



For immediate release

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Headline – Chambers call for government to allow small businesses to open by appointment

TRURO – Three Chamber’s in northern Nova Scotia are calling upon government to support small business by allowing them to open to customers by appointment.

The Truro and Colchester Chamber of Commerce, the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce and the Amherst and Area Chamber of Commerce collectively represent more than 825 members in northern Nova Scotia.

In the co-signed letter sent to the Premier’s office on Thursday (May 20), as well as to government department officials and MLAs, the chambers delivered a collective message that current lockdown restrictions are creating disparity between small business and large corporate-owned businesses.

“There’s no time more important to be clear with our small businesses that the Province sees them as important to our economy,” said Ron Furlong, Executive Director of the Amherst and Area Chamber of Commerce. “Especially as we struggle through this third wave, with the general population engaged in doing their part through vaccination, and as we can see an end in sight.”

The chambers are asking government to amend restrictions to allow small businesses to offer sales on an appointment basis with limited hours for customers from their own municipality, stringent COVID-19 public health measures in place and contact tracing records maintained to limit risk.

“We appreciate the provincial approach to the economic realities of the pandemic has been one of collaboration with the business sector so we trust our suggestions will be given priority,” said Jack Kyte, Executive Director of the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce.

Sherry Martell, Executive Director of the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce, said businesses are sharing that there has been a significant drop in sales in recent weeks as they attempted to engage customers through curbside pick-up or online sales. The Truro-based chamber is currently offering E-Commerce support to business in central Nova Scotia, however, their Executive Director said poor access to high-speed internet and cell service continue to be an impediment for many rural businesses trying to enter the online market place.

“Many of our small businesses are sitting on stock that they cannot move for a number of reasons and they are scared and losing hope for the future,” said Martell. “We support public health in its efforts to restrict the spread of the virus, however, small businesses are willing to work with government to ensure



public safety is not compromised beyond current restrictions with a tightly controlled approach to appointment only customer service during the lockdown.”

There is also real concern for business viability beyond the lifting of lockdown restrictions anticipated by the second week of June. It is common practice for businesses to order fall stock in the spring or summer, but with many barely able to make enough money to cover capital costs now while they are closed to all traffic, even with government assistance for those who qualify, they are deeply concerned about their futures.

“For 15 months our small independent businesses have been asked to bend, and bend again. They are now at the breaking point and many are literally broke,” said Martell. “Allowing limited customer appointments could be key to saving many of our small independent business. They are willing to meet strict standards to have this implemented as soon as possible to comply with public health guidelines. We ask that government hear their pleas for help and work with them to save small business.”

For more information about E-Commerce support for small business in central Nova Scotia visit www.trurocolchesterchamber.com or email ec@tcchamber.ca

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