%**

prefer to drive  
than fly, and

**62%**

prefer to stay  
in Canada.



#### How We Share

More bandwidth,  
more data,  
more hacks.

Data creation  
will grow to:

**175**

zettabytes  
by 2025

**10X**

the amount of data  
produced in 2017.



#### How We Shop

More shipping,  
more local,  
more expensive.

Nearly

**3 in  
10**

Canadians are  
now shopping  
online for things  
they normally  
would have  
bought in a store.

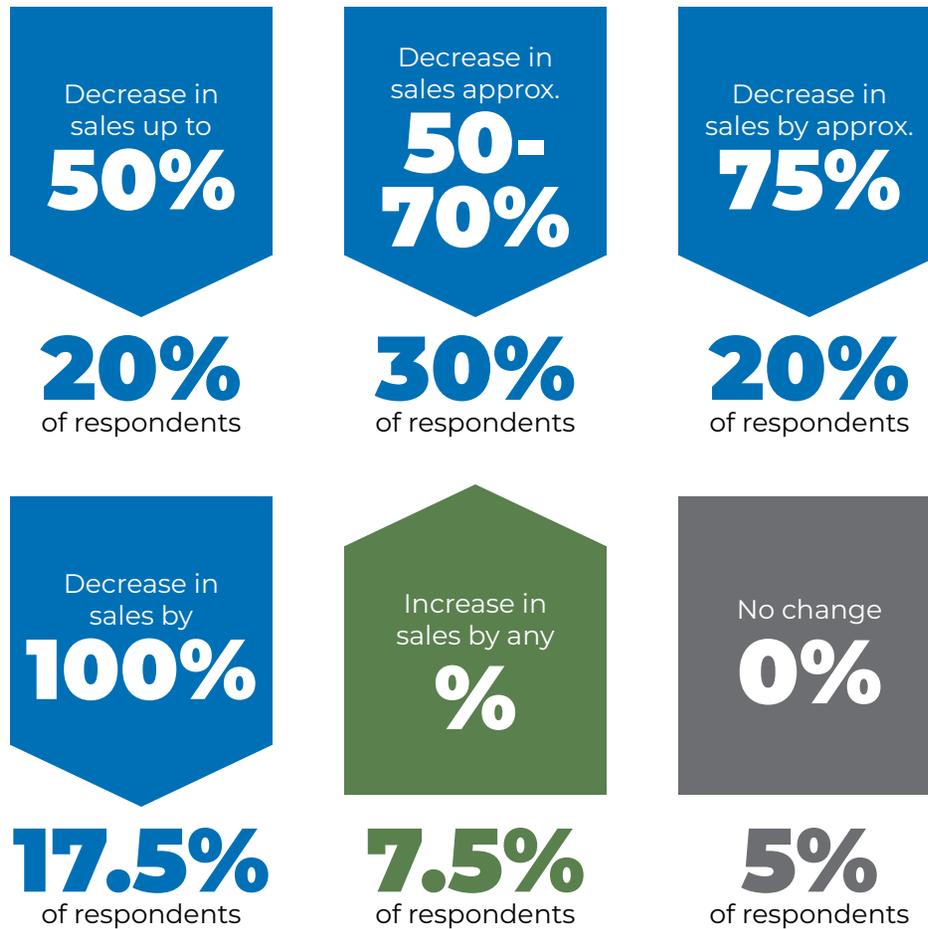


# Northumberland Survey Results

## Impact of COVID-19 on Northumberland County Businesses

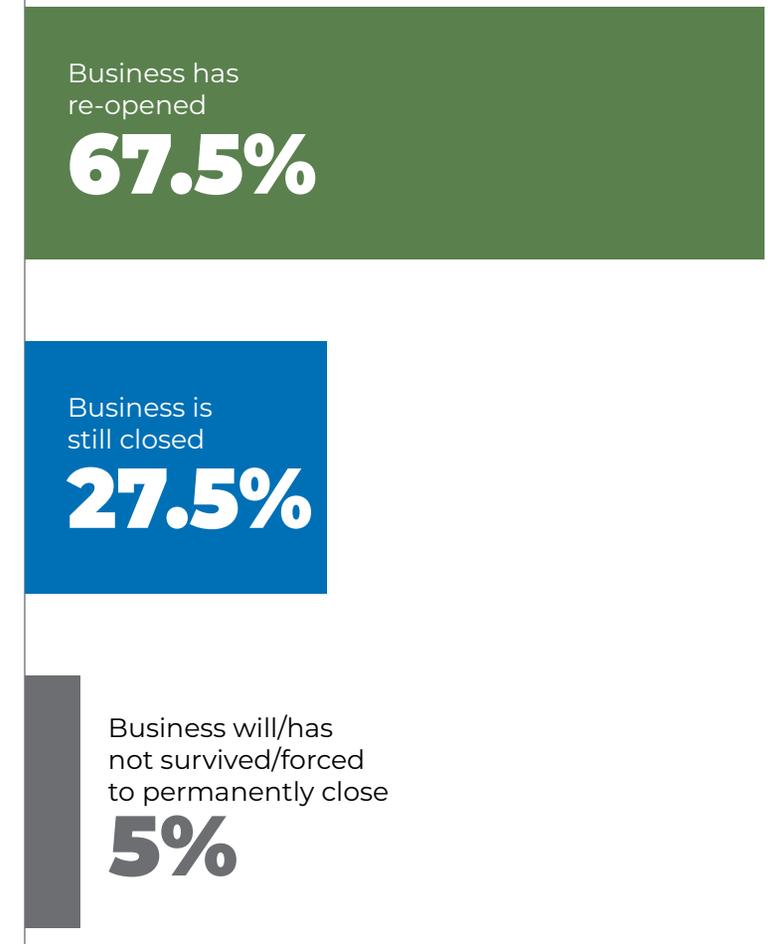
### Financial Impact of COVID-19

(AS OF JUNE 1)



### Status of Business

(AS OF JUNE 1)



## Top Priority for Businesses

(AS OF APRIL 28)

Moving business to  
online sales platform

**31.8%**

Accessing government  
resources/assistance

**23.8%**

Accessing webinars  
to stay current

**15.9%**

Connecting virtually  
with other businesses

**12.6%**

## Consumer Feedback

### What is important to local consumers to begin shopping in a curbside store in Northumberland County?

(AS OF MAY 24)



**54%**

plan to reduce the amount of shopping in curbside stores.



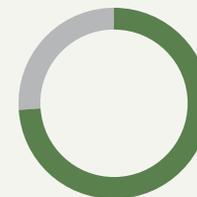
**61%**

plan to support local businesses by shopping online (28% already do).



**52%**

said designated shopping hours for seniors/ those with disabilities/health conditions are important. Respondents said they shop then.



**74%**

said physical distancing requirements being posted, clearly marked and enforced in customer service settings is very important.

# Recommendations



## Tackle broadband deficits

High-speed internet connectivity is a linchpin to local economic recovery. Unfortunately, there are significant gaps in high-speed availability and capacity throughout Northumberland.



### Action Underway

Northumberland County is leading an initiative to evaluate local high-speed internet capacity and connectivity levels and define a recommended approach to—and roadmap for—maximizing access in underserved and unserved areas.

