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NEWS

FINANCIAL PRESSURES MOUNTING FOR MANY

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the personal emergency response benefit.

"I just can't wait to get back to work," she added. "I really enjoy what I do and miss my clients."

For Tina De Crisci, who owns and operates Oakville's Duran Place for Kids with husband Claudio Duran — a family business that supports their five children and foster child — the financial strain of the forced closure is very real.

"Our income is nothing now, and we have a full household that we need to provide for," she said. "All of our pennies are wrapped up in this (business)."

The children's activity centre was already struggling as the extensive road reconstruction in downtown Oakville continues, deterring customers.

And like other owners of new small businesses, the local couple are unsure if they'll qualify for any of the government relief measures that have been announced, as they may not meet the criteria of payroll minimums, etc.

Unable to make rent for the first time, Duran Place has now turned to GoFundMe with a goal to raise \$97,000, which would



Graham Paine/Torstar
Troy Newton, owner of the popular Milton restaurant Troy's Diner, has been forced to temporarily close his diner and catering business.

be used to cover their business rent for the foreseeable future during the pandemic. So far, they've raised about \$15,000.

"It has been humbling to see this response," noted De Crisci. "We just want to weather the storm and still be here at the end of all this."

In Burlington, new business owner Marco Rodrigues finds himself in a similar position. The restaurant he operates with partner Gio Falbo, called Chop & Wop, has been closed for weeks as their fine dining menu doesn't lend itself to takeout or-

ders.

While they just reached the establishment's one-year anniversary, the couple isn't celebrating, but rather contemplating whether or not the pandemic closure will put them out of business forever.

"We personally put \$350,000 into that restaurant — our entire life savings, and all the equity from selling our dream home," he said. "It was quite a bit of sacrifice to bring our dream to reality, and at this rate we may not be able to reopen."

The pair had to lay their staff off, and like Duran Place, they don't believe they'll be eligible for relief funding or loans as Rodrigues says it can be challenging for new businesses to meet the criteria.

He noted Chop & Wop may qualify for the 75 per cent emergency wage subsidy, but it would be difficult for the restaurant to cover the remaining 25 per cent.

"That's a hefty bill when there's no income coming in," he said.

For details on the various relief programs that have been introduced by the federal government and how to apply, visit canada.ca.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: We wanted to get a clear picture of how the pandemic is financially impacting local residents and spoke with a variety of small business owners across Halton to find out.



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