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February 5th, 2021

Office of the Premier Executive Branch
307 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Premier Kenney,

The COVID-19 public health crisis, and the resulting economic crisis, is creating significant challenges for Canadians, families, and businesses. We applaud the actions you have taken to date to protect Albertans from this global pandemic. You have done an exemplary job in general and we appreciate your recognition of error in creating the Essential and Non-Essential services policy which clearly chose the ‘winners’ & ‘losers’ in business. Leadership is all about making the best decision you can with the information at hand and pivoting when better information becomes available.

As a chamber of commerce supporting business in our region, we stand beside the government’s commitment to bolster business in Alberta, and we also recognize the challenges of protecting the integrity of our health services. We appreciate the new phased-in approach to easing restrictions based on actual hospitalization numbers and trends. This seems to be the most responsible approach given the desire to balance health services capacity with re-opening our society both for business and mental health reasons. However, this phased re-opening approach laid out again has clear emphasis on sectors of business rather than creating a clear road map that provides clarity and understanding.

We are concerned that the government is simply repeating the recognized errors of the past by once again choosing clear winners and losers by sector. During your town hall conversations with businesses across the province we clearly heard story after story where businesses or organizations could cite reasons why they fell outside of the normal framework and could safely operate inside of established safety guidelines. They appealed to the government to consider them differently, while recognizing case by case decisions are impractical.

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We are requesting that Government make the decision to create a framework of simplicity by allowing Alberta entrepreneurs and business owners, who are some of the best in the world, to have back their responsibility for the safe operations of their business. It is our belief that we must place the onus on the businesses to meet specific requirements in a clearly set out framework. We believe that following the same principle of easing restrictions based on hospitalization trends is correct, however opening should be based on compliance to guidelines instead of by sector and repeating the mistakes of the past.

Our businesses collectively represent the jobs of hundreds of thousands working Albertans. We know that our businesses are each taking various measures to ensure their employees and their clients remain safe, healthy and they want to ensure our communities remain resilient once the worst is passed. Our businesses have been on a path that can only be described as a roller coaster and Government needs to give back ownership and responsibility to them.

Meeting specific criteria for opening would enable everyone to prepare their own implementation plan whilst providing a framework for returning staff and on-site presence. We know that everyone's top priority must be the health and safety and well-being of staff and clients in conjunction with having the freedom to operate.

The fight against the virus must remain top priority, but we must support business by lifting these inhibitive restrictions.

Yours sincerely

Richard Wong
Chair Greater Parkland Regional Chamber of Commerce on behalf of the GPRC Board of Directors.

cc:

Dane Lloyd, MP Sturgeon River-Parkland
Gerald Soroka, MP Yellowhead
Searle Turton, MLA Spruce Grove-Stony Plain
Shane Getson, MLA Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland

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Mark Smith, MLA Drayton Valley-Devon
Ken Kobly, President & CEO Alberta Chambers of Commerce
Greater Parkland Regional Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors