

We're all in this together

Second Report from the Mayor's Economic and Social Impact and Recovery Task Forces
8 May 2020

Introduction	2
Progress so far	3
Ideas for Action	6
During the shutdown	6
Grants rather than loans or deferrals for commercial rent (already actioned)	6
Pooling resources or collaborating to allow smaller organizations access to EAP services like counselling	6
Insurance companies should reduce premiums to reflect changes in economic activity and mobility	7
Consider distributing funds through existing organizations like Regional Innovation Centres	7
Delivery food on a regular basis to agencies that provide food to people	7
Maximize number of people receiving support through discretionary benefits	7
Supporting physical distancing by people who are living unsheltered	7
Communicate government programs via widely available print publications that are delivered	7
Continuing transit service to make sure people can continue to move around the city for essential trips	8
Significant increases in funding for mental health for children and youth	8
Clarify how psychotherapists can provide emergency counselling	8
Broaden distribution of comfort stations to include Hamilton Road	8
Providing blankets to agencies working with people experiencing homelessness	8
Expand the number of monthly rent supplements	8
Creating more space to provide shelter	8
Connecting faith communities to support service agencies	9
Supporting the specific needs of international students	9
During the recovery	9
Rapid shift to office employees working remotely should be considered in long-term planning	9
Consider waiving or deferring approved increases in building permit fees and development charges for 2021	9
Sharing best practices for minimizing risks in different kinds of workplaces	9
Increased funding for mental health phone and virtual supports during recovery period	10
Appendix A: List of Task Force Members	11
Mayor's Economic Impact and Recovery Task Force	11

Introduction

Less than two months ago, we began meeting to understand the economic and social impacts of COVID-19 on Londoners and to identify actions that could be taken to respond to the needs of Londoners. Thank you for making time to be part of these conversations to share your experience and insights.

This second report builds on the [first report to the task forces](#), which was shared with City Council, civic administration, our local Members of Provincial Parliament and Members of Parliament. This second report tracks progress on ideas that were included in the first report and attempts to synthesize what we have heard since then during our calls.

We would like to acknowledge the many ways that Londoners are stepping up to lead during this crisis. We hear examples on every task force call of the many ways businesses, nonprofits, charities, governments and individuals are serving our community. A couple of examples: the [United Way of Elgin Middlesex](#) and the [London Community Foundation](#), made possible by their donors, have made an initial round of grants, totalling over \$300,000 to meet some of the urgent needs in our community. And the London Food Bank has stepped up to meet the food supply needs of agencies providing food to Londoners.

At a local level, the work of City Manager Lynne Livingstone, her senior leadership team, city employees and employees of our agencies, boards and commissions who deliver essential services has been exemplary. The leaders who serve on the community control group through our Emergency Operations Centre, which convenes daily to coordinate and manage the local response demonstrate calm, clear-headed decision making at a time when we need it most.

In April, to help property taxpayers facing cash flow problems, City Council approved a two-month deferral of roughly \$130 million in property tax payments, spreading remaining preauthorized payments equally over the remaining months of the year. [City Council approved nine additional relief measures in early May.](#)

Your ongoing participation in these task forces, as detailed in the progress summary and additional ideas identified below, continues to inform not only action at the local level but also our advocacy to the provincial and federal governments.

We would like to thank our local MPPs and MPs for listening in to our task force discussions. We commend the provincial and federal governments for acting quickly in their own areas of jurisdiction and for collaborating on programs like commercial rent relief. As we said in our first report, this Team Canada approach that puts solving immediate problems ahead of jurisdictional wrangling is exactly what is needed right now.

Almost two months into this pandemic, the direct financial impact on the City of London is shaping up to be very significant. The initial estimates of between \$23 and \$33 million by the end of August 2020, put together by Treasurer Anna Lisa Barbon and her team, are

non-recoverable losses. And these numbers are *after* many measures to contain costs have already been taken. Cities throughout Canada, especially those that operate transit systems, are facing financial challenges of a similar magnitude, which is why the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and its Big City Mayors’ Caucus, supported by the Large Urban Mayors’ Caucus of Ontario, has asked the federal government for an emergency operating grant to municipalities of \$10 billion. All governments, including provinces, will need to play a role, but national leadership is required to ensure that all communities are able to recover strongly.

The first part of this report tracks progress on the many ideas raised during our initial discussions. The second part includes new ideas raised since the first report.

Through our continued discussions, we will be focusing on both the impact during the shutdown but also how we recover as a community and come out of this pandemic stronger and more united.

Regards,

Ed Holder
Mayor

Jesse Helmer
Deputy Mayor

Progress so far

This chart tracks progress so far on the ideas that were outlined in our first report to the task forces. Thank you to City Council, Civic Administration and the Provincial and Federal governments for acting quickly on many of these ideas.

Number	Idea	Progress so far
1	Meet the immediate needs of people who have suddenly lost their income	Existing Ontario Works clients, as of March 1, 2020, and all ODSP applicants and recipients will have CERB income treated as partially exempt i.e. \$200 flat rate exemption + 50 per cent for each additional dollar. Measures will be put in place so no recipient will lose access to health benefits for March or subsequent benefit months as a result of receiving CERB.
1		Additional measures from the federal government: CERB expanded to cover people who have exhausted EI; people can earn up to \$1,000 per month while receiving CERB; Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) of \$1,250 per month; temporary salary top-up for low-income essential workers earning less than \$2,500 per month.

2	Support for renters and landlords	Deputy Mayor wrote to Minister of Municipal Affairs and Minister of Finance regarding a temporary rent supplement.
3	More substantial property tax relief	In addition to waiving penalty and interest for taxes due March 31 for 60 days, City Council approved deferral of the final property tax due dates by 60 days with payments now due August 31st, October 30th, and December 15th; each due date results in approximately \$130 million of payments deferred.
3		Mayor wrote to Minister of Finance about the business education property tax cuts to move to a uniform rate across the province, which were temporarily frozen with the 2012 Provincial budget and would lower business education property taxes on London-area businesses.
4	Ensure our frontline workers supporting our most vulnerable have the equipment they need	Agencies connected to MLHU and regional planning table for PPE distribution to non-hospital community agencies.
4		Federal Reaching Home funding increase for London covers immediate PPE costs.
5	Maximizing the experience and talents of our residents	Ontario has launched a Workforce Matching Portal to connect open positions with those with medical talent. Additional opportunities may exist to expand program to include foreign-trained students.
6	Closing the digital divide for students and families	Covering cost of Connected for Success Internet for LMCH tenants for three months approved unanimously by City Council.
6		The province has funded iPads with data plan being provided to students with support of Apple and Rogers.
7	Clearly communicate programs in plain language	The City of London has developed a number of simple to understand tools for residents and businesses.
8	Public health messaging for children and youth	
9	Ensuring women and kids at risk of domestic violence have a safe place to go	\$50 million to support violence against women shelters and sexual assault centres
10	Aligning deferrals of rent, utilities, property taxes, mortgage payments	Canada-Ontario Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance : 75% reduction in rent with 50% covered by provincial and federal government, 25% covered by landlords. Three months of April, May, June.
11	Minimizing layoffs by organizations without an immediate year-over-year revenue decrease	CEWS eligibility criteria adjusted by the federal government to accommodate other measures of revenue change.

