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We are all on the same team: the impact of COVID-19 on small businesses in Canada

Nous sommes tous du même bord : l'impact de la COVID-19 sur les petites entreprises au Canada

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Nous sommes tous du même bord : l'impact de la COVID-19 sur les petites entreprises au Canada

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The COVID-19 pandemic has changed my life and the lives of many others who work for small local businesses. This photograph highlights some of the effects that COVID-19 has had on myself and my colleagues as small business employees on Broadway Avenue in Saskatoon, SK, and as people concerned about their personal health during this pandemic. I have felt firsthand how small businesses have been devastated by COVID-19. During this time, it is

difficult to balance financial security with personal health. However, wearing a mask can help protect people and reduce the spread of the virus, thus allowing businesses to continue to function.

This photo displays the marquee from the Broadway Theatre in Saskatoon, SK, recommending people wear a mask and protect one another. This image is meaningful to me as our business has adjusted to many different COVID-19 restrictions, including the enforcement of wearing masks in indoor public places. I have heard and experienced many strong and controversial opinions surrounding this guideline, including anger and frustration at having to wear a mask. The refusal by a customer to follow these guidelines could threaten my personal health as well as the health of other nearby people and, indirectly, my source of income. Responding to such people can be an emotional experience which can include frustrations at their disregard for the well-being of others, helplessness at their unwillingness to engage in discussion, and a strong desire to confront them in an effort to champion the societal good. This message from the Broadway Theatre is a reminder that the purpose of wearing masks is to protect other people from contracting COVID-19.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Broadway would be filled with shoppers, moviegoers, and people dining at restaurants, yet as I captured this photo on a Friday night, the streets were empty and the businesses were idle. There

is an aura of emptiness to this local cinema and this beloved neighborhood accompanied by a bright exhortation to wear masks, seemingly calling out no one except the photographer. But behind the walls and within the doors of these under-capacity businesses, people are worrying about finances, about the virus, about the restrictions, and about the hard choices they must make for the sake of their personhood, their business, and their families. The lack of customers has resulted in financial and social stressors for many local businesses and their

employees, such as myself. This image also relates to my own impression of health and well-being as I would prefer to stay home on a Friday night in an attempt to minimize the risk of contraction. Yet instead I chose to go to work wearing a mask so that I could support myself and stay safe. Staying at home as much as possible and wearing a mask in public spaces are important ways to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and this image provides a positive depiction of both these factors and of the importance of pursuing this societal good.