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Chamber seeks transparency on business closures

VERNON – The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce is calling for government transparency regarding public health orders and increased efforts to keep businesses open.

On Jan. 18, the provincial government announced that fitness centres can reopen Jan. 20 if certain conditions are met while bars and banquet facilities will remain shut until at least Feb. 16. The 50 per cent capacity limit remains for indoor venues such as sports events and theatres and certain gatherings are not allowed.

“There is no question that action is required if we, as a province, are to get a handle on the pandemic and our Chamber appreciates the hard work and commitment demonstrated by health care professionals. That said, there is a need for health orders such as closures to be based on data that is open and available to those impacted as well as the public,” said Robin Cardew, Greater Vernon Chamber president.

“Without access to that information, such measures appear arbitrary, and this undermines the integrity of these decisions as they are challenging for businesses and the public to accept.”

The Greater Vernon Chamber is urging the government to provide data and information that supports closure of businesses as well as reduced capacity at sports events, theatres and other venues.

“It’s important to know why some businesses are identified for full closures while other businesses remain open with no restrictions in place,” said Cardew.

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.

“Our economy relies on small businesses and closures will force some to close permanently, wiping out owners’ investments and creating unemployment for their staff. Our communities and province need these businesses to survive for the long-term,” said Cardew.

“Some of the financial impact fitness centres have experienced during the closure might have been avoided if they had been consulted and options for staying open had been discussed.”

The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce will approach Harwinder Sandhu, Vernon-Monashee MLA, to discuss this matter further.

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