

King Chamber calls for stronger measures

By Mark Pavilons

King's business organization is calling for all levels of government to infuse some needed economic stimulus, to slow the fallout from the COVID-19 crisis. The King Chamber of Commerce sent out a plea to King councillors, King-Vaughan MP Deb Schulte and King-Vaughan MPP Stephen Lecce last week, calling for an emergency standstill agreement. In the letter, from Chamber president Angelo Santorelli, said all payments should top mortgages, lease payments, taxes, etc. All businesses would pay their employees with a pay-through fund that all levels of government pass on to employers to pass on to employees that are currently on staff as of a specific date set by the government. This needs to be implemented immediately, with all levels of government working together to make it happen so we can have stability and continuity in our work place, our homes and our businesses. We need to bring all business leaders and governments together to make this agreement now. Our goal should be to have this in place within 15 days and have the emergency standstill agreement become the lifeline that is so badly needed at this time, a lifeline that can't be broken until life gets back to normal. No waiting period, start now! Santorelli said the government must stop throwing more money out without working out a sustainable future for all people and all businesses in this great country. We need long-term positive action. He pointed out he's been in business in Ontario for 43 years and has seen a lot of economic turmoil over four decades. I have had to deal with many situations in my business but nothing like this! Not many of us, or perhaps none of us, have seen anything like this before, that's why we have to act now. MP Schulte said nothing in our lifetime has compared with the changes to our daily routines that we now face. The federal government of is delivering immediate help to Canadians and businesses that are most in need. They are providing \$27 billion of direct support to Canadian workers and businesses, and keeping an additional \$55 billion in the economy through tax deferrals. The new Canada Emergency Response Benefit will provide \$2,000 a month for up to four months for workers who lose their income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is available to all workers, regardless of whether they are eligible for Employment Insurance or not. For businesses, the government has provided a deferral of tax payments until the end of August and to help businesses retain workers, there now is a 75% wage subsidy and enhancements to the Work-Sharing Program. We are working to ensure that businesses can stay on their feet and eventually recover. This is important to the well being of the Canadian economy. Schulte said. As we work together to flatten the curve and slow down the transmission of the virus, the government is working to support Canadians every step of the way. MPP Lecce has been working around the clock checking in with local stakeholders, small business owners, and constituents of the King-Vaughan community, while we all deal with the global pandemic of COVID-19. He has reached out to both Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua and Mayor Steve Pellegrini, as well as federal MPs Deb Schulte and Francesco Sorbara. He spoke with Brian Shifman (president of Vaughan's Chamber of Commerce), Angelo Santorelli (president of King's Chamber of Commerce), and small business owners on government efforts to support local business and the King-Vaughan economy. In partnership with all levels of government and our Township, we will do whatever it takes to protect the health of our people and of our economy. This is why we have made \$10 billion in support available for small businesses to protect jobs, keep taxes low, and support local businesses. I recently engaged in conversations with the Chamber of Commerce President Angelo Santorelli, where I emphasized our efforts to support the King-Vaughan economy. Citizens of King Township and Vaughan should know that our Government will continue to take action to save lives, jobs, incomes and our local economy, working to ensure we all overcome this pandemic together. First announced in Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19, measures to help lessen the burden on businesses and household budgets include: Supporting more affordable electricity bills for eligible residential, farm and small business consumers, by providing approximately \$5.6 billion for electricity cost relief programs in 2020-21, which is an increase of approximately \$1.5 billion compared to the 2019 Budget plan. Making electricity bills more affordable by setting electricity prices for residential, farm and small business time-of-use customers at the lowest rate, known as the off-peak price, 24 hours a day for 45 days to support ratepayers in their increased daytime electricity usage as they respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, addressing concerns on time-of-use metering. Cutting taxes by \$355 million dollars for about 57,000 employers through a proposed temporary increase to the Employer Health Tax (EHT) exemption. Making available \$6 billion by providing five months of interest and penalty relief for businesses to file and make payments for the majority of provincially administered taxes. Deferring in the upcoming June 30 quarterly municipal remittance of education property tax to school boards by 90 days, which will provide over \$1.8 billion in relief to businesses by providing municipalities the flexibility to, in

turn, provide property tax deferrals to residents and businesses, while ensuring school boards continue to receive their funding. ? Making available \$1.9 billion by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) allowing employers to defer payments for up to six months ? Helping to support regions lagging in employment growth with a proposed new Corporate Income Tax Credit, the Regional Opportunities Investment Tax Credit.