Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes Business Survey: COVID-19 Report

April 9, 2020

where **lifestyle** **grows** good **business**

Survey Timeframe: March 30 – April 3, 2020

Communities

Athens | Augusta | Brockville | Edwardsburgh Cardinal | Elizabethtown-Kitley | Front of Yonge Gananoque | Leeds and the Thousand Islands | Merrickville-Wolford | North Grenville | Prescott Rideau Lakes | Westport

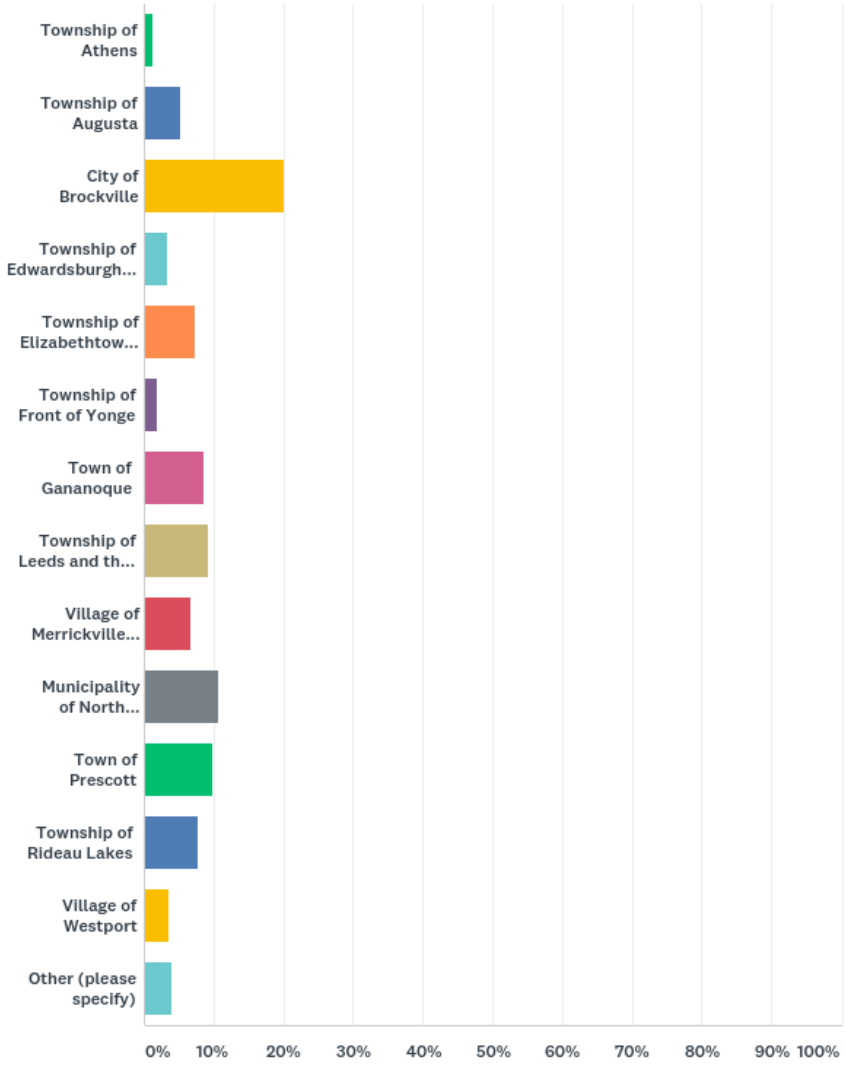
Prepared by:

United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
Economic Development Office
32 Wall Street, Suite 300, Brockville, ON

www.investleedsgrenville.com/covid19

#1 Where is your business located?

