



Ontario's Big City Mayors start 2021 focusing on pandemic, worker protection and recovery efforts

January 15, 2021 – At its first meeting of the year this morning, Ontario's Big City Mayors (OBCM) discussed municipal efforts to assist the provincially-led vaccination roll-out, to support the province-wide lockdown, and reduce employee health risks.

The OBCM caucus recognized the extensive work of provincial and federal leadership in reducing the virus count and increasing vaccinations. OBCM members are supporting this work through local public health units, first responders, and enforcement team members.

Rick Hillier and the provincial vaccination team are doing an incredible job of distributing vaccines as well as communicating to municipalities and to the public. OBCM members will continue to support the efforts to distribute the vaccine doses in an equitable fashion across the province and will make municipal resources available to support the provincial vaccination program.

Given the current case count and the timeline for extensive vaccination coverage, OBCM is reiterating its call for an enhanced sick day program from the federal and provincial governments. Right now, too many workers across Ontario are having to choose between going to work sick or losing income. OBCM urges both the provincial and the federal government to implement a broader sick day program now that provides greater benefits and can be accessed by employees as quickly as possible.

Finally, OBCM looks forward to working with new Ontario Finance Minister, Peter Bethlenfalvy, to extend the Safe Restart Agreement for much needed financial support to Ontario municipalities in 2021. Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer highlighted the Safe Restart Agreement's success in supporting 2020 municipal budget shortfalls and OBCM looks forward to the continuation of that agreement in the upcoming provincial and federal budgets.

“OBCM members have been leaders in bringing creative ideas forward to minimize virus spread, support mental health and recreation initiatives, and help small business,” said OBCM Chair, Jeff Lehman. “Our members will continue to bring our municipal resources and ingenuity to the table to rid us of the virus and move Ontario forward.”

Below is a list of motions passed at the January 15, 2021 OBCM meeting.

About Ontario's Big City Mayors

[Ontario's Big City Mayors](#) (OBCM), formerly known as the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus of Ontario, includes mayors of 29 single and lower-tier cities with a population of 100,000 or more, who collectively represent nearly 70 per cent of Ontario's population. OBCM advocates for issues and policies important to Ontario's largest cities.

Media Contacts:

Mayor Jeff Lehman, Chair
officeofthemayor@barrie.ca
705 792-7900

Motions – January 15, 2021:

Sick Leave

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic and rise in workplace transmission has highlighted the crucial need for paid sick time so workers, particularly in precarious and/or essential services, do not choose to go to work sick due to economic hardship;

Whereas the Government of Canada has introduced the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit for workers who are sick or need to self isolate due to COVID-19, however this benefit is time limited and maximum payment is \$450 per one-week period (after taxes) which does not cover most workers' full wages;

Whereas the Government of Ontario has extended the Infectious Disease Emergency Leave to July 2021, a welcome step to protect jobs, but which is unpaid leave;

Whereas the lack of paid sick days, financial/income supports, and sick leave protection are known barriers to COVID-19 control measures, including testing and isolation, due to the fear of income loss and financial hardship;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Ontario's Big City Mayors requests that the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada move swiftly to provide longer, better funded sick leave to help address the ongoing spread of COVID-19.

Safe Restart Agreement extension

Whereas municipalities were able to fulfill their legislative requirement to run a balanced budget and support efforts to manage the COVID-19 pandemic response, through smart and difficult fiscal management coupled with Safe Restart Agreement funding;

And Whereas, The Financial Accountability Office (FAO) of Ontario confirmed that municipalities remained financially whole due to these combined efforts and also identified a substantial gap in municipal budgets for the 2021 municipal fiscal year;

And Whereas the support of the Federal and Provincial governments is deeply appreciated.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Ontario's Big City Mayors urges the Federal and Provincial governments to work together to identify additional funds to help the municipal sector address this shortfall in 2021 and prepare for our economic recovery.

COVID19 Pandemic – Provincial Business Restrictions

That the Province review and revise the maximum occupancy restrictions when businesses are able to open to the public during the covid-19 pandemic, using restrictions that are based on the capacity/occupancy level of the business establishment with appropriate social distancing measures in place, rather than a maximum single number of customers regardless of the size of the business establishment.

That tighter restrictions be placed on the sale of non-essential goods in big box stores.