

May 7, 2020



Hon. Jason Kenney, PC  
Premier of Alberta  
307 Legislature Building  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Premier Kenney:

Our two Chambers were pleased last week to see your announcement on relaunching the Alberta economy. This strategy is a strong step forward to provide businesses more of the certainty they need to plan for their successful future. We have received many questions from businesses in our two cities since your announcement last week, which we hope you can clarify both in response to this letter and in your ongoing public announcements.

We are pleased to see that Stage 1 of the relaunch can take place as early as May 14<sup>th</sup>, presuming Albertans maintain the appropriate public health measures and our curve continues to flatten. Many businesses are eager to open, but are not clear on how re-opening will take place:

- Many personal services businesses are unsure how to operate given physical distancing requirements. For this sector, we recommend publishing provincial guidelines as soon as possible detailing how to operate safely and in accordance with public health measures. Where possible, these guidelines should be issued jointly from Alberta Health Services and the applicable licensing college to increase certainty for Alberta businesses.
- Restaurants have asked us on a number of occasions about the intersection between the 15-person limit on gatherings, and the requirement to open at only 50% capacity. For most restaurants, 50% capacity is larger than 15 people, and they are seeking clarity as to whether the 15-person limit applies to their operations as well.
- The Province is encouraging businesses to keep staff working from home wherever possible, and businesses are asking us whether they can recall staff if appropriate physical distancing measures are put in place in their workplace. Essential businesses have received considerable guidance on how to operate safely, and we recommend the Province release similar sector-specific guidelines for businesses who are keen to recall their staff. We also ask that the Province consider potential incentive programs for businesses who need to re-imagine their physical spaces to allow for physical distancing.
- Businesses in Stage 1 have many questions about how re-opening will impact their access to programs. Will the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program or the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy payments continue to flow to businesses who have re-opened, but are still facing a shortfall of customers and revenue? We urge the Government of Alberta to work with the federal government to ensure there are adequate supports to bridge the revenue gap most businesses will face upon re-opening. It is also imperative that supports remain available for businesses who make the difficult but prudent decision not to re-open as part of Stage 1. Following public health directives is most important to continue to flatten the curve and protect the health of all Albertans – for some businesses, the best way to do this may be to not re-open in Stage 1.

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- Retailers in Stage 1 are unclear on whether staff and/or customers are required to wear PPE, how and when PPE will be made available, whether shielding will be required at cash desks, and how to accommodate physical distancing in smaller shops. Publishing sector-specific guidelines will help retailers and businesses in other industry sectors to address their specific considerations in re-opening.
- Businesses in the essential services category are seeking more information to plan effectively. Will these businesses be allowed to do onsite rapid testing for COVID-19? Will AB Trace Together be mandatory for essential workers? Once a vaccine has been developed, will essential workers be a high priority for vaccinations? Will the isolation period for essential workers be shortened if the worker tests negative for COVID-19? Essential businesses that require workers to enter someone's home are seeking clarification on how to do this safely, which sector-specific guidelines could provide.
- Office workers are unclear as to what PPE will be required in their workplaces, and how PPE will be made available.
- Tourism providers are unclear on when travel restrictions will be lifted, and when they can accept bookings for travellers.
- We have heard numerous concerns about staff being unwilling to return to certain types of jobs, especially those where earnings are below the level of support being provided through the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. We ask that the Province work with the Federal Government to ensure support programs include requirements to return to work when it is safe to do so.
- There is disagreement between the business categories listed in Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the relaunch plan, and the categories of municipal business licensing in both Calgary and Edmonton. In instances of disagreement, we urge that the province ensure its relaunch plan is not superseded by municipal business licensing categories. Businesses are also unclear as to whether Cities are required to follow the Government of Alberta's timeline.
- Businesses in Stages 2 and 3 are eager to understand any projected timelines for when they can expect to re-open. We understand the timing of re-opening is heavily dependent on the behaviour of Albertans and the continued flattening of our curve, but any information you can provide for businesses in later stages would be most appreciated. A line of site to timing would be beneficial to aid Stage 2 and 3 businesses to be ready and for those businesses to continue to engage with their customers.
- Retailers in Stage 1 who are located in large shopping centres are hearing mixed messages about whether or not they will be able to open. Please provide clarity on the re-opening guidelines for large shopping centres as soon as possible.

Premier, we thank you for your consideration on these issues. Please do not hesitate to have your team reach out to our staff should any of these issues require further conversation:

- Brent Francis, Director, Advocacy and Outreach, Edmonton Chamber  
780-409-2614 | [bfrancis@edmontonchamber.com](mailto:bfrancis@edmontonchamber.com)
- Geraldine Anderson, Director, Policy and Communications, Calgary Chamber  
403-617-3003 | [ganderson@calgarychamber.com](mailto:ganderson@calgarychamber.com)

We continue to commend your government for working closely with businesses, individuals and other orders of government to effectively navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. We know this spirit of collaboration will help ensure Alberta emerges from this pandemic on our front foot, ready to continue the work of building a vibrant, diverse province that is able to take on our future. Together, we can accomplish anything.

Yours truly,



**Janet M. Riopel**  
President & CEO  
Edmonton Chamber of Commerce



**Dr. Sandip Lalli**  
President & CEO  
Calgary Chamber of Commerce

#### **ABOUT THE EDMONTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

*The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce is the official voice of business in the Edmonton Region. With more than 1,900 member companies who employ nearly 100,000 people in our Region, we are one of the largest Chambers in Canada and among the most influential business organizations in the country.*

#### **ABOUT THE CALGARY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

*The Calgary Chamber is a non-partisan organization, founded and funded by business. This year we celebrate our 129th year and are proud to be the voice and podium of record of the Calgary business community. We represent almost 400,000 citizens, and work to build a community that is not only vibrant, but is also one that nourishes, powers, and inspires the world.*