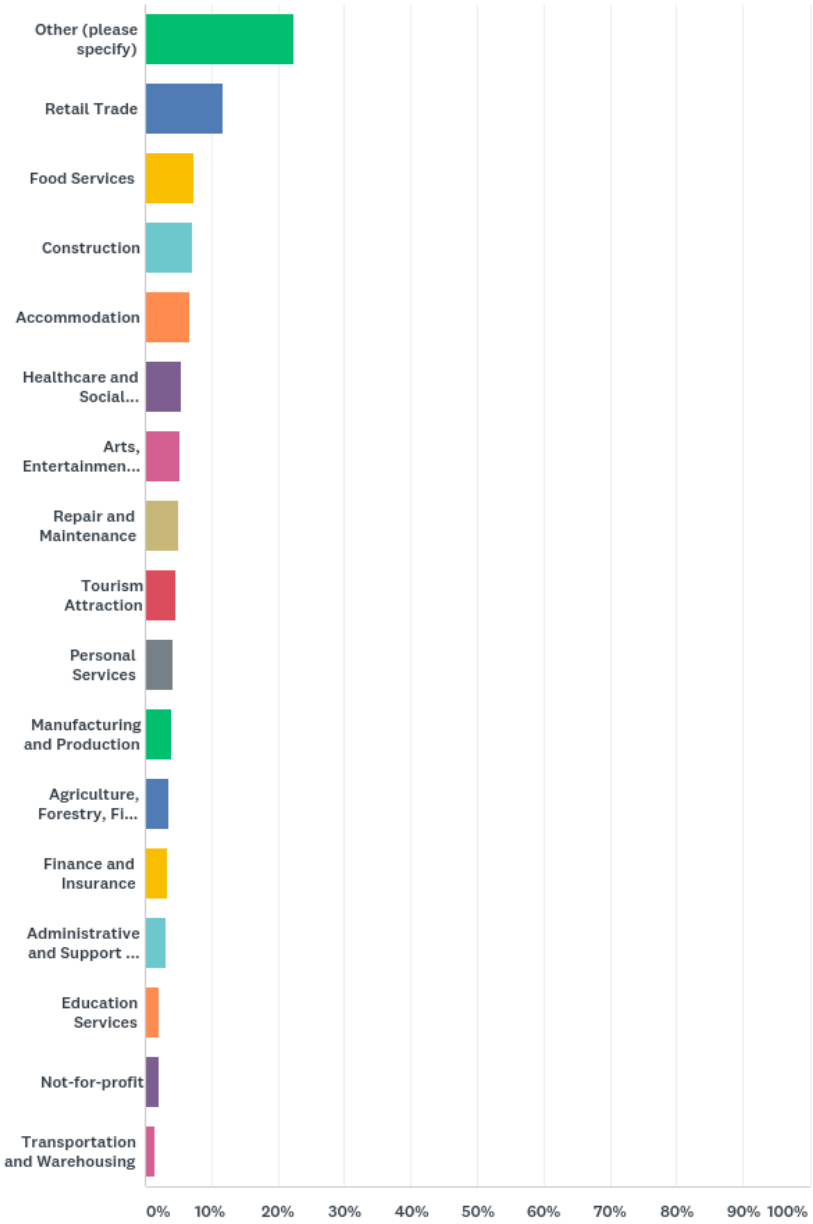
Answered: 473 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Township of Athens		1.27%	6
Township of Augusta		5.29%	25
City of Brockville		20.08%	95
Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal		3.38%	16
Township of Elizabethtown-Kitley		7.40%	35
Township of Front of Yonge		1.90%	9
Town of Gananoque		8.67%	41
Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands		9.30%	44
Village of Merrickville-Wolford		6.77%	32
Municipality of North Grenville		10.57%	50
Town of Prescott		9.94%	47
Township of Rideau Lakes		7.82%	37
Village of Westport		3.59%	17
Other (please specify)	Responses	4.02%	19
TOTAL			473

#2 What sector is your business primarily operating in?

Answered: 474 Skipped: 0



#2 continued…

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Other (please specify)	Responses	22.36%	106
Retail Trade		11.81%	56
Food Services		7.38%	35
Construction		7.17%	34
Accommodation		6.75%	32
Healthcare and Social Assistance		5.49%	26
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation		5.27%	25
Repair and Maintenance		5.06%	24
Tourism Attraction		4.64%	22
Personal Services		4.22%	20
Manufacturing and Production		4.01%	19
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish and Hunting		3.59%	17
Finance and Insurance		3.38%	16
Administrative and Support - Business Services		3.16%	15
Education Services		2.11%	10
Not-for-profit		2.11%	10
Transportation and Warehousing		1.48%	7
TOTAL			474

- Real estate sales x8
- Marina x3
- Dog kennel x3
- Electrical contractor x2
- Professional services x2
- Marketing x2
- Riding stable x2
- HVAC x2
- Law x2
- Funeral home x2
- Consulting x2
- Wholesale, retail, food production
- Residential and commercial cleaning
- Property management
- Security
- Martial arts training
- Dog boarding and daycare
- Wellness
- Provider of retail space, landlord for multiple stores
- Technology
- Risk assessment and risk management consulting
- Wildlife management / Sales
- Telecommunications
- Information technology
- Not-for-profit child care

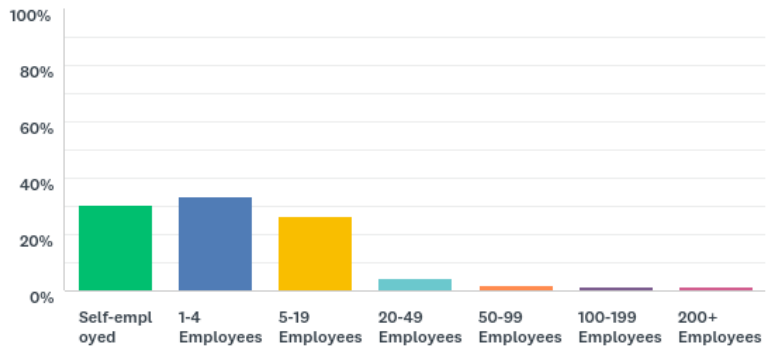
#2 continued…

- Accommodation / restaurant
- Automotive repair and parts sales
- Photographer
- Halo therapy and reflexology
- Vineyard and winery which encompasses tourism, food service's and agriculture
- Local crafters and artisans
- Freelance writer / virtual assistant
- Home inspection
- Custom picture framing
- Event services and retail
- Wedding decor rentals and cakes
- Stylist
- Employment services - employers and job seekers
- Self-storage / cargo trailer and U-Haul rentals
- Heritage and culture
- Property maintenance
- Public accounting
- Veterinary
- Technology - software development
- Inspection of commercial and pleasure craft for regulatory compliance
- Wedding officiant / celebrant
- Municipal government
- Signs and advertising
- Wellness spa
- Management consulting
- Antique shop
- Residential / cottage painting and light maintenance
- Business financial and growth development consulting
- Spiritual wicca
- Travel agency
- Signage and design
- House cleaner
- Wholesale and warehouse
- Media
- Waste management
- Dry cleaners
- Environmental and safety training / monitoring
- Fitness
- Tour guide and canoe / boat restoration
- Psychotherapist
- Website hosting and design
- Local newspaper
- Recreation and tourism

