



Wednesday, June 23, 2021

Via Email: premier@novascotia.ca

Premier Rankin,

On behalf of the Halifax business community and all our member organizations, the Halifax Chamber of Commerce wants to express our disappointment with the recent, sudden, and unexpected changes outlined in the press release and news conference of June 22, 2021.

Nova Scotia businesses have been extremely patient and compliant and have appreciated the measures put in place to support businesses affected negatively by the pandemic. We worked collaboratively with government through the Nova Scotian Business Labour and Economic Coalition and have advocated for clearer timelines and advanced notice to businesses around all COVID measures, whether tightening or loosening.

With your government having communicated an opening plan with ranges of dates and targets and a specific date of June 23rd for the Atlantic bubble, Nova Scotia businesses began to make plans for reopening locally, to the rest of Atlantic Canada and to Canadians from outside the bubble. A sudden departure from those plans has impacted many Nova Scotian businesses and will hurt them just as they began to make plans to reopen. The Chamber was happy to see the early reopening to the rest of Canada on June 30th, however we were concerned about the criteria for that reopening. The need for testing and self-isolation for fully vaccinated Canadians or travelers seems inconsistent with other provinces or other countries. We urge you to reconsider this decision to align more closely with other Canadian provinces.

We are in a much different place than we were during the last reopening, with over 70% of Nova Scotians having received 1 dose of vaccine and cases now at zero. We are publicly touting our vaccine program as the most successful in the country, yet we still have the most conservative reopening measures, and as of yesterday became even more restrictive, with absolutely no notice. Yesterday during the press conference, suddenly second dose targets became part of the early reopening phases when they are not articulated in any way in phases one through four.

New Brunswick announced their reopening plan on May 28th and the NS government waited until June 22 to change the rules of the bubble opening and placed new restrictions on travel that will severely limit tourist travel to NS this summer and eliminate business travel. The moment the press conference ended, hotel and tourist operators started receiving cancellations. Businesspeople that had travelled to New Brunswick based on the reopening plan now faced quarantine upon returning. And going forward, what vaccinated Nova Scotian businessperson is going to fly anywhere, only to come home to quarantine.

As of yesterday, Nova Scotians can travel to PEI and Newfoundland and come back without restrictions, but in a week, Newfoundland will be open to Canada and PEI will be the only place left for Nova Scotians to travel and not face a restrictive return.

We must ask, if we are making science-based decisions as a province, where is the science behind making Nova Scotians or Canadians with 2 vaccines isolate from 24 to 72 hours while waiting for a PCR test when returning to or visiting the province.

Nova Scotia calls itself an innovation leader, a place where people want to move and live because of our business community and quality of life, yet these types of announcements and overly restrictive measures do anything but paint that picture for Canadians or the international community. We urge you to reconsider your decision and meet with the Atlantic Canadian premiers immediately to plan a better way forward for all of us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Sullivan".

Patrick Sullivan
President & CEO
Halifax Chamber of Commerce