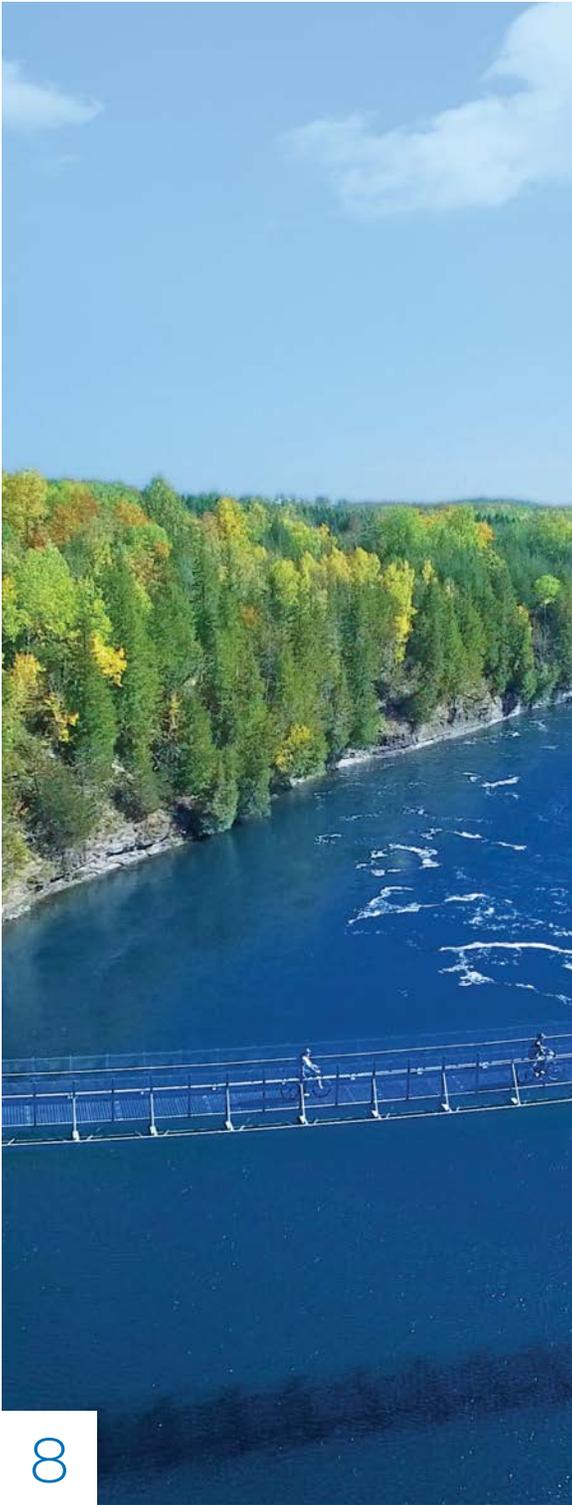
A Request for Proposal was awarded on July 9, 2020 to Nordicity to conduct a feasibility study and develop a Broadband Strategic Plan in order to move this initiative forward. Determining existing capacity will form the basis for strategic investments in technology to meet local needs.



### Support Required

This roadmap will be completed by September 2020, with the next step being application for funds for implementation.

The Task Force recommends partnership with the federal and provincial governments as an urgent priority, in alignment with the goals of programs such as the 'Improving Connectivity in Ontario' program and the 'Connect to Innovate' program as well as Federal infrastructure funding.



## 2.

### Power the transition to online

Where there is adequate internet access in areas of high connectivity, support is required to help businesses transition to the online environment. Local surveys indicate that consumers wish to support local businesses but feel the safest way to do so in the current environment is by buying online.



