

Council raises concerns for local business during lockdown

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

local journalism initiative reporter

During the Town Council meeting on November 24, several Councillors shared their concerns for local businesses who are struggling being closed during lockdown.

As Peel officially entered lockdown on November 23, smaller local businesses have reached out to their Ward Councillors to share their worries and challenges of being closed.

Peel Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Lawrence Loh, joined in the meeting to provide an update and answer any questions or concerns councillors have.

Ward 5 Area Councillor Tony Rosa shared his concerns from feedback provided by members of the community on residents going outside the region to shop due to not having the ability to enter stores and shop local.

‘It’s very discouraging to our small, independent retailers who know that our residents are going elsewhere, leaving our municipality and going into others,’ said Councillor Rosa. ‘They’re looking at the fairness of it.’

One local business reached out to Councillor Rosa stating that even having one customer in at a time would make a huge difference, especially as we near Christmas time.

‘They’re the small players, but I know for a fact that people will venture out. They will leave the Region of Peel and go into another region, and that’s concerning as well,’ said Rosa.

Neighbouring regions such as York and Dufferin, will and can be further impacted with Peel residents venturing out for general shopping, as well as holiday shopping as we near the month of December.

The province discourages all travel to other regions, especially those who reside in higher transmission areas, to avoid the spread of the COVID-19 virus to lower transmission areas.

‘From the retail perspective, I’m concerned about it from the disease transmission perspective,’ responded Dr. Loh. ‘We need to make sure that we’re trying to do the right thing for our community, keeping all communities safe, keeping our neighbouring jurisdictions and community safe.’

Though the likeliness of allowing even one or two individuals into our local stores seems slim as of now, the whole purpose is to strongly encourage as little in-person interactions as possible.

‘We saw them going over to York Region and, before we knew it, York Region was shut down as well,’ commented Ward 5 Regional Councillor Annette Groves. ‘I don’t know how you control it, because people just don’t listen.’

Dr. Loh is hopeful in the next couple weeks that numbers will begin to decrease, and changes will be made to better support local businesses.

‘A lot of these small businesses don’t have that online presence, nor do they have the time right now to create an online presence,’ remarked Ward 3 and 4 Regional Councillor Jennifer Innis. ‘Those businesses are in crucial time period of their formation.’

Councillor Innis is hoping to host a virtual session specifically for local businesses to provide resources and local programs that will help them through these difficult times. Alongside these discussions, it was asked that provincial and federal officials be invited to discuss issues such as these, to advocate for the small businesses whose voice may not be loud enough.

?A lot of them are not going to be able to sustain this, and we need to do our part,? she said.

For further information about what resources are available for local businesses, please visit Caledon.ca/business.