

West End Business affected by new city construction projects

In the city's West End, staff at Eadha Bakery Worker Co-op decided to close their doors for at least the rest of this week after a nearby construction project tore up the entire lane and sidewalk in front of the tiny Ellice Avenue shop.



Eadha Bakery Worker Co-op is just one of the businesses getting hit hard by the more than 200 construction projects currently underway across Winnipeg.

Baker and co-owner Mack Parman said even if the bakery was accessible, the construction itself has been incredibly disruptive — with debris hitting the building, smoke coming in through the vents and vibrations at times making the shop shake like there's an earthquake.

"We just don't feel right having people try to manoeuvre their way into the building," Parman said, adding while the shop averages about 200 customers weekly, there have only been 10 this week.



Mack Parman is a baker and co-owner at Eadha Bakery Worker Co-op, a tiny shop on Ellice Avenue in Winnipeg's West End.

As Winnipeg's roughly six-month construction season inches forward, Parman's bakery is among the businesses getting hit hard by the more than 200 projects that city spokesperson Julie Horbal Dooley said are underway.

This story highlights what one expert calls an issue the city should take seriously and come up with solutions to address — especially when it comes to small operations that may struggle to stay afloat during a days- or weeks-long construction slump.

High stakes for small businesses

"Small businesses are the lifeblood of the city. It's what makes a city unique. Like, I can go to McDonald's or Burger King or Wendy's, you know, in any city," said Fabrizio Di Muro, an associate professor who studies consumer behaviour in the University of Winnipeg's department of business and administration.

It's not uncommon for customers to stop visiting a business if it becomes dangerous or even inconvenient to access, Di Muro said.

And for smaller operations, which often "operate on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis," construction that goes on for a few weeks could have serious impacts — including potentially forcing them to close their doors for good.