#### Action Underway

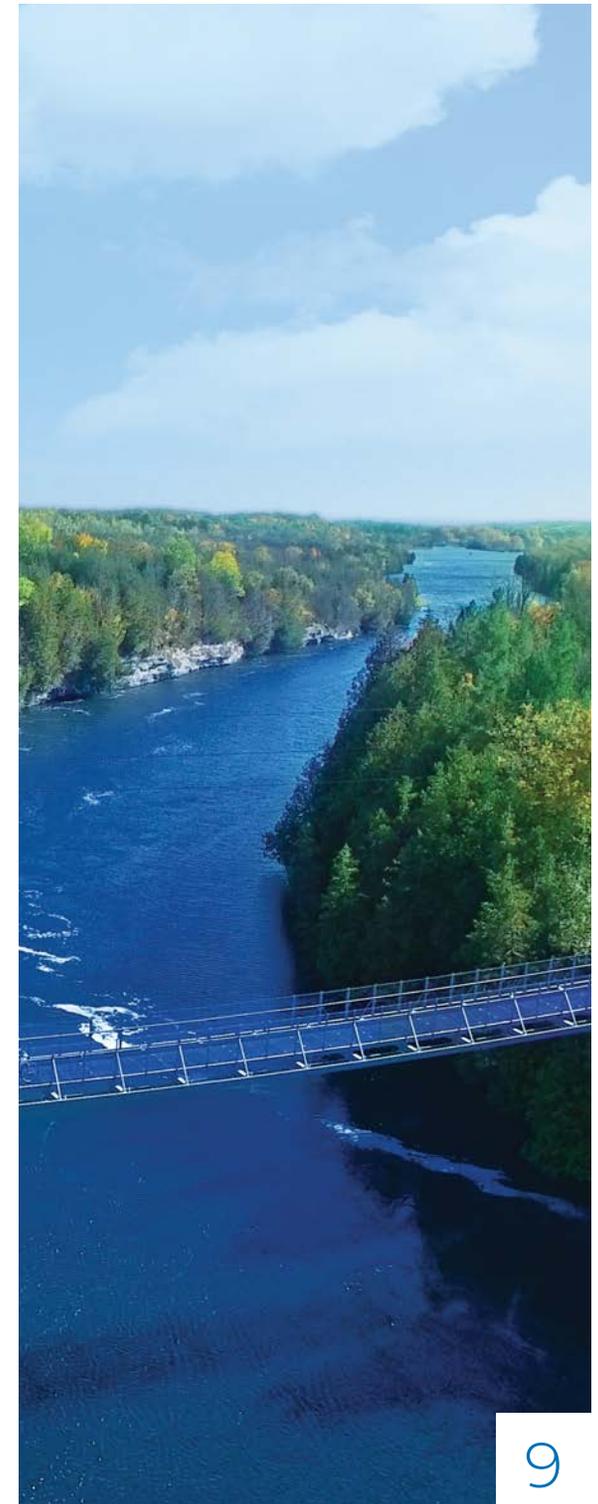
The Business & Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland (BECN) in partnership with participating municipalities (4), chambers of commerce (4) and BIAs (3) are launching a county-wide “Digital Northumberland” initiative to assist small businesses in developing their digital presence.

Building on successful initiatives started in 2019, the program will support the community’s existing small businesses by helping to establish or improve their web or social media presence, or e-commerce capabilities. In addition, further opportunities are being developed in collaboration with Northumberland CFDC to leverage existing resources.



#### Support Required

The Task Force recommends partnership with the provincial government to facilitate business adoption of necessary tools and technology and to support capacity-building activities as well as striking collaborative relationships with existing organizations to leverage financial opportunities.





### 3.

## Fuel consumer confidence

Standardizing a requirement for personal protective equipment for consumers will enhance public safety and increase consumer confidence in visiting bricks and mortar establishments.



### Action Underway

Businesses across Northumberland continue to monitor and respond to public health direction and ensure measures are in place to enhance the safety of customers visiting their establishments. In its release of initial recommendations on June 4, the Task Force recommended that a county-wide standard be established for the wearing of masks in all customer-facing environments, to ensure consistency in this practice by businesses and the public alike. The Task Force strongly endorses the July 7 order issued by the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDU) Medical Officer of Health requiring non-medical masks or face coverings in commercial establishments in Northumberland.



### Support Required

The Task Force recommends ongoing education by the public and private sectors about the use of non-medical masks/face coverings in public spaces, especially when physical distancing may be a challenge. Face masks or coverings minimize the spread of infection when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

# 4.

## Enhance the PPE supply chain

Business innovation and public-private collaboration have reinforced Ontario supply chains for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) however gaps in access and acquisition remain, putting an additional strain on local businesses.



