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Subject: Council Agenda Items - Outdoor Patios

Importance: High

Dear Mayor and Council:

As the local Voice of Business representing 350 Chatham-Kent businesses of all sectors, we recognize the hardships the COVID-19 pandemic has put on many local businesses over the past number of months. We can appreciate the adverse effects this crisis has put on small business right through to large manufacturers and corporate institutions. Of the hardest hit is the restaurant and hospitality sector. With ongoing restrictive numbers and safety measures, these proprietors have been challenged day after day. Should they withstand through the pandemic, it will take many patrons and many years to resurrect any losses currently being suffered by this sector.

It is of positive mind that Council adopts measures to assist in remedying this ailing sector. Noting Council embraced outdoor patios and use of municipal properties earlier in 2020, this initiative needs to remain in place. While the concept was initiated to adapt to safety measures and restrictions, the initiative is one to be considered for long term. Offering patrons an opportunity to socialize in an outdoor setting is not only assisting the restaurant business but also provides a healthy atmosphere that invites comradery, long into post pandemic. Recognizing the concept of incorporating parking spaces into such plans goes even further in this positive initiative as it also promotes inclusion to outdoor events and activities that will open new doors for the hospitality sector and can embrace retail and service in such undertakings.

The Province of Ontario through AGCO has adopted flexibility to such causes and continues to review rulings that support the restaurant industry. While we recognize the challenges put on many at the present time, this is an ideal opportunity for Council to look forward at creative prospects to bring new business and investment to Chatham-Kent through current and future proprietors. The message in Council adopting such recommendations clearly states that our Council is proactive and Chatham-Kent is "Open for Business".

Yours in Prosperity, Gail

Gail A.B. Hundt / President & CEO / Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce