

while a few new businesses have even made a grand entrance into the small town during the pandemic.

According to Marylee Boston, Fenelon Falls and District Chamber of Commerce Manager, while shopping traffic in the downtown core may be slow, which is always expected during the winter months, the small business owners have been creative in offering shopping options and have pulled through the recent lockdown.

“I have to say, when I was downtown yesterday, I saw a few people with shopping bags in hand, which is always exciting no matter what time of year, I think it’s slow, but businesses have adapted and created new things,” she said. “We have such a broad scope of members, some are swamped. Restaurants and personal services like hair, they literally couldn’t be open, it’s such a broad spectrum and it’s really hard. I personally hope with the vaccine and once summer comes we can have a really good summer and everyone can get a boost mentally, financially and emotionally.”

And considering the circumstances, Boston noted how exciting it has been to welcome three new businesses to town in the last six months, including the Kawartha Artisan Market, Treasures By The Locks and Fenelon collectables.



Courtesy – Kaique Rocha

“It’s so interesting, I’m so proud of our local business owners, people are not letting Covid stop them from going ahead with their dreams, there is a lot of exciting things happening in Fenelon falls in spite of Covid.”

According to a new report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, CFIB, seven in 10 small business owners have taken on debt due to COVID-19, with the average now reaching almost \$170,000 per business. In total, small businesses in Canada now owe a collective \$135 billion.

“Over the last six months, the average debt taken on by small businesses to deal with COVID-19 has grown significantly,” said Laura Jones, Executive Vice-President at CFIB. “While many businesses had previously reopened and were attempting to regain lost sales, the second wave and the restrictions that came with it are putting a massive wrench in an already slow recovery for small businesses.”

But even though those numbers are staggering, Kawartha Lake business owners and entrepreneurs continue to rally together, pushing forward to continue their success while serving their residents.

For the Bobcaygeon community the town also welcomed three new businesses, Trease, Kawartha Delivers and Che Figata.

According to Denise Benning-Reid, Manager Bobcaygeon and Area Chamber of Commerce, local cottages, resorts and other accommodations are already almost fully booked for this summer.

And even though the tourism industry in Bobcaygeon had a late start last summer, business owners caught up and had a great season, she added.

“They were able to catch up last year, solid bookings and it’s looking really promising this summer, I mean everything is uncertain, they seem to be hanging in there,” she said. “This community has a ton of community spirit and everybody really supports each other, which helps a lot through these crazy uncertain times.”

She also noted that the biggest challenge for many local businesses is staying on top of the ever-changing protocols.

“It’s so hard with the extra expenses to put protocols in place, there is a lot of grants but not everybody qualifies, that takes a lot of time to navigate as well,” she said.

But, according to Benning-Reid, the local businesses have found a way to persevere by supporting one