

Jan. 20, 2022

Adrian Dix

Minister of Health

HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Harwinder Sandhu

MLA for Vernon-Monashee

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Re: Government engagement with businesses and disclosure of data

Minister Dix and MLA Sandhu

The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce appreciates the efforts being taken by health care professionals to respond to Covid-19 and its variants. However, we are concerned about the significant pressure small business owners continue to face due to restrictions.

Specifically, recent public health orders forced gyms, fitness centres, bars and banquet facilities to close. Many business owners are left wondering how they will pay rent, utilities and other costs and while there is the Closure Relief Grant program, the available assistance and the timeline to actually receive funding may prove inadequate.

Prior to future closures being considered for any sectors, we would urge the provincial government to initiate a process that actively engages with businesses and finds a way for them to remain open while ensuring public health and safety.

There is also a need for health orders to be based on data that is open and available to those impacted as well as the public. Without access to that information, measures such as closures appear arbitrary, and this undermines the integrity of these decisions as they are challenging for businesses and the public to accept. It's important to know why some businesses are identified for full closures while other businesses remain open with no restrictions in place.

The Chamber wants the government to initiate a process that actively engages with businesses and finds a way for them to remain operating while ensuring public health and safety rather than choosing certain industries to shut their doors.

The reality is that our economy relies on small businesses and future mandated closures will force some to close permanently, wiping out owners' dreams and investments and creating unemployment for their staff. Our communities and province need these businesses to survive for the long-term.

There is a need for direct engagement between government, health authorities and businesses that provides meaningful results.

If there is any further information that we can provide, please contact us. Thank you for your attention to this important matter and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Robin Cardew
President
Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

CC. Shirley Bond, Official Opposition Interim Leader
City of Vernon Mayor and Council
District of Coldstream Mayor and Council
Regional District of North Okanagan Board of Directors
Okanagan-Shuswap Chambers of Commerce