- Landscape / garden service
- Media and publishing
- Cottages, seasonal trailers and an Airbnb
- Software for zero waste
- Accommodation and attractions
- Plumbing repair and service
- Steel recycling and new steel sales
- Maple syrup production and sales
- Event venue
- Fishing, hunting retail and tourism
- Commercial printing
- Plumbing
- Utilities
- Cemetery, funeral industry
- Design and supply of forms and labels
- Hearing

#3 Typically, how many employees does your company have?

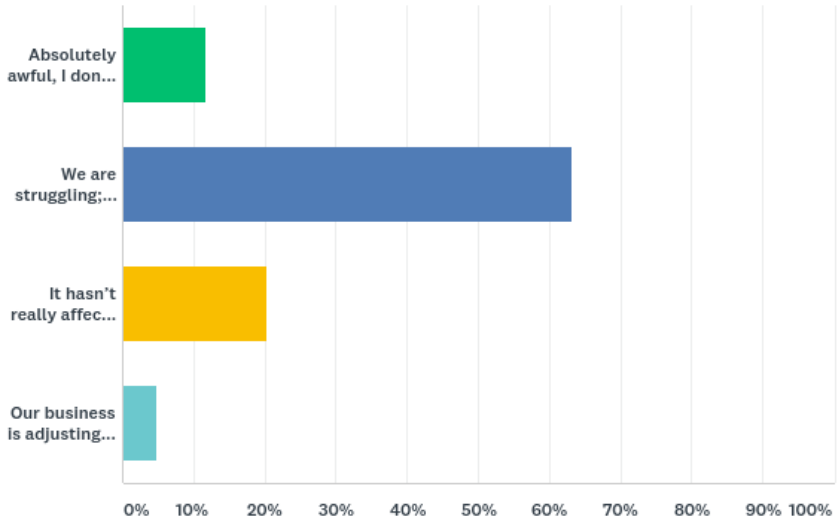
Answered: 473 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Self-employed	30.66%	145
1-4 Employees	33.62%	159
5-19 Employees	26.43%	125
20-49 Employees	4.65%	22
50-99 Employees	1.90%	9
100-199 Employees	1.27%	6
200+ Employees	1.48%	7
TOTAL		473

#4 How would you describe the impacts of COVID-19 on your business?

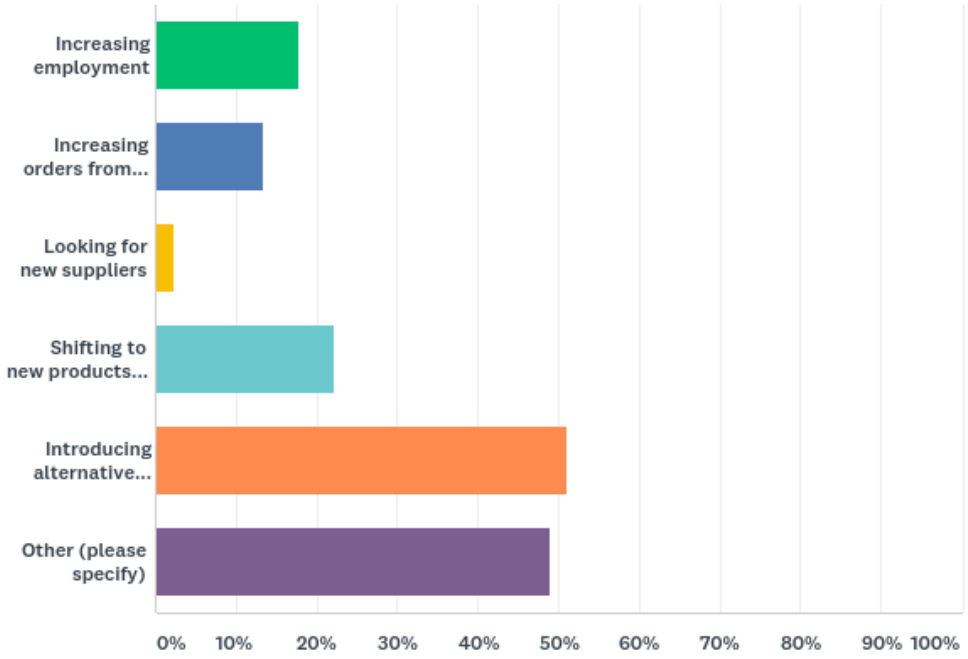
Answered: 470 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Absolutely awful, I don't think our business will make it through (PROCEED TO QUESTION 6)	11.70%	55
We are struggling; recovering for this could take some time (PROCEED TO QUESTION 6)	63.19%	297
It hasn't really affected us yet (PROCEED TO QUESTION 7)	20.21%	95
Our business is adjusting and growing (PROCEED TO QUESTION 5)	4.89%	23
TOTAL		470

