

Lack of child care a barrier for business reopenings in Peterborough ^[1]

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Access to child care is a major concern for local businesses owners as the province slowly reopens the economy from COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns.

Rhonda Keenan, president and CEO of Peterborough and the Kawarthas Economic Development, said as businesses begin to reopen with safety precautions in place, they're finding employees aren't able to work.

"Workers are unable to return because they still have children to look after. So without schools and daycares being open, it's a barrier for businesses to be in a position to recall their workers," Keenan said.

Businesses that have been impacted due to lack of child care are generally ones where employees can't work remotely, she said.

"There's a few local manufacturers that have identified that challenged. I anticipate that when restaurants and things are able to reopen in a bigger way, that when workers need to be on site, if there isn't something for their children to be looked after, that's going to impact them," Keenan said.

Another concern for local business owners is access to personal protective equipment.

As businesses establish their safety plans, almost every plan will have a component of PPE attached to it to ensure the safety of their clients and employees, she said.

"With all these people going back to work, that's just an increased demand as businesses build PPE into their ongoing operations and protocols," Keenan said.

The cost of PPE is another concern, she said.

"It's not just getting access to it, but it's also an additional cost that's associated with those extra PPE's that wasn't necessarily planned for a couple of months ago before we even knew what COVID was," Keenan said.

She said she is hoping Peterborough's Economic Recovery Task Force can create solutions for these problems that continue to arise.

To help local business owners find access to PPE, the agency created a section on its website that lists all PPE suppliers in the region.

Now the agency is trying to establish a plan to help local businesses financially with affording PPE.

Local sources such as Community Futures Peterborough are being used to see if they can help these local businesses afford any additional costs, she said.

"So those are the plans that we're trying to put in place, but there's nothing specific as of yet. But that's what we hope the task force will be used for. To help find those solutions locally," Keenan said.

According to the agency, other financial concerns for local business owners relating to business continuity and challenges regarding financial relief include commercial rent subsidy, waterfront property taxes and taking advantage of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy while employees are declining return to work.

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