

MEDIA RELEASE**Kelowna Chamber Reacts to Outbreak Announcement Today**

Kelowna: The Kelowna Chamber understands the government's decision to reinstate mask wearing indoors in our area but is raising the red flag over the way decisions are being made and communicated.

"We can appreciate that with rising cases of infection in the area that reinstating a mask mandate is warranted but the recent announcement with little to no advance consultation with our organization or the business community is simply not acceptable," says Dan Rogers, Executive Director of the Kelowna Chamber.

"Businesses are frustrated and tired of trying to keep track of what's required of them when changes are frequent and occasionally appear arbitrary. As an example, we had pushed for regional decision making a long time ago but when the interior numbers were low, we continually heard from government that all rules would apply equally across all regions of the province," says Rogers. "Now when things are a concern in one small area in the Interior, the BC government doesn't seem to have a problem with regional-based restrictions."

On the issue of mask wearing the Chamber would concur that making it mandatory is a reasonable step and in fact might help lessen potential conflicts some businesses were facing with their customers who were opting not to wear masks even when recommended or requested.

"The increased case rate is a concern and threatens to dim the light at the end of the tunnel," Rogers continued. "It is a good reminder that the pandemic virus is still out there, and we still need to be diligent in how we operate, and the government needs to do more to encourage those who haven't been vaccinated to pick up the pace. The evidence is clear that those who are not vaccinated or who are under-vaccinated are not only putting themselves at risk but they're putting others and the local economy at risk."

Interior Health, backed by the province, is declaring an outbreak as of midnight. That means, gathering sizes remain restricted: all events require COVID safety plans and non-essential travel to the area is discouraged for anyone who isn't fully vaccinated.

As for the suggestion of limiting non-essential travel to a few communities in the area, the Chamber continues to encourage the Province and health authorities to focus their efforts more on "how people behave" rather than where they are from.



Our economy is very much linked to tourism, and we should welcome visitors and simply ask them, along with all of us, to respect COVID-19 safety protocols to see us through to the end of the pandemic.

The Chamber also continues to encourage employers to pay attention to other health orders, guidance, and recommendations from the Province and WorkSafeBC.

(End)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Dan Rogers, Executive Director, Kelowna Chamber of Commerce

dan@kelownachamber.org

