

MEDICINE HAT & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



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The Voice of Business: The Chamber of Commerce is a member-driven, volunteer-led organization, proudly representing the interests of businesses in our region, and working diligently to stimulate a strengthened and vibrant economy through our connections, support and influence. For more than 115 years, the Chamber has stood for promoting business, monitoring government and championing managed growth in the local economy. The Chamber represents over 800 businesses in our region and is aligned with both the Alberta Chambers of Commerce (