#5 If your business is growing due to COVID-19, what will you or are you doing to address this? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 45 Skipped: 429



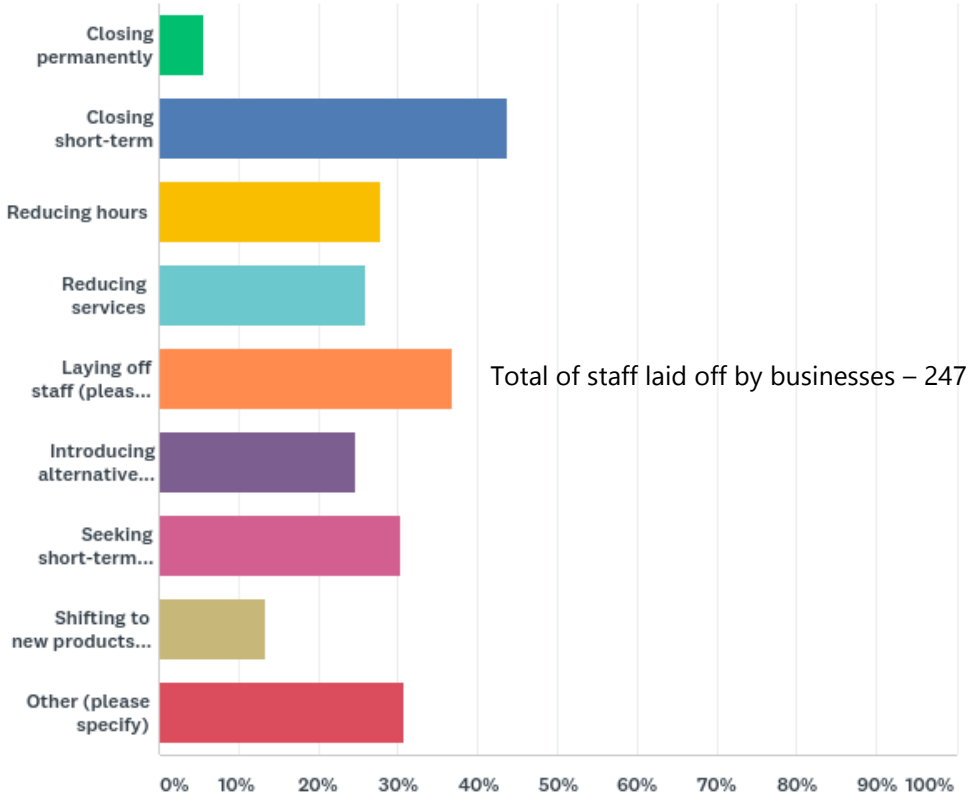
ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Increasing employment		17.78%	8
Increasing orders from suppliers		13.33%	6
Looking for new suppliers		2.22%	1
Shifting to new products or services		22.22%	10
Introducing alternative ways of working (working from home, working remotely)		51.11%	23
Other (please specify)	Responses	48.89%	22
Total Respondents: 45			

Other (please specify)

- Changing procedures for interactions with customers x3
- Selling online x2
- Delivering products to customers x2
- Increased demand for farm fresh food
- Working from home to provide services
- Taking orders and payments by phone and orders brought to customer's cars
- Home delivery
- Developing programs and strategies to quickly adapt business once crisis is over
- Diversification and growth plans have been put on hold

#6 If your business is affected negatively by COVID-19, what will you or are you doing to address this? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 388 Skipped: 86



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Closing permanently		5.67%	22
Closing short-term		43.81%	170
Reducing hours		27.84%	108
Reducing services		26.03%	101
Laying off staff (please specify number) _____		36.86%	143
Introducing alternative ways of working (working from home, working remotely)		24.74%	96
Seeking short-term financing		30.41%	118
Shifting to new products or services		13.40%	52
Other (please specify)	Responses	30.67%	119
Total Respondents: 388			

