

MEDIA RELEASE
FRIDAY APRIL 17, 2020

**A PULSE OF THE WINDSOR-ESSEX ECONOMY
– PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AND RETAIL**

#YQGStandsStrong

Windsor-Essex County, Ontario, Canada – April 17, 2020 – Led by the [Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce](#), the Professional Services and Retail Committee of the [Windsor Essex COVID-19 Economic Task Force](#) is comprised of 13 individuals representing a wide cross-section of businesses and association in the sector.

The retail and professional services sector have been significantly impacted by the Province of Ontario's [Essential Workplace list](#) as many businesses were forced to temporarily close traditional forms of commerce. Rakesh Naidu, President and CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, has stated:

“Companies in Windsor-Essex have been severely impacted by COVID-19. A significant number of SMEs have shut down operations and several among them will not be able to re-start their business. Reduction in demand of goods & services, supply chain disruption, and cash flow challenges have added to the challenge.”

Data from the sector pulled from the [Windsor Essex COVID-19 Business Impact Survey](#) collected between March 22nd and April 8th match the comments by Naidu. Of the 393 responses from individuals who self-identify underneath the professional services or retail umbrella, the following data were compiled:

- 90.8% of respondents have recognized a significant negative economic impact
- 4.8% of respondents have recognized any positive impact
- 53.4% of respondents have said they had temporary lay-offs
- 22.1% of respondents expect some percentage of their workforce to become permanently laid-off
- 80.1% of respondents had already recognized a significant or moderate drop in revenue
- 84.2% of respondents expect a significant or moderate drop in revenue into the future

The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce with the Windsor Essex COVID-19 Economic Task Force have been working with both the [Ontario Chamber of Commerce](#) and the [Canadian Chamber of Commerce](#) to ensure all groups and businesses are able to access the Federal funding. Naidu adds,

“The recent support from all 3 levels of government has been well received but more needs to be done. Businesses are averse to taking on more debt at this time since the future economic conditions are unknown. Businesses are seeking additional support in terms of enhanced stimulus packages that include rent support, grants, interest rate cuts, tax exemptions, etc.”

Some retailers, especially grocery stores and other food services, are experiencing strong sales and in some cases are hiring workers. Delivery services are thriving. Increasingly retailers are moving to delivery or curbside pick-up to maintain some forms of revenue.

Debra Purdy, owner of ShopEco, has used the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic to accelerate future online plans to operate an e-commerce platform. “We are about to launch online, with free delivery throughout Essex County.” Said Purdy, “The new and regular customer support has been heartwarming and uplifting. I hope to emerge from this with a business that is better and stronger than before.”

[WEtech Alliance](#) shared an aggregated list of 200+ local businesses that remain open with any combination of regular or reduced hours, delivery, e-commerce or curbside pick-up with Postmedia’s new [‘Connect With Local Businesses’](#) platform.

Greg Drouillard, President of Target Building Materials, has witnessed immediate changes in demand as retail and construction customers have requested disinfecting and sanitizing products. However, Drouillard is also concerned with water levels in the surrounding lakes and rivers and is making strategic purchasing decisions based on potential and upcoming risk.

“As if the COVID-19 pandemic isn’t devastating enough, the potential for local flooding is adding to stress,” says Drouillard. “With smaller contractors often unable to aid homeowners in risk areas, we at Target Building Materials have taken this problem extremely seriously and have prepared remedies and products that are available to shoreline residents who can self-protect against flooding. Moreover, these preventative measures may mitigate against a longer-term health risk due to the growth of mold and mildew – potentially adding to the overburdened healthcare system.”

The bulk of professional services have been shifted to work-from-home scenarios. Companies that were innovative and progressive pre-COVID adapted easily while others quickly caught up. Some offices remain open, often with reduced hours and/or staff, and are practicing Physical Distancing. Wills can now be legally witnessed by Video Chat, saving the need for personal interaction.

Overall, there is excellent information sharing and support throughout the community from the [WindsorEssex Small Business Centre](#), [EPICentre’s Project Nimble](#), and informative and instructional webinars hosted by the [Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce](#) and [Leamington District Chamber of Commerce](#) and other organizations.

ABOUT THE WINDSOR ESSEX COVID-19 ECONOMIC TASK FORCE

The Windsor Essex COVID-19 Economic Task Force was established March 18, 2020 and is comprised of 40 members who represent a broad cross-section of industries in Windsor-Essex, Ontario Canada. The Task Force is sub-divided into six separate committees, each with upwards of 15 members.

The mission of the Windsor Essex COVID-19 Economic Task Force is to collect, coordinate and disseminate information on strategies, programs, and other remedies that are available to mitigate the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the economic well-being of workers, entrepreneurs, businesses and the regional economy. The Task Force has, and will continue to, strategize and formalize re-ignition plans for their respective industries in the context of the overall Windsor-Essex, provincial and national economies. Learn more [choosewindsor.essex.com](https://www.choosewindsor.essex.on.ca).

##

Contact:

General Inquiries:

Ryan Donally, Secretariat

Windsor Essex COVID-19 Economic Task Force

Mobile: (226) 346-8919

E-Mail: rdonally@choosewindsor.essex.com

Professional Services and Retail Committee Inquiries:

Keith Chinnery, Chair: Professional Services and Retail Committee

Director of Membership Services, Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce

Mobile: (519) 796-1965

E-Mail: kchinnery@windsor.essexchamber.org