

Small Business Support Media Announcement (Tuesday February 22/22)

Good Morning to all, my name is John Kiru, Executive Director of the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) representing the 85 BIAs in the city and the voice of its 90,000 local businesses and property owners.

I would like to thank Mike Sheppard, owner of Trinity Common Bar for his hospitality this morning and the Kensington Market BIA, board and staff.

I don't think I need to remind any of us that this has been a tough and at times a tragic two years, but non-more so than for local small businesses.

Notwithstanding the support programs, deferrals, and loans from all three levels of government, thousands of businesses in Toronto, Ontario and the country have had no choice but to close their doors. Hundred of thousands of jobs were lost and for some life savings invested in a dream will never be recovered.

But the entrepreneurial spirit is as strong as ever, many have survived through this time (in part to the grants noted earlier) and some have even thrived. It's that entrepreneurial spirit that will lead the recovery of our main streets, neighbourhoods and downtown(s).

I can tell you that our BIAs are well on their way, thanks in part to the opportunities and grants announced today, to planning the iconic events that make Toronto so unique and special in this the city of Neighbourhoods and the most diverse city in the world.

With temperatures rising and the snows receding, it won't be long before the sounds and smells of Toronto's main streets, bakeries, restaurants and Cafes are upon us. Whether it's the Tastes of the Danforth, Kingsway or Wexford OR the Polish, Ukrainian or Rasta Festivals OR simply music or a Movie in the local park, PLEASE find the time to go out and support your local community.

Local Small Businesses need your support now more than ever. Drop into your local business and buy something if you can or simply stick your head thru the front door and let them know that you are glad to see that they came out of this. Shop local and keep 68 cents of every dollar spent locally and don't send it to Arkansas.

To all businesses out there, take a little time and rejoice in having made it thru this unprecedented albatross that has been placed around your necks. But make sure that you take a minute and visit the URL on the city site and those of both the province and Feds, to see if there is a grant or opportunity that can benefit you as you meander towards recovery. Whether its to help guide you thru and assist you in the changing consumer habits and online sales or simply to provide you with matching grants as you build out your café patio for yet another season. As a landlord make sure you know about the dollars available to prepare your vacant property for your next small business tenant to help them succeed.

Its not only small businesses along our main streets that are suffering, but those in our urban core as well. To that end we welcome back the workers in our CBD towers and office nodes as it seems that the core is busier each week, and we must not underestimate the Economic impact of students returning to the classrooms and our theaters and concert venues opening soon.

In Conclusion, what I have learned from this is that there is no Playbook for something like this. Not for the governments, the politicians, the business community or even the residents. We all (And I will use likely the most over used word thru this, maybe the second as I am sure that "You're on Mute" is the first) We all pivoted as we needed to. Notwithstanding the warts and scars of the well-intentioned grants and support programs or the way we have at times treated each other, the only way we will come thru this is TOGETHER. To all our elected officials we still need for a while longer your continued support and grants. Toronto, thanks you for taking that step with today's announcement.

And if there is a legacy to be had, lets make sure it includes a playbook that future governments and generations of business can look to.