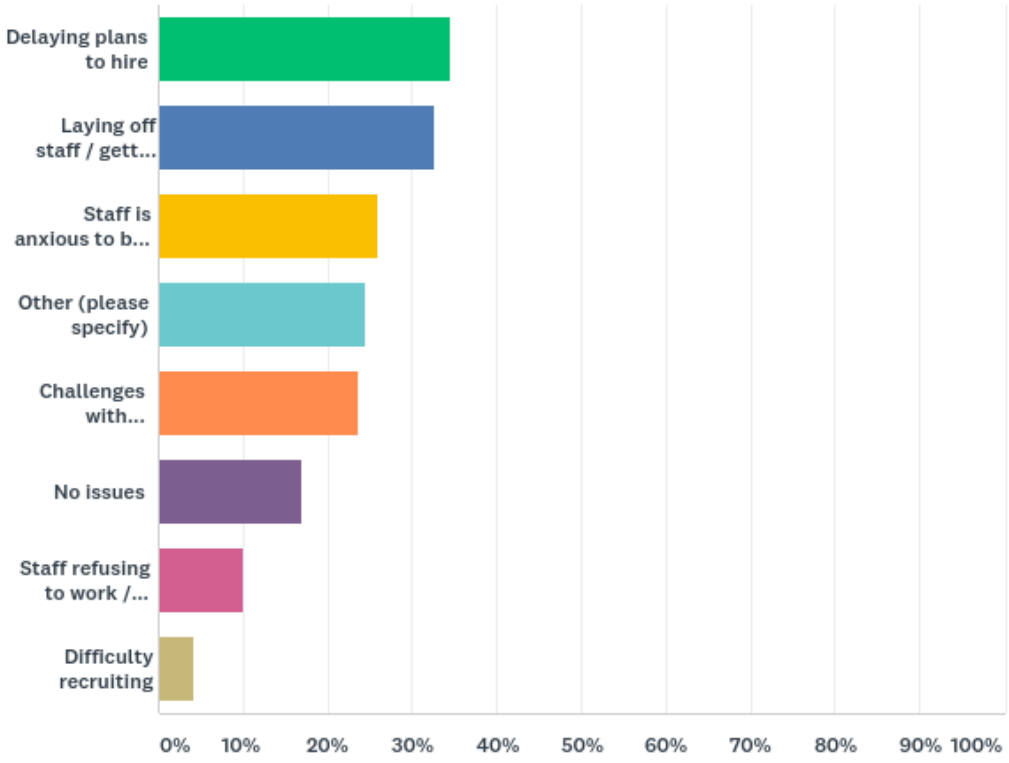
#6 continued…

Other (please specify)

- Seeking government funding x8
- Adding or increasing online sales x6
- Online ordering with curb-side pickup and/or delivery x4
- Providing virtual services x2
- Minimizing expenses x2
- Buying more trucks for social distancing
- Temporarily reducing payments towards accounts payable
- Stopping travel to client's sites for training and facilitation
- Reduced services to residential clients due to social distancing; provide essential services to Hydro One and local municipalities and have had to hire extra staff in the event that someone is ill so we can continue to provide service
- Only servicing customers that want workers in homes or outdoor installs
- Self-employed and no longer taking salary from business
- Shifting to minimum operations and looking for short-term financing for investment in infrastructure as a make-work project
- Looking for more clients
- Doing only emergency service and repairs for HVAC
- Appointments only or email consultations
- Reduction in income for owner and staff
- Not hiring for season and doing more work ourselves
- Take out only
- Purchasing labour saving equipment to help compensate for loss of productivity
- Possibly declaring bankruptcy
- Seeking funding from local municipality
- Bring in short-term casual relief staff as needed
- Paying my two employees as usual despite financial hardship for business
- Rescheduling booked events where possible
- Offering additional classes and new products
- Trying to diversify and build on other aspects of business
- Deferring government HST and WSIB payments
- Will need to find a job to avoid personal bankruptcy

#7 What issues or challenges are you experiencing with your employees/ workforce due to COVID-19? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 420 Skipped: 54



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Delaying plans to hire		34.52%	145
Laying off staff / getting them onto EI		32.62%	137
Staff is anxious to be working		25.95%	109
Other (please specify)	Responses	24.52%	103
Challenges with alternative ways of working (ie. working from home, working remotely)		23.57%	99
No issues		16.90%	71
Staff refusing to work / absenteeism		10.00%	42
Difficulty recruiting		4.29%	18
Total Respondents: 420			

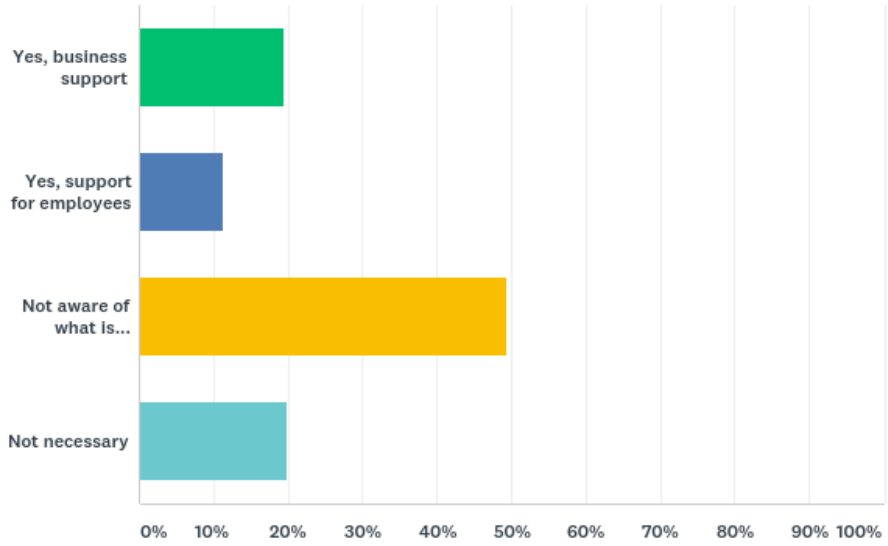
#7 continued…

Other (please specify)

