

Office of the Mayor and Council Update

Wednesday, May 20 COVID-19 emergency

There's been a long wait for rent relief for many local businesses.

Weeks in the making, the rent program that resulted from pandemic policy making is one that has faced much confusion for landlords and tenants alike.

According to [this story from Maclean's](#), "Some landlords said they were confused about what was on offer. Tenants complained they qualified, but their landlords weren't keen to sign up. And small business advocacy groups continuously sounded the alarm about a crisis of shuttered shops that might not be saved in time."

The reports I've been hearing echo the confusion and frustration you can read about in the Maclean's article and as such, today in Regional Council we unanimously supported a Resolution brought forward by Town and Regional Councillor Jeff Knoll and seconded by me to freeze commercial evictions in Ontario and update the Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (OCECRA) program.

Councillor Knoll's resolution calls on the Province of Ontario to freeze commercial evictions for a period up to and including 30 days following the conclusion of the Provincial order declaring an emergency.

The Resolution also calls upon the Federal and Provincial governments to resolve barriers to participate in the Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (OCECRA) and launch the program immediately.

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I want to thank the Premier for his remarks on this matter. They show that he is actually getting the message and that he understands that the program still has some flaws. This is in fact our third message to the province on this matter and we've seen our letters and resolutions from the Town get picked up and endorsed by many other municipalities. I believe that several of the changes and fixes that we've achieved to date have been a result of municipal pressure.

In order to work, the OCECRA program needs to address the fact that many tenants may not qualify or benefit from the program. And some landlords have indicated that they will not participate. Without changes to the announced OCECRA program, an increasingly large number of small businesses will be put in a position where they may be faced with permanent closure.

That's why last week, in a letter to the provincial and federal Ministers of Finance, I, on behalf of my Oakville Economic Task Force, offered suggestions for changes to the program that include:

- The suspension of evictions of commercial tenants
- Allow tenants to make an application for the rent assistance if the property owner does not want to apply or is ineligible
- Allow property owners to make one application all of their properties rather than individual applications
- Lower the 70 per cent revenue decline threshold for tenants

As we begin the responsible reopening of the town, province and country, we need our local businesses to be able to open their doors to support recovery and this is just one of the steps I'm taking to ensure they can.

As a reminder of where we've come from in the pandemic and where we are headed, please visit the updated timeline at the end of this email.
