



Rebuilding Main Street

Helping Ontario Businesses
Reopen Safer, Rehire Faster
and Recover from COVID-19



MAIN STREET S.

“ Every day, people in communities across Ontario depend on small businesses. They did their part and closed their doors during the first wave of the pandemic. Now they are depending on all of us. Our government is determined to support them through this pandemic and beyond.”

Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria,
Associate Minister of Small Business
and Red Tape Reduction



A Message from the Minister

Helping Ontario Businesses Reopen Safer, Rehire Faster and Recover from COVID-19

As Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction and the proud son of two small business owners, I understand what these businesses mean to the people who run them, the communities they serve and the economy they support.

Every day, communities across Ontario depend on small businesses. And today, those small businesses are depending on all of us. That's why our government is determined to support them through this pandemic and beyond.

COVID-19 has presented challenges unlike anything Main Street Ontario has ever faced. Through more than 100 virtual roundtables, I've heard directly from owners, employees, customers, local leaders, and economists. I have listened to the heartbreaking stories from entrepreneurs and family businesses who've sacrificed so much to make their dreams a reality—only to face devastating setbacks brought on by COVID-19.

Throughout the pandemic, small businesses have asked us to support them and lay a stronger economic foundation with new opportunities for growth. Our government's proposals outlined in the Main Street Recovery Plan will help struggling small businesses get back on their feet and jumpstart our economic recovery—so that Ontario's Main Street can reopen safer, rehire faster, and rebuild stronger than before.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke that curves upwards at the end.

Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria,
Associate Minister of Small Business
and Red Tape Reduction

The Backbone of Ontario's Economy

Small and main street businesses are the backbone of Ontario's economy.

They sustain thriving communities, support supply chains, and connect regional economies. Many of them grow into the game-changing companies Ontario is known for worldwide.



Small businesses account for 98% of all businesses across the province and employ close to 2.4 million hardworking Ontarians. That's why their recovery is so critical to Ontario's recovery.

Ontario's Main Street Recovery Plan

The government's **Main Street Recovery Plan** delivers on the concerns it has heard from small businesses by:

- Providing personal protective equipment grants for main street businesses;
- Ending outdated and duplicative rules so businesses can focus on their work;
- Modernizing regulations to allow businesses to innovate and meet the challenges of today;
- Providing mental health supports to business owners and employees who are struggling;
- Building e-commerce tools so small businesses can do more online; and
- Launching a new webpage to assist small businesses to quickly find the supports and information they need.

Ontario Spirit

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented effect on small businesses throughout the province. During this crisis many have come together to serve their communities, while sacrificing to help protect the public's health.

Whether it was temporarily closing their doors to flatten the curve, putting new physical distancing rules in place to keep employees and customers safe, or transforming their business model overnight, small businesses have gone above and beyond to serve the people of Ontario—often at great cost to themselves, their employees and their families.

Together, Premier Ford and Minister Sarkaria have travelled across the province to recognize many of those who have gone above and beyond, with *Small Businesses with Big Hearts*.

A photograph of a woman with short, wavy white hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a blue denim button-down shirt under a green apron. She is holding a white tablet computer with both hands and looking at the screen. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting, possibly a cafe or a shop. A large blue geometric shape is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text.

Ontario's Main Street Recovery Plan

Many small businesses have carefully and safely reopened across the province, but it is not business as usual.

Our government wants small businesses to know that we will be there for them. Not just today, but every step of the way.

Ontario's Main Street Recovery Plan

Ontario's new **Main Street Recovery Plan** builds on more than \$10 billion in urgent relief and support provided through Ontario's COVID-19 Action Plan.

It features the proposed **Main Street Recovery Act**, along with new programs and policy changes that will provide the supports and services small businesses need, as identified through more than 100 virtual meetings, roundtables, and discussions with owners, employees, economists and associations.

Ontario's **Small Business Strategy** completes the plan, providing the framework for how the government will support small business growth and investment over the long term.

The strategy has five pillars to support main street businesses:

- Lowering costs
- Increasing exports
- Developing talent
- Accelerating technology adoption
- Encouraging entrepreneurship, succession planning, and diversity

Altogether, the **Main Street Recovery Plan** will allow more small businesses to learn about, apply for, and easily access the help they need.

Programs, Services and Supports

to Help Small and Main Street Businesses Reopen Safer, Rehire Faster, and Rebuild Better



Ontario's Main Street Recovery Grant

Ontario businesses come in all shapes and sizes. Those that require frequent, in-person contact with customers or coworkers have been heavily impacted by physical distancing requirements to stop the spread of COVID-19. To help these businesses provide a safe place for their customers and their employees, our government is launching the Main Street Recovery Grant.

It will provide a one-time grant of up to \$1,000 for small and main street businesses—in the retail, food and accommodation sectors, and other service sectors with two to nine employees—to help them cover personal protective equipment (PPE) costs, as well as provide cash flow relief. Eligible costs include plexiglass, gloves, face coverings, and other items businesses need to protect their employees and customers, while increasing confidence for consumers. Grant applications will open later this year.