- Business not able to operate / open as non-essential x7
- Getting access to sites where work is to be completed (some sites are on lockdown or clients do not want workers in homes) x3
- Require part-time or seasonal help but will not have financial resources to hire x2
- Getting products to customers with the safety of employees and customers in mind x2
- Supply channels, coordination of work with sub-contractors and meeting project deadlines x2
- Lack of childcare for staff x2
- Pre-ordered and purchased supplies may not be available
- Cannot work from home in health care
- Paying employees to be home until it is safe to work again
- Uncertainty as to whether our foreign workers will arrive in time
- Employees ill with non-COVID illness cannot get clearances to return to work because of the overload to the health system and doctor shortage in this area
- Worried about employees feeling safe and not anxious when ready to return to work
- Lack of supplies – gloves and masks
- Setting up access to files for employees working from home
- Heavy load on internet is affecting my home-based business
- Staff is paid on commission and there is little or no work
- Transportation to site is now limited to 1-2 persons per vehicle, this is expensive
- Dealing with client's employees fears
- Employees lack focus
- Concerned about having enough volunteers to care for animals
- Cost of buying equipment for staff to work at home
- Cost of adapting business to make it safe for staff and customers
- Delaying return from maternity leave
- Anxiety for owner re upcoming season and viability of business

#8 Have you accessed any government support programs currently available?

Answered: 437 Skipped: 37



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, business support	19.45%	85
Yes, support for employees	11.21%	49
Not aware of what is available	49.43%	216
Not necessary	19.91%	87
TOTAL		437

#9 What support are you looking for from the federal and provincial governments right now?

Answered: 384 Skipped: 90

- Income replacement / financial assistance (grants) x163
- Wage subsidies x48
- Clear information and easier access to programs x23
- Loans x19
- Deferral of operating costs (hydro, rent, mortgage payments, taxes, phone) x13
- Nothing x12
- Nothing right now x12
- Interest free loans x9
- Assistance for small businesses / self-employed that do not qualify for CERB x7
- HST / source deduction breaks / forgiveness x6
- Working capital x4
- An exit plan and help for tourism businesses further on x3
- Waiting for support to become available x2
- Enforcement of social distancing x2
- Tighten the shutdown to be more specific for construction industry x2
- Close all businesses including drive-thru and take-out, flatten the curve x2
- Deferral of income tax x2
- Daycare costs x2
- More PPE for staff x2
- Ability to remain open
- Defer or lower costs for CPP, EI, WSIB
- Tax breaks
- Debt forgiveness
- Approval of delivering farm fresh eggs to customers
- Ensure that crop inputs are available, support for ethanol industry
- Allow farm gate sales to extend to delivery and farmers markets
- Something for medium businesses with payroll over $1 million
- Rental assistance
- A plan of action, true numbers
- Government to recognize my skills as a health care worker and allow me to work within my scope of practice to see patients and divert them from overwhelmed facilities
- Quick action on access for foreign workers
- Accounts receivable will become an issue for telecommunications providers
- Commercial rent and mortgage freeze
- Equal access to supports for all businesses
- Cancel the Carbon Tax
- Need reliable high speed internet in rural areas and subsidies for home offices
- Assistance for starting new business
- Assistance for realtors

#9 continued…

- Lower taxes
- All hotels and motels be given $40 per day per room for March, April, May and June
- Will Province support municipalities to keep staff on with no work available
- Get back to normal ASAP, this is not a good reason to shut down everyone's lives
- Lowering of bank interest rate
- Mandate that all banks freeze mortgage and loan payments along with interest for small businesses
- Grants for small media publications
- More tourism support and water level corrections
- Bridge financing, lower credit card rates
- Stimulus for manufacturing sector
- Grants to increase advertising for new season

#10 What support are you looking for from your local municipal government right now?

Answered: 338 Skipped: 136

- Nothing x51
- Financial grants x39
- Property tax deferral x34
- Just keep us safe / keep people home, no cottages or boating / tighten restrictions on essential services so that we can get through this quicker, fight the spread x17
- Information / support / advise on government programs x17
- Refund property taxes / tax relief x15
- Reduce property taxes x14
- Promote / market local businesses and services that are open x12
- Support of any kind when needed x9
- Keep us informed on what is happening locally x9
- Defer utility payments x9
- Nothing at present time x8
- Lobby the federal / provincial governments, including for support for self-employed x7
- Reduce water bills x5
- Remove non-payment fees or charges x5
- Support businesses that are functioning in some capacity or are not able to operate x3
- Freeze property taxes for 5 years x3
- Keep tax rates status quo x2
- Remove all fees x2
- Let us know if there is any requirement my business can fulfill x2
- To be there when we need them, cooperation x2
- Rent subsidies x2
- Leadership x2
- Wage subsidy x2
- Support health care efforts, primary care, seniors care, hospitals x2

