

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate distribution

The Results are in! What impacts did COVID-19 have on Thunder Bay Businesses in September?

November 2, 2020 - The summary report from the September Business Impact Survey has been released finding that there is a lower percentage of businesses in the Thunder Bay region that believe that COVID-19 will put them out of business. The Thunder Bay Business Impact Survey is a monthly survey created in partnership between the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, North Superior Workforce Planning Board, Thunder Bay CEDC and Northern Policy Institute.

The survey has been distributed since April and the results gathered will help to inform the development of federal, provincial and municipal government policies, ensuring Thunder Bay's needs are identified and considered. It may also be used by community partners as a way of identifying workforce and business needs and developing supports unique to the region.

Some results from the September Business Impact Survey show that compared to previous surveys, there is a lower percentage of businesses that believe COVID-19 will put them out of business or significantly impact their financials. At the same time, the percentage of businesses that classified their level of risk as low negative has increased to 32% in September. While this shift from high/medium negative to low negative over the past few months could be due to some businesses having closed their doors, another explanation is that more businesses have been allowed to reopen and/or increase their capacity.

Fewer respondents in September indicated having reduced hours and staff and more employers are operating online. For the second month in a row, no employers have stated they had to close their operations permanently.

Unfortunately not all the data had positive outcomes. A higher proportion of businesses in the services-providing industry like retail, and accommodations and food services, stated that the risk posed by COVID-19 was highly negative (this could put them out of business). Also, it is important to note that the percentage of employers having trouble recalling staff has increased since August. All in all, while we are seeing progress, it is not across the board and efforts to continue aiding employers and communities as a whole is key.

The employers who responded to this survey have indicated that all levels of government need to assist local businesses, provide tax relief, provide financial assistance and extend the various programs currently offered in order to recover from this crisis.

"Business owners, we need you. Participating in the survey each month will ensure that we can identify the impact on businesses over a long period of time," said Charles Cirtwill, President & CEO of Northern Policy Institute. "Are things getting better or worse? Are people taking advantage of the programs offered and are they working as intended?"

The November survey is open to businesses of all sizes and can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NSKKJYF>. The survey will close on November 16. You can read the September summary report here: <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/september-business-survey>

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For more information, contact:

Piero Pucci
Thunder Bay CEDC
(807) 625-3960
ppucci@thunderbay.ca

Charles Cirtwill
Northern Policy Institute
(807) 632-7999
ccirtwill@northernpolicy.ca