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# SmallBusinessEveryDay

## New normal arrives on Main Streets with Stage Three

By Ryan Mallough, CFIB

As Ontario begins Stage Three, the final phase of its economic reopening, the "new normal" is visible on Main Streets across the province.

It's almost like one of those "spot the differences" games you played as a kid. The image looks mostly right, it's just a little bit off. There are people on patios, but dining rooms aren't as full as they should be. Musicians are playing, but behind plexi-glass barriers. There's a hand sanitizer station at store entrances and of course almost everyone is wearing a mask.

Things are a little different inside small businesses too. After three months of lockdown, businesses are reopening to new rules, safety requirements and capacity restrictions that, while essential for public safety and preventing a second COVID-19 wave, present another speed bump on the road to recovery.

Even now, with more than half of Ontario's businesses open, only 23 per cent indicate they are making their usual revenues for this time of year. Things like plexi-glass barriers, additional cleaning supplies, face masks and hand sanitizer

all need to be sourced and bring a new, significant cost at a time when many businesses don't have the extra funds to pay for it.

Some businesses adding PPE surcharges to bills to try to manage. Governments at all levels could help by footing some of the PPE bill. Ontario has yet to take the extra step to offset new costs with programs like dedicated PPE grants. Such programs are even more important as municipalities and public health units across the province issue mandatory mask by-laws and orders.

Employee and customer safety are paramount. No small business in Ontario wants to see a second wave bring a second lockdown. But new rules and new costs are coming at a time where local businesses can ill afford them. While governments are encouraging Ontarians to shop local and think #SmallBusinessEveryDay, they could do a lot to help small businesses recovery by covering PPE costs, to help keep everyone safe as the economy reopens.

Ryan Mallough is a director of provincial affairs for Ontario at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB).



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