**MAY 19**

**COMMUNICATION TO MEMBERS**

**Subject line: Province has lifted some restrictions and** new federal programs

Dear Member,

I hope you enjoyed the sunny weekend and you were able to take advantage of the newly announced bubbles. It’s an important step for Nova Scotians to connect with our families and friends while remaining committed to flattening the curve. We are pleased to see some restrictions lifting and some changes when it comes to reopening, but we need to see more. The Premier said today if we stay on the current track, we can expect reopening in early June. Unless you were a business ordered closed, you can be open now, if you can maintain the 6ft of social distancing required by the medical order. Dr. Strang will finish his consultations this week and we hope to hear more information on the plans for those businesses ordered closed next week. We are working hard to get clarity and new information from government officials in the hands of our members over the next few days.

**Preparing to reopen**

Our team has created a toolkit to help your business get ready for reopening with the new public health guidelines. To ensure continued operations, it is important to keep employees and customers safe while still providing a quality customer experience. We have planned a 5-step approach to operate business safely with COVID-19. Read through the toolkit [here and use it to reopen your business.](https://halifaxchamber.com/files/documents/NEW-Business-Guide-to-Reopening.docx)

[**Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) expansion**](https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2020/05/19/prime-minister-announces-expansion-support-workers-and-small)

The federal government announced an expansion to the eligibility criteria for the CEBA to include many owner-operated small businesses today. The program will now be available to a greater number of businesses that are sole proprietors receiving income directly from their businesses, businesses that rely on contractors, and family-owned corporations that pay employees through dividends rather than payroll.

To qualify under the expanded eligibility criteria, applicants with payroll lower than $20,000 would need:

* a business operating account at a participating financial institution
* a Canada Revenue Agency business number, and to have filed a 2018 or 2019 tax return.
* eligible non-deferrable expenses between $40,000 and $1.5 million. Eligible non-deferrable expenses could include costs such as rent, property taxes, utilities, and insurance.

Funding will be delivered in partnership with financial institutions. The launch date for new applications and more details will follow in the days to come.

**Canada Emergency Wages Subsidy (CEWS) extended**

The Government of Canada will extend the CEWS by an additional 12 weeks to August 29, 2020. As a Canadian employer whose business has been affected by COVID-19, you may be eligible for a subsidy of 75% of employee wages for up to 24 weeks, retroactive from March 15, 2020, to August 29, 2020. This wage subsidy will enable you to re-hire workers previously laid off as a result of COVID-19, help prevent further job losses, and better position you to resume normal operations following the crisis. [Find more information here.](https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2020/05/government-extends-the-canada-emergency-wage-subsidy.html)

[**Additional public health measures lifted**](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/support/#support-for-business)

On Friday, May 15, Premier McNeil and Dr. Strang announced more easing of public health restrictions. Two immediate family households can now come together without physical distancing. It’s up to you to decide who your family bubble is – you can choose **one** household to be your family bubble. The family bubble must be mutually exclusive to each other to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread and can be friends instead of family. Public beaches also opened on the weekend. Use of backyard appliances such as chimineas and fire pits are allowed for households, however the ban on open fires – those within 305 metres of woods anywhere in the province including domestic brush burning and beach fires – will remain until June 1. A phased plan to further lift public health restrictions is under development. Consultation is ongoing with sectors.

[**Free webinars schedule**](https://business.halifaxchamber.com/events/calendar/)

The Halifax Chamber continues to offer free webinars every week to help your business navigate COVID-19’s impact. We have shifted our focus to supporting businesses as they prepare to reopen and adhere to new guidelines. Our next webinars include:

* [Business Continuity Planning with BrenDaniel](https://business.halifaxchamber.com/events/details/navigating-covid-19-business-continuity-planning-2573)
* [Mindfulness for Mental Health with Recognize your Potential](https://business.halifaxchamber.com/events/details/navigating-covid-19-mindfulness-for-mental-health-2582)
* [Change Management for the New World with Big Leap Leadership](https://business.halifaxchamber.com/events/details/navigating-covid-19-change-management-for-the-new-world-2583)

We are getting through this together. Let’s get our plans for reopening in place and let’s follow guidelines to ensure this virus stays away and we can all get back to work, for all of those who rely on us.

We’re in your corner.

Sincerely,

Patrick Sullivan

President & CEO

Halifax Chamber of Commerce