



Office of the Premier
7th Floor, One Government Place
1700 Granville Street
Halifax, NS
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January 5, 2022

Re: Workplace Rapid Testing

Dear Premier Tim Houston,

We are writing to you today on behalf of the members of the Truro and Colchester Chamber of Commerce (the second largest chamber in the province outside HRM), the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce, the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce and the Amherst Chamber of Commerce, collectively serving more 1,100 members that represent a diverse cross section of the local economy.

We ask that your government do everything within its means to immediately reopen the Workplace Rapid Testing program.

While we understood the need to pause the program in December to provide time to redeploy tests, we implore you to consider the negative impact on our businesses and our economy with a continued suspension of the program.

From day-one, our chambers have stood with the province and its stakeholders to see this workplace testing program implemented successfully in our province. It has been an absolute success in keeping our workers safe and reducing absenteeism while promoting staff and consumer confidence. Since the pause we have all experienced calls from businesses expressing concern and frustration.

More than 2,000 businesses were enrolled in the program, participated in training and were authorized by the Department of Health and Wellness to launch this program in their workplace. They were reporting results, responsibly administering tests to employees and following protocols. Through their efforts, cases were identified and removed from the public domain to reduce spread of the virus.

We understand that given current COVID-19 PRC testing capacity with the rising case counts, additional use of Rapid Tests for the public is needed to isolate carriers. We also understand the challenges in sourcing the tests for distribution.

However, we strongly believe that use of the tests in workplaces is key to reducing spread. The decision to pause the program is having a negative impact in our rural areas as access to tests is limited. Businesses

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are experiencing staff shortages which are forcing closures. Their staff are having a great difficulty in accessing tests through your newly implemented appointment system. This is deepening the impacts on our local economy with little to no financial support across many sectors.

We ask that consideration be given for those businesses that have been trained and reporting results, to have some tests provided to them to be used with new guidelines for exposed or symptomatic staff. They have already demonstrated their commitment to the Province’s safety in previous months by participating in the program.

Rather than a continued full pause of the program we ask you to consider one or more of the following options:

- Provide limited tests to employers that have participated in the Workplace Rapid testing program with new testing criteria
- Ensure that high-risk businesses, such as restaurants, large manufacturers, gyms, etc. already in the program have access to tests
- The previous recommendation of two tests per week is paused and new testing criteria could be limited to employees with a known exposure or symptoms.
- Continue to offer intake by businesses in high-risk categories with limited test availability

By enlisting the support and participation of businesses already enrolled in the current program you will take stress off of the public distribution system which is currently lacking in responsiveness across the province, particularly in rural areas. We are acutely aware that people are seeking tests to enable them to carry on with social practices. We believe that those who are contributing to the workforce, and our overall economy, should be a priority and provided access to tests at their places of work.

In closing, we want to reinforce our commitment to the Workplace Rapid Testing program. We believe it is a pillar in the battle against COVID. We offer our support to your teams as we continue to navigate the pandemic working together to assist our economy as it rebounds.

Sincerely,

Sherry Martell
Executive Director
Truro & Colchester
Chamber of Commerce

Jack Kyte
Executive Director
Pictou County Chamber
of Commerce

Rick Allwright
Executive Director
Yarmouth & Area
Chamber of Commerce

Ron Furlong
Executive Director
Amherst and Area
Chamber of Commerce



CC: David Ritcey, MLA Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook Salmon River
Tom Taggart, MLA Colchester North
Larry Harrison, MLA Colchester Musquodoboit Valley
Pat Dunn, MLA Pictou Centre
Karla MacFarlane, MLA Pictou West
Tory Rushton, MLA Cumberland South
Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin, MLA Cumberland North
Colton LeBlanc, Minister Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services
Zach Churchill, MLA Yarmouth
Ronnie LeBlanc, MLA Clare
Susan Corkum-Greek, Minister Economic Development
Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health
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