#10 continued…

- Low interest loan x2
- Complete capital projects as budgeted and deliver services x2
- Interest free loans
- Help with interest free loans that we qualify for
- Suspend garbage tags
- Permanently exempt downtown hotels from the DBIA charges
- Reduce property taxes for six months
- Same as what we are looking for from the federal and provincial governments
- Working capital
- Assistance with rent
- Lower fees for zoning amendments to keep business in area
- Extensive marketing for tourism in preparation for end of crisis
- Allow farms to sell products outside of quota systems
- Allow farm gate sales to extend to delivery and farmers markets, for example, delivering eggs to homes
- Reduce commercial tax rates
- Eliminate by-law restrictions that are anti-business
- Stop fear mongering in the media
- Keep boat ramps open so that I can continue to operate my provincially mandated essential service
- Clean city streets, stop people racing around Blockhouse Island and up and down general area
- I honestly don't know, I feel overwhelmed
- Ways for small farms to survive
- Defer unnecessary infrastructure work
- If tighter travel restrictions placed, would be helpful to have vehicle identifiers or documents from local municipalities for all essential service providers
- Property tax support and more cooperation, they have never been helpful to us in any way
- Help for the homeless, open the old Elmgrove on Oxford Avenue as a temporary quarantine shelter for the homeless
- Just remember that we are here too, keep us in mind when decisions are made
- Will be reaching out to United Counties for funding support for homeless youths
- Support delivery of Health Canada safety messages; Prescott is doing well in this
- Not-for-profits and charitable organizations will need long-term partnerships with municipalities to remain viable
- Presence at planning tables, especially if there are any interests in sharing facilities or services
- Recovery funding with priority consideration given to investing in new technologies, partnerships and markets
- Lobbying for us to open
- Waive fees so that projects can get going faster
- Write off property taxes, water / sewer, establish emergency funds for businesses, subsidize tourism businesses that are going to have to offer deep discounts
- Focus support on people living in our region
- Defer payment of kennel license
- Hazardous waste more than one day per year
- Assistance with our former Maitland store revitalization project

#10 continued…

- Plan for tourism downtown improvements, support community assets that have run down, open Forwarder's Museum
- Government assistance is a joke. I needed it during the ice storm and got nothing. I expect same this time as well.

#11 What support are you looking for from your local community organizations right now? (ie. Chambers, Employment Services, BIAs, Small Business Centres)

Answered: 287 Skipped: 187

- Nothing x53
- Provision of clear and concise information on supports that are available x34
- Assistance in applying for government funding x26
- Shop local advertise / promote businesses that are open and promote buy local x18
- Don't know what they do or unsure of how they could help x18
- Financial grants x13
- We need an advocate for small business (5-10 employees, sole proprietors, etc.) relief that does not involve added debt and with payrolls less than $50,000 x11
- Nothing right now x10
- Work on a recovery plan for when crisis is over x4
- A regional marketing campaign, including a goal to replace US and international markets x4
- Additional supports for employees, including training x4
- Information on best COVID 19 practices x4
- Help people "stay at home" to flatten the curve, keep employees safe x3
- Interest free loans x2
- Easily accessible EI x2
- Leadership x2
- Defer Chamber membership dues x2
- Online training for hosting Zoom meetings, webinars and using technology to work x2
- I would not expect these offices to have any experience that would help x2
- Assistance to establish and encourage online sales x2
- Local showcasing of small businesses, including home based businesses x2
- Tourism marketing campaign for region
- Support for vulnerable and short-term work arounds to allow for physical distancing for a couple of weeks
- Payment deferrals
- Loans
- Negotiate better Moneris rates
- Defer property taxes
- Support for farm gate sales to extend to delivery and farmers markets
- Be more supportive of new businesses instead of focusing on status quo
- Possibly use funds allocated to BIA to help small businesses

#11 continued…

- Assistance in finding a job, as business is now closed
- Reductions in utility charges
- Feed and address the poor
- United Way of Leeds and Grenville – financial support and referrals and connections to other community organizations
- No more webinars, we are in webinar overload
- Support in new ways to do business and how to advertise without seeming to use fear to grow our business
- Lobby the government for financial aid that does not involve stopping my employees from working small amounts, which then makes them ineligible for $2000 per month
- Platform where we can come together to help each other
- Considering this crisis an opportunity to refocus and restructure
- Open communication on matters of shared interest and consultation on strategies
- Advertise local businesses that are offering online sales
- Assistance for businesses in terms of having to close, opening and being open as an essential service
- Any assistance to let people know that donations are down substantially and encourage donations
- Chamber is not helpful but Ontario Approved has been sharing information and working with companies
- Creating a winter destination
- Would like to see a Grenville Community Futures Development Corporation interest rate drop to the Bank of Canada rate
- Innovation, free learning
- Chamber and BIA should support tourism
- Leeds Grenville Small Business Enterprise Centre has already started webinars for strategies and business plan revisions and I applaud them for that
- Businesses sharing information as to what specific struggles they are facing so that those that may be able to assist can contact them
- I have no idea, I am so scared that I am going to close permanently
- Ad revenue to support my publication and to promote shop local. Help promote my publications to small businesses in the area for affordable advertising
- Testing sites for the public and employees

#12 What would be helpful right now to assist your business with transition and recovery?

