

Recap of Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce Survey on COVID-19 Restrictions

December 11, 2020

The survey was completed on December 7-9, 2020 by 431 individuals from all parts of the province and from all sectors. The results were consistent with earlier surveys by the SCC in the following ways:

- Most respondents supported the actions of the governments to date and felt that any person or business not adhering to the policies should be fined heavily to reflect the importance of the protocols. Several mentioned that every participant at house parties should be fined not just the organizer and the same point was made about rallies where masks were not worn.
- Most participants had received some form of financial support from one of the three levels of government.
- Much greater clarity and in some cases “common sense” was felt necessary around the number of people gathering at private homes versus restaurants or in banquet halls and it was referenced many times that because it did not make sense, some people would not adhere.
- Most respondents believed that the protocols and restrictions announced on November 27th should be maintained into January to use the normal slower down period over the holidays as a buffer with the hope of having lower infection numbers in the new year.
- There were numerous comments about the importance of enhanced mental health and addiction supports for individuals because of the added strain and the lack of some services during the pandemic. It was also noted that several NGOs are not eligible for some of the support programs and therefore had to reduce their services and their client groups may therefore be even more challenged.
- Utilization of more public sector persons to increase the number of inspections and to ensure compliance of health orders was suggested. While most respondents ensured that their customers adhered to the mask policy while in their business, several were also concerned that it was not being consistently monitored.
- Ensure a clear and unified message by government leadership and top health officials. Consistency is critical so that there is no confusion on what should or should not be done.

Survey response specifics:

- 42% felt that the current restrictions (Nov 27th) are suitable for now and several indicated they had already moved to that level of restriction on their own. Of the remaining 58% it was equally split between those that felt the current restrictions had gone too far, not far enough or they were not sure.

- 73% had moderate or high impact to their business due to the cost of PPE which was deemed a hardship for many.
- 73% of respondents indicated a moderate or high level of impact on their mental health or that of their staff.
- Only 8% of respondents were working from home due to COVID-19, although some were home based businesses (i.e., consultants).
- The need for sufficient notice in advance of new protocols coming into effect was noted many times and the cost and difficulty of adjustments was considered a significant challenge.
- The emphasis by political, medical, and business leadership on messaging the importance of mandatory masks, small groups, social distancing etc. was made dozens of times as was noted *“an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”*

Summary

While there were several respondents who believed the current protocols were too harsh, it was clear there was majority support for the Nov 27th protocols being retained into January to utilize the time to slow the infection rate and for at least most businesses, would cause the least negative impact on business.

Therefore, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce would encourage the Government of Saskatchewan to:

- Retain existing protocols as announced on November 27th.
- Clarify and better communicate all protocols and be consistent in their verbal messaging.
- Confirm the extension of the current Provincial support programs until business is returned to a normal level.

For more information, contact:

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