



To : Anthony Leardi, MPP

February 25, 2026

Subject: Financial Support for Rural Businesses Impacted by Power Outages

Dear Mr. Leardi

The Essex Centre Business Improvement Area (BIA) has received complaints from several small businesses that have been experiencing power outages, surges, and disruptions in our service area. These disruptions are significant and have resulted in financial and operational implications, particularly for our businesses that rely on refrigeration and temperature-controlled storage for their day-to-day operations. Extended power outages result in product spoilage and operational interruptions, causing significant financial loss. This loss is concerning, especially in rural communities like Essex, where small business profit margins are narrow and operational resilience can be challenging.

A current market analysis indicates that the cost of a commercial generator can cost up to \$50,000, depending on the size and operational demands of the business. For most small business owners, this level of capital investment is not financially feasible.

Recently, the Chief Administrative Officer at the Town of Essex met with ENWIN Utilities Ltd, the hydro utility for the Town, to gather information on the power outage challenges facing local business owners and residents. While this discussion brought forward opportunities and understanding, it was confirmed that there are currently no funding initiatives to support the purchase of backup power sources or surge protectors for small businesses.

In addition to these discussions, an external scan was completed by Town administration to identify whether any private, provincial or federal programs exist to support small businesses in mitigating the impacts of power instability. However, no available funding opportunities or support programs were identified that align with the needs or circumstances of small businesses experiencing these issues.

Due to the lack of financial assistance programs, small businesses are left to file insurance claims to recover losses when they experience frequent and extended power outages. These claims often increase insurance premiums, which can have a significant impact on the financial and operational health of our local small businesses.

To address the current challenges facing our business community, the Essex Centre BIA kindly requests that the Associate Minister of Small Business explore the feasibility of developing a provincial grant initiative or a cost-share program for rural businesses to purchase the necessary infrastructure and equipment to mitigate losses during frequent and extended power outages.

The development of a provincial program would significantly enhance the operational capacity and financial position of Ontario small businesses and would provide peace of mind and reassurance to small business owners during power outages. A program of this nature would be instrumental in ensuring rural Ontario businesses remain resilient and better equipped during periods of power instability.

We appreciate the Associate Minister of Small Business' attention to this growing challenge experienced by small businesses in rural Ontario and we welcome the opportunity to provide further information on this matter, if necessary.

Sincerely,



**Stephanie Winger**

Chair of the Board of Directors

Essex Centre BIA

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