Ontario's Small Business COVID-19 Recovery Network

Small businesses in every region of Ontario have been negatively impacted by the pandemic to some degree. The government is helping small businesses access direct local support by linking Ontario's 47 Small Business Enterprise Centres into the new Small Business COVID-19 Recovery Network. Through this network, Small Business Enterprise Centres will offer more individually tailored advice, planning, and tools to serve the needs of owners and entrepreneurs in their community.

New location tools and up-to-date contact information to help find the nearest local centre are available on the new Small Business Recovery Webpage at ontario.ca/smallbusiness.

Digital Main Street Squads

The digital space provides a whole new world of opportunities for small businesses to expand and advance. **Digital Main Street Squads** are going live across the province to help more small and main street businesses go digital. The squads, composed of talented graduates and students with strong technology and marketing backgrounds, are providing one-on-one help with digital assessments, website creation, social media advertising, and e-commerce platforms.

These squads are part of the province's **Digital Main Street** program which, in partnership with the Federal Government, is helping nearly 23,000 small businesses across Ontario to create, build and improve their online presence. Through three digital main street programs, the Toronto Region Board of Trade's Recovery Activation Program, and grants of up to \$2,500, we are helping small and main street businesses quickly pivot their operations online, reach more customers in a physically distanced environment, and be better positioned for future success.

Ontario's Small Business Recovery Webpage

With the COVID-19 crisis changing day-to-day, small businesses need one window to get answers for their most important questions, as well as easy access to supports and programs. Ontario's new Small Business Recovery webpage brings together government services for small and main street businesses, making it easier to learn about, apply for, and access COVID-19 recovery and relief programs and up-to-date information.

The webpage will be regularly refreshed with small business-focused news from across government. It currently features information on reopening, financial and non-financial supports, adapting and transforming operations, and how people and businesses can help.

Visit the webpage at ontario.ca/smallbusiness.



Mental Health Services

To help more families, frontline workers, young people, children, and Indigenous communities across Ontario manage through this difficult time, the government is offering expanded mental health and addiction services. This includes community-based services along with virtual and online mental health supports like internet-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (iCBT) and BounceBack.

Modernized Regulations so Businesses can Innovate and Meet the Unique Challenges of COVID-19

The last thing small businesses need as they struggle to respond to the pandemic are outdated or duplicative regulations and red tape that slow them down and cost them money. The government continues to help more businesses rapidly adapt to new demands and the changing business climate by modernizing regulations so they can keep their doors open.

Focused and effective rules are improving existing standards to help Ontario workers and families stay healthy and safe, while protecting our environment and the public interest. Smarter regulations that use digital pathways where possible are faster to comply with, so that businesses can invest their precious time and money in restarting, rehiring and implementing new safety measures.

Our government is making the following changes that would:

Commit to exploring options to permanently allow restaurants and bars that hold a Liquor Sales Licence to include alcohol with food as part of a takeout or delivery order

These changes would allow restaurants and food businesses to continue the new revenue streams the government has temporarily provided due to the pandemic, positioning them for future growth opportunities.

Support the distribution of local food and food products by increasing the range of products sold at the Ontario Food Terminal

Thousands of small businesses—from farms to independent grocery stores to restaurants—rely on the Ontario Food Terminal for their success.

This would help support the recovery and growth of agri-food businesses across Ontario, enabling sellers to offer more products for sale to increase their revenues.

At the same time, buyers—and ultimately consumers—would enjoy an expanded variety of local products for purchase.

Support Ontario's Taxi and Limousine Industry by increasing fines for illegal operators

To ensure that Ontarians are safe when they travel, these changes would act as a strong deterrent to illegal operators, making it easier to protect those arriving at Ontario's airports.

Among other changes, this would increase the fine range to \$500 - \$30,000 per offence.





Permanently allow 24/7 deliveries of goods across Ontario to businesses that include retail stores, restaurants and distribution facilities

This would build on temporary changes made to help keep shelves stocked at the outset of the pandemic this spring.

It would help support economic recovery on our main streets and help ensure that important goods can continue to be delivered to businesses as efficiently as possible.

Two previous pilots have shown that it could also reduce rush-hour traffic, lower fuel costs for businesses, and reduce greenhouse gas and other emissions.

Enable Community Net Metering demonstration projects to help support local communities to develop innovative community energy projects, such as net-zero or community micro-grids that use small-scale energy systems including renewable generation

These changes would allow participating small businesses and residential customers to embrace innovative, low-carbon opportunities and provide access to more choices in how they meet their daily energy needs.

Smart communities could unlock lower costs through sustainable energy choices and distributed energy and conservation technologies.



Bring Ontario's Assistive Devices Program into the 21st Century

These changes would ensure that when people need their first or a new assistive device—such as a wheelchair, a hearing aid, or other specialized supplies—they are not burdened with unnecessary paperwork and outdated timelines for small business vendors.

By digitizing this process, small businesses that sell assistive devices would be able to upload claims online and receive payment in as little as 1-2 weeks instead of 8.



To learn more and hear about
other programs and changes
we're making to support small
and main street businesses,

visit ontario.ca/smallbusiness

