



Eric Novak, School of leadership & Human Resources, has created a Facebook group that is helping restaurants in Durham Region. (Photo: submitted)

Cutting out the commission fees to help restaurants

Seneca professor's initiative taps into community spirit

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A Facebook group created by a Seneca professor is providing a new lease on life for restaurants in Durham Region during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eric Novak of the School of Leadership & Human Resources (</school/seneca-business/leadership-and-human-resources.html>) recently launched the Durham Region Restaurants Offering Pick Up & Self Delivery (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1066186193760495>) group to connect restaurants, caterers and other food providers who either make deliveries or offer pickup services — saving them commission fees charged by most online delivery apps.

“The restaurant industry has been severely affected by the COVID shutdown,” Mr. Novak said. “The restaurants that are open are relying on either pickups or driver delivery apps such as Skip the Dishes and Uber Eats. The problem is the apps take inflated delivery charges from the restaurants, often as high as 30 per cent on every order. In these difficult times, this is a huge revenue sacrifice for restaurants, which are barely managing to keep their heads above water.”

Mr. Novak is not associated with the restaurant industry but orders takeout a couple of times a week. He says he initially wanted to help the restaurants in Ajax, where he lives, after hearing that online delivery apps were not lowering their commissions despite requests from struggling restaurants.

“When I heard that, I thought it was not fair as the bulk of the restaurants are merely trying to survive,” he said. “So I set up this Facebook group and it is nothing more than a resource for its members. Anyone who knows of a restaurant offering delivery or pickup can post that information in the group and the restaurants themselves too can create posts letting the others know that they are open and will be happy to deliver or offer pickups.”

Mr. Novak expanded its scope to include Pickering, Whitby, Oshawa, Clarington, Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock as media coverage led to a surge in the group's membership.

“I literally received about 400 requests to join while CTV was running my interview. By the end of that day, I had about 800 requests,” Mr. Novak said.

The group now has more than 9,200 members and 200 participating restaurants.

"I've had the opportunity to speak to a few restaurant owners in the past week or two and I'm absolutely thrilled at how the community spirit and level of support for our local businesses shown here is netting results," Mr. Novak said.

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