Answered: 279 Skipped: 195

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Online Retail Store setup and training		15.41%	43
Support or best practices on deliveries		16.13%	45
Group software or technology purchases to allow workers to work remotely		7.17%	20
Other (please specify)	Responses	61.29%	171
TOTAL			279

Other (please specify)

- Financial grants x37
- Clear and concise information on government assistance that is available x7
- Free advertising / marketing for businesses still open, not just retail x5
- Rent forgiveness / rent assistance x3
- Good internet services, grants for software and hardware to do business online x3
- Social media support to allow interactions with customers x2
- Digital training x2
- Advocate for federal / provincial funding to support businesses in region
- Working capital
- Financing, banks that stay open past normal business hours
- Allow delivery of eggs to customers and allow farmers markets to remain open
- More government support at all levels
- Guidance on how to re-establish customer relationships and trust
- PPE for employees to continue with essential services
- Government assistance with bad debts
- Best practices re working from home
- A positive plan for recovery
- Financing to set up online store in time for market garden season
- Removing half load restriction on roads
- Close all non-essential businesses, only allow gas and groceries, no drive-thrus
- Help with advertising locally (cooperative advertising)
- Free business promotion
- Deferral of municipal taxes and water bill, elimination of two-tier water bills (residential and commercial)
- Advocacy and stressing the importance of key community programs and services like the YMCA that operates as a charity
- Wage subsidy
- Financing to purchasing new equipment for new business
- Recovery plan
- Daycare

#12 continued…

- Open up the economy now
- Adjustments to websites making those aware of cancellations
- Support with business planning and cash flow planning moving forward
- Get children back to school and open up day care facilities
- Temporary lifting of bureaucratic red tape
- Programs and webinars
- Municipal effort to recruit new businesses downtown
- Government virus testing to prove I am not a carrier to assure clients
- Best practices on operations
- Software development
- Financing for hardware purchase and software implementation
- Assistance on how to close incorporated business quickly and cost effectively

#13 What is your primary source of information on COVID-19 and business support programs?

Answered: 463 Skipped: 11

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Local media		41.47%	192
Twitter		1.08%	5
Facebook		8.42%	39
LinkedIn		0.00%	0
Leeds Grenville Lanark District Health Unit		5.40%	25
Municipal or Counties website		3.46%	16
Local Chamber of Commerce		2.16%	10
Industry Association		6.91%	32
Other (please specify)	Responses	31.10%	144
TOTAL			463

Other (please specify)

- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) x42
- Canadian Television Network (CTV) x31
- Federal / provincial government websites x27
- CBC Radio / local radio x13
- Online x10
- Television news x9
- International news x6
- Canadian Federation of Independent Business x5
- Lawyers and accounting professionals x4
- World Health Organization x3
- Conversations with friends, family x3
- Social media (follow Health Canada, Theresa Tham, Justin Trudeau, Doug Ford) x3
- Centre for Disease Control x2
- Canada Revenue Agency x2
- Federal, provincial health organizations x2
- Local Health Unit x2
- Facebook x2
- Health Canada x2
- Local business networking groups and associates, Ontario Approved, BBN x2
- Global
- Ministry of Health
- Bank manager and accountant
- Prime Minister Trudeau and MNP newsletters
- Two daily newspapers
- Email from Ministry of Education, Counties

- Internal work updates
- Reddit
- Sun Life Financials' COVID 19 updates
- Feeds from industry sector
- Google
- Bank, Canadian Physiotherapy Association
- YouTube
- Counties website
- Various chat groups
- ORCA and RHRA
- John Hopkins University
- Ottawa Public Health
- Royal College of Dental Surgeons, Ontario Dental Association
- Small Business Enterprise Centre
- Many in rural area do not have access to reliable media or internet sources
- Ontario Approved Professionals
- Equestrian Canada

#14 If you would like to speak to someone regarding support available to businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, please provide your contact information:

Answered: 175 Skipped: 299

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Contact Name	Responses	100.00%	175
Business Name	Responses	98.29%	172
Contact Number	Responses	91.43%	160
Email	Responses	97.71%	171

Additional Notes:

- Survey Timeframe: March 30 – April 3, 2020
- Survey Distribution: Businesses that were part the Counties Economic Development business directory, with active email addresses, received the Covid-19 survey directly. In addition, some members of Business Support Working Group distributed the survey through their membership lists.
- Government of Ontario modified Essential Workplace list on April 3, 2020 with additional business closures on April 4, 2020 at 11:59 p.m.

Business Support Working Group:

Municipalities
Athens | Augusta | Brockville | Edwardsburgh Cardinal | Elizabethtown-Kitley | Front of Yonge | Gananoque | Leeds and the Thousand Islands | Merrickville-Wolford | North Grenville | Prescott | Rideau Lakes | Westport

MP / MPP
MP Office of Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes
MPP Office of Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes

Community Futures Development Corporations
1000 Islands CDC | Grenville CFDC | Valley Heartland CFDC

Small Business Enterprise Centres
Leeds & Grenville Small Business Enterprise Centre
Small Business Advisory Centre – Smiths Falls | Lanark

Chambers of Commerce
1000 Islands Gananqoue | Brockville and District | Lyndhurst, Seeley's Bay & District | Merrickville and District | North Grenville | South Grenville

BIAs
Downtown Brockville | Downtown Gananoque | Downtown Prescott | Old Town Kemptville

Employment Services
CSE Consulting | Employment and Education Centre | KEYS Job Centre

Other Business & Education Agencies
Regional Tourism Organization 9 | St. Lawrence Corridor Economic Development Commission | Eastern Ontario Workforce Innovation Board | Rideau Lakes Business Network | St. Lawrence College | Kemptville Campus Education and Community Hub

THANK-YOU!

On behalf of the Business Support Working Group, I would like to thank each business who took the time to complete the survey. Members of the Working Group will be reaching out to assist businesses who indicated they would like assistance. The Working Group contact list is available on the webpage, along with any new programs and resources as they become available.

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