

REGION URGES PROVINCE TO CHANGE BUSINESS LOCKDOWN RULES

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Halton is calling on the province to level the playing field for small businesses forced to close their doors during provincial COVID-19 lockdowns.

During their last meeting of 2020, regional councillors unanimously passed a motion asking the Ontario government to revise its lockdown rules to address inequities and "avoid unfair competitive advantage between businesses."

The resolution, put forth by Burlington councillors Kelvin Galbraith and Angelo Bentivegna, indicates that small businesses and local retailers are "at a significant competitive disadvantage"

when they're limited to on-line sales and curbside pickup or delivery while larger retail outlets are allowed to remain open and sell more than just essentials.

"They (big box stores) can still sell clothes, where a small clothing retailer is required to close," said Galbraith, noting January and February are already tough months for businesses. "We want to do everything we can to assist businesses in their survival."

The motion also calls for the Ford government to address its red zone regulations that limit restaurants to 10 customers, regardless of the building size, and instead establish capacity limits on a per-square-metre basis.

Bentivegna emphasized that the effects of the busi-

ness restrictions are far-reaching, including impacts on people's families, emotional health and local employment opportunities.

"Small businesses employ a lot of people," he said. Oakville Coun. Jeff Knoll said it's a "special kind of hell" to be a business owner right now, adding he believes there are safe capacity limits that small businesses can implement to continue operating.

"The province needs to dig into where the real (COVID-19) spread issues are coming from," he said.

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