### Action Underway

With many local businesses expressing the need for a reliable and consistent source of PPE to ensure safety measures are in place for staff and clients, the Task Force has reviewed models for strengthening local PPE supply chains.



### Support Required

The Task Force recommends a partnership of local businesses and stakeholders based on a model from the Municipality of Clarington, whereby a lead organization would manage the procurement and distribution of PPE on behalf of member partners, who would benefit from bulk purchasing and an internal distribution network. A working group will be convened to confirm best practices and formalize implementation.





# 5.

## Invest in workforce mental health

The instability created by the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the mental health of our local work force. There continues to be worry, anxiety and uncertainty about the future, impacting both workforce availability and productivity. A focus on mental health resilience and wellness is vital for the effective reopening of our economy.



### Action Underway

In addition to existing community mental health services, innovative virtual mental health support initiatives launched by local agencies and at the provincial level in response to COVID-19 are available to Northumberland residents.



### Support Required

The Task Force recommends ongoing and increased public-sector investments in mental health resources to ensure workforce psychological health in addition to the measures being put in place to ensure workforce physical health as the economy reopens. In addition, the Task Force recommends public-private sector collaboration facilitated by Northumberland County to increase awareness of the availability of existing resources.

# 6.

## Develop targeted economic recovery actions

We have repeatedly heard about the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women, youth and older workers.



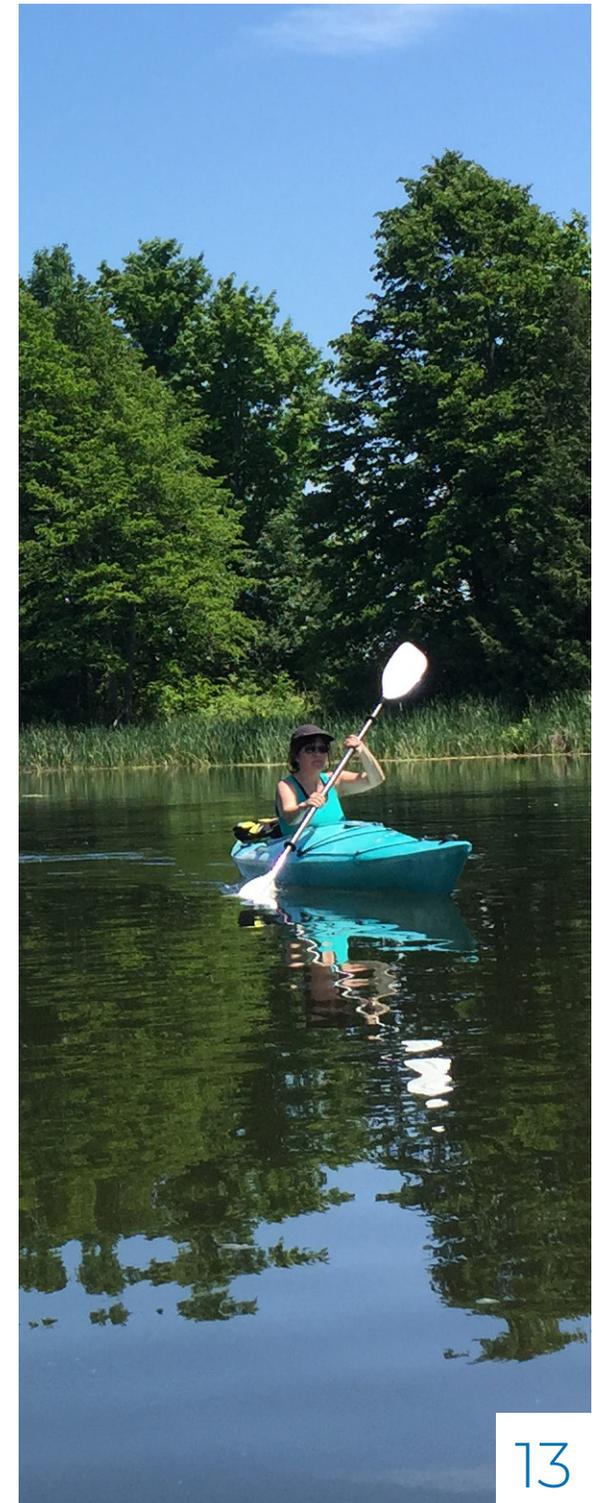
### Action Underway

Just prior to COVID-19, the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy was in the process of launching in Northumberland through the Business & Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland (BECN). The program – running as a regional pilot administered by the BECN – will support the launch of 225 women entrepreneurs. In addition, local community partners have been in ongoing discussions with post-secondary institutions to advance internship (experiential learning) opportunities for youth. Successful youth-focused support programs such as Starter and Summer Company continue to be a priority. Research and summary information has been collected from Northumberland’s Community Employment Resource Partnership to assess local employment/re-training opportunities.



### Support Required

The Task Force recommends continued and focused support for programming which targets economic stabilization and growth across demographics that have been disproportionately disadvantaged by COVID-19.



# Economic Recovery Task Force Structure

The Northumberland Economic Recovery Task Force was an industry-led initiative, with local business owners and leaders coming together to identify actions that will promote local economic recovery. Informing the Task Force were six Working Groups focused on targeted sectors including micro and small business, manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, professional, and development/construction.

The Task Force was convened with support from Northumberland County's Economic Development team and the four local chambers of commerce, together with area municipal partners, industry associations and agencies, and representatives from the education sector.

**Thank you to the following Task Force and Working Group participants.**

## Business Representatives

- Allen Insurance Group
- Baker Tilly
- Behan Construction
- Belden Canada Inc.
- Brighton Barn Theatre
- Burnham Family Farm Market
- Cameco
- Cellar Door Wine
- Centre and Main Chocolate
- Cobourg Kia
- Codrington Market
- Colborne Guest House
- Cricklewood Farm
- Brendan Cunneen, financial services
- Fidelity Engineering & Construction/Landscaping
- Fieldstone Spa
- Ganaraska Grain
- Haute Goat
- Holton Flowers
- Kinch Eddie Litigation
- LeBlanc Enterprises
- David Lindsay, higher education
- Kim MacNeil, community representative
- Millard Towers
- Mrs. B's Chocolate
- New Amherst Homes
- Part Time CFO Services
- Queenies Bake Shop
- Racine Financial
- Re/Max Hallmark First Group Realty
- Sabic Innovative Plastics
- Schmidt Law Legal Services

- Stadtke Plumbing & Heating
- Stalwood Homes
- Ste. Anne's Spa
- StoRRack Manufacturing
- Taylor's Meats
- Team Eagle
- The El. Gastropub
- The Market & Smor
- Tobey Homes
- Trade Tech Industries
- Tugg's Furniture
- Village Paint and Paper
- WEIR
- Westben
- Whispering Springs  
Wilderness Retreat

## Community Stakeholders

- Brighton Cramahe Chamber of Commerce
- Brighton Downtown Business Improvement Area
- BDC (ex-officio)
- Cobourg Downtown Business Improvement Area
- Community Futures Development Corporation
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (ex-officio)
- Municipality of Brighton
- Municipality of Port Hope
- Municipality of Trent Hills
- Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce
- Northumberland County & Warden of County Council
- Northumberland Federation of Agriculture
- Northumberland Manufacturers' Association
- Port Hope & District Chamber of Commerce
- Port Hope Heritage Business Improvement Area
- Regional Tourism Organization 8
- Town of Cobourg
- Trent Hills Chamber of Commerce
- Workforce Development Board



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