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**GREATER
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January 27th, 2021

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

Dear Premier Kenney,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and members of the Greater Parkland Regional Chamber of Commerce we are voicing our concerns with the current COVID-19 restrictions and the negative impacts these restrictions are continuing to have on our business community. Our businesses have had an incredibly difficult year and there is grave concern over the lack of guidance and direction coming from government right now. No timelines on when businesses in impacted industries will be allowed to reopen is causing great angst and inhibiting business to plan and feel in control; even those businesses that have opened feel little or no control.

Having such strict measures in place province-wide puts smaller population densities and areas with lower confirmed COVID-19 cases at a severe disadvantage. There is no understanding as to why business sectors that have had no traceable cases remain closed.

Restaurants struggle with not being able to seat customers despite having taken extreme measures to keep their customers safe with the prior restrictions. Businesses who have been forced to close had been following all proper health protocols. They implemented new processes and procedures, were innovative and creative and spent valuable time and resources to protect their customers and employees while keeping their business operating. This was incredibly frustrating for business to be shut down again with no clear direction on when they will be allowed to resume operations.

Our hospitality industry is a struggling sector. In fact, the hospitality industry was among the first and hardest hit and is likely to be one of the last sectors to experience a full recovery. We have heard from our hotel industry employers that they anticipate at least a 2–3-year timeframe for such a recovery. After a brief bump in business at the end of summer, the second wave of the pandemic and the end of the tourism season have, as anticipated, combined to create a second collapse for the hotel & tourism sector.

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Based on a recent survey with businesses in our region by the Greater Parkland Regional Chamber of Commerce, over 80% of respondents have stated that their business has been negatively impacted by the restrictions, with 69% stating they would like actions to reduce the current restrictions. We know that these businesses have poured their life savings and energy into trying to make it through the pandemic. Although government support programs have been a temporary relief, they do not make up for the costs endured and the ongoing uncertainty and lack of clarity these businesses are faced with.

We will continue to raise alarm bells about these issues, because we know that our business community is suffering and that has a major impact on everyone. 56% of survey respondents have told us that they are working to less than half of normal revenues, with over 60% saying they have severe cash flow concerns. Sadly, 36% of respondents admitted to psychological health issues, which is only set to rise, increasing the burden all round. And of course, as businesses fail, employees lose their jobs, and the government also loses much needed income tax, GST and other revenues.

On behalf of our membership, we strongly urge you to reconsider existing restrictions and implement a plan that will keep Albertans safe while allowing the business community to maintain their livelihoods and drive the revitalization of the economy.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Wong
Board Chair
Greater Parkland Regional Chamber of Commerce (GPRC)

Cc: Board of Directors, GPRC
Sarah Parry, CEO, GPRC