12	Increase wage subsidy from 10% to 75%	The federal government increased the proposed Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy from 10% to 75%.
13	Coordinating the delivery of fresh, healthy food to people who are quarantined or self-isolating	\$25,000 for this initiative supported unanimously at City Council.
14	Meeting the basic needs of our most vulnerable	City staff and partnering agencies are exploring options for shower access
15	Providing isolation spaces for people who are experiencing homelessness	City staff have worked with emergency shelters to move people into 171 rooms in motels/hotels. City staff and agencies have established and staffed an isolation spaces for 26 people and monitoring spaces for 30 people.
		Federal government approved Reaching Home funding by \$157.5 million.
16	Increased support for crisis mental health and phone supports	The Province has invested \$12 million in additional funding to expand online and virtual mental health supports.
17	Benefits delivered through Ontario Works should be as flexible as possible	The Province of Ontario has approved one-time funding for COVID-related items at a maximum of \$100 for individuals and \$200 for families. This benefit is available to eligible recipients for 3 months. The City of London Social Services staff are using provincial guidelines to effectively administer this discretionary top-up.
18	Where possible and safe, adapting essential public works projects to new mobility patterns	Essential construction projects awarded by council and are proceeding. Construction-related meetings for core-area projects moving online. City staff, consulting engineers and contractors exploring opportunities to compress projects.
18		Province has allowed major essential public works projects to proceed.
19	Front-load grants and transfer payments as much as possible	Shared with local MPs and MPPs. City grant funding flows once grant agreements are signed.
20	A local clearinghouse matching needs for essential equipment and supplies and manufacturing capabilities	The London Chamber of Commerce is connecting businesses that have clean rooms with the London Region Manufacturers' Council.
21	Eliminate 30-day waiting period for work sharing program (already actioned)	30-day waiting period eliminated by the federal government.
22	Support of postal workers and Canada Post	Shared with local MPs.
23	Continuation of public funding for arts, cultural events and festivals	Major arts funding organizations like the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council are continuing

	that have been cancelled	to support organizations even when events are cancelled.
24	Accelerating Core Area Action plan	City staff are supporting activations to improve streetscapes with closed businesses, such as murals on plywood boardings over businesses. Funding for supportive housing as part of the Core Area Action Plan, \$4.5 million for Indwell's building at 744 Dundas St, was supported unanimously by City Council.
25	Lowering the peak load on essential services like grocery stores	
26	Security staffing	Shared with local MPPs.
27	Emergency procurement processes	City procurement policy allows for procurement flexibility during an emergency.
28	Flexibility in loading/unloading and delivery times	Supported unanimously by City Council.
Recovery Ideas		
29	Focused recovery plan for entertainment, culture, tourism and hospitality sector	
30	Support for recovery of the airport	
31	Closing the digital divide in infrastructure	
32	Shovel-ready infrastructure stimulus projects	Shared with local MPs and MPPs and part of provincial and federal advocacy efforts.

Ideas for Action

We have organized the initial ideas proposed through the task force discussions into two time periods: **during the shutdown**, which started in mid-March; and **during the recovery**. These ideas are new ones raised since the first report to the task forces. The numbering continues from that report.

During the shutdown

33. Grants rather than loans or deferrals for commercial rent (already actioned)

The provincial and federal governments should provide grants rather than loans to tenants and landlords to lower the costs of commercial rent in a way that benefits both tenants and landlords. This has already been actioned by the provincial and federal government. A lower threshold of a 50% decline in revenue should be considered, as

many essential businesses that have adapted to new ways of working are not eligible for the current program.

34. Pooling resources or collaborating to allow smaller organizations access to EAP services like counselling

Considering the dramatic increase in the number of people who are working remotely and isolated at home, it would be helpful to have Employee Assistance Program services available to employees of smaller organizations that currently do not have access to such benefits, similar to how nonprofits in Ontario have worked together to provide pension benefits.

35. Insurance companies should reduce premiums to reflect changes in economic activity and mobility

The provincial government should encourage insurance companies to lower premiums for customers whose operations have been impacted by the pandemic and whose activities have changed significantly.

36. Consider distributing funds through existing organizations like Regional Innovation Centres

The provincial and federal governments should consider building on the established relationships between regional innovation centres and their client companies to flow funding to startups and scaleups that may not qualify for existing support programs.

37. Deliver food on a regular basis to agencies that provide food to people

As demand for food, both prepared meals in takeaway boxes and groceries, increases, organizations that have significant food supplies should deliver directly to agencies in need of food, including neighbourhood resource centres. The London Food Bank has stepped up to fill this need in the community.

38. Maximize number of people receiving support through discretionary benefits

City staff should make sure eligible recipients are aware of and are maximizing their discretionary benefits.

39. Supporting physical distancing by people who are living unsheltered

People who are experiencing homelessness and are living unsheltered face many barriers in practicing physical distancing. Efforts to create spaces for people in motel

rooms have been excellent, but for people who remain on the street, all city services and agencies should be communicating physical distancing measures in effective ways.

40. Communicate government programs via widely available print publications that are delivered

The pandemic has revealed the extent of the digital divide in London. Governments at all levels should communicate key information in print publications that are delivered to people's homes.

41. Continuing transit service to make sure people can continue to move around the city for essential trips

Maintaining transit service is critical for essential workers at hospitals, grocery stores and other essential workplaces and for many people who do not have access to a car. Reductions in existing transit service have already put cost pressures on individuals and organizations. Maintaining a basic minimum transit service throughout the city is very important for essential workers and people who have the fewest mobility options.

42. Significant increases in funding for mental health for children and youth

The isolation arising from physical distancing measures is worsening people's mental health. The pre-existing issues facing children and youth in accessing mental health care, especially psychotherapy, are being made worse. The provincial government should significantly increase funding to make it possible to hire more people who are trained to provide psychotherapy to children and youth. The [CMHO's pre-budget submission for 2020 provides a good roadmap](#).

43. Clarify how psychotherapists can provide emergency counselling

Regulatory colleges should clarify virtual practice standards for psychotherapists and how they can safely provide in-person counselling during a public health emergency.

44. Broaden distribution of comfort stations to include Hamilton Road

The 26 comfort stations located throughout the core are very helpful. A comfort station close to Safe Space would help to meet the needs of people in that part of the city.

45. Providing blankets to agencies working with people experiencing homelessness

The cool weather is increasing demand for blankets but many agencies are in short supply. Connecting with a supply of blankets from Goodwill Industries would help to meet this need for people who are living unsheltered.

46. Expand the number of monthly rent supplements

To help make more rental units affordable, the city could expand its existing rent supplement program. The Ontario-Canada Housing Benefit may also meet this need.

47. Creating more space to provide shelter

The initial work by city staff and emergency shelter providers to create spaces in motels to support isolation and physical distancing is excellent. But there are still many people living unsheltered. The city and agency partners should look to create additional spaces with staffing to support the people staying there.

48. Connecting faith communities to support service agencies

Many faith communities are looking for opportunities to serve the community, but in-person volunteering has been disrupted by the pandemic. There is an opportunity to match faith communities with community organizations that have identified needs for volunteers. Faith communities are organizing a London interfaith service in May.

49. Providing opportunities for public participation in committee meetings

For committees like the planning and environment committee, which often includes public participation meetings, it is important that Londoners are able to participate, ask questions and provide their feedback on land-use planning issues, even if these committee meetings are held virtually rather than in person.

50. Supporting the specific needs of international students

Hundreds of international students at Western, Huron, Brescia, King's and Fanshawe College have completed their academic terms but face unexpected and difficult circumstances. Many are not eligible for pandemic-related emergency benefits. The federal government's decision to allow international students to work more hours than usually allowed is a good step forward, but all levels of government should work together and with our postsecondary institutions to ensure that the basic needs of international students are met.

During the recovery

51. Rapid shift to office employees working remotely should be considered in long-term planning

Many large employers of office workers have moved upwards of 90% of their employees to work from home. Although this level of working at home is not seen as sustainable, or even desirable from a productivity standpoint, the rapid change has shown how it can be

done and the future for many office workers will likely include more hours worked at home than was the case at the beginning of 2020. Heading into the recovery, long-term plans should consider what a future with more hours worked at home would mean for office space needs and peak congestion of the transportation network.

52. Consider waiving or deferring approved increases in building permit fees and development charges for 2021

Developers and buildings of residential, commercial and institutional buildings are facing significant financial challenges because of the shutdown of many parts of the economy. They have requested consideration of deferring planned increases in planning and development fees and development charges, and/or flexibility on the timing of paying these fees and charges.

53. Sharing best practices for minimizing risks in different kinds of workplaces

Returning to work with additional public health precautions will be different for different kinds of organizations. Rapidly and clearly sharing best practices and evidence-informed guidelines will be essential in supporting recovery.

54. Increased funding for mental health phone and virtual supports during recovery period

The mental health impacts of isolation are likely to continue well into the recovery period. Funding to support increased levels of supports should also continue throughout the recovery period.

Appendix A: List of Task Force Members

Mayor's Economic Impact and Recovery Task Force

The membership of the task force is evolving. If you are interested in being part of the task force, or have ideas for consideration, please email mayor@london.ca.

3M Canada	London Economic Development Corporation
Argyle BIA	London Health Sciences Centre
Avison Young	London Homebuilders' Association
Better Business Bureau	London International Airport
Bluestone Properties	London Regional Manufacturers Association
Canada Life	Media Sonar
Diamond Aircraft	Nestle Canada
Digital Echidna	Old East Village BIA
Digital Extremes	Old Oak Properties
Downtown London	Pathways
Drewlo Properties	Paystone
Ealing Pharmacy	Pillar Nonprofit Network
Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Development and Planning Board	RBC
Fanshawe College	RBC Place London
Farhi Developments	Sifton Properties
Gateway Casinos	Small Business Centre
GDLS-Canada	St. Joseph's Hospital
Goodlife Fitness	Start.ca
Hamilton Road BIA	Sterling Marking Products Inc.
Hyde Park BIA	Sun Life Financial
InfoTech Research Group	Sunfest
Libro Credit Union	TD Bank
Liuna 1059	TechAlliance
London District Construction Association	Tourism London
London and District Heavy Construction Association	Tricar Developments
London Arts Council	Trillium Manufacturing Network
London Chamber of Commerce	Western Fair District
London Development Institute	Western University
	York Developments

We want to recognize all of the City Councillors as well as Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks Jeff Yurek (Elgin—Middlesex—London), MPPs Teresa Armstrong (London—Fanshawe), Terence Kernaghan (London North Centre) and Peggy Sattler (London West), and MPs Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre), Parliamentary Secretary Kate Young (London West), Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London) and Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe), who have listened in to task force discussions.

Mayor's Social Impact and Recovery Task Force

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519 Pursuit	London District Catholic School Board
Across Languages	London Food Bank
Anova	London Homeless Coalition
Ark Aid Street Mission	London Intercommunity Health Centre
Atlohsa Family Healing Services	London Middlesex Community Housing
Big Brothers Big Sisters	London Public Library
Boys and Girls Club	London Youth Advisory Council
Centre of Hope	LUSO Community Services
Centre for Research on Health Equity and Social Inclusion	Meals on Wheels
Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex	Middlesex County
CMHA Middlesex	Middlesex London Health Unit
Cross Cultural Learner Centre	Neighbourhood Legal Services
Crouch Neighbourhood Resource Centre	Ontario Student Nutrition Program
CSC Providence	Pathways
CSC Viamonde	Pillar Nonprofit Network
Culinary Foundation	Safe Space London
Fanshawe College	Sisters of St. Joseph
Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre	South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre
Goodwill Industries	Thames Valley District School Board
Health Services for South West	United Sikhs
Life*Spin	United Way
London Abused Women's Centre	Youth for Christ
London Cares	Youth Opportunities Unlimited
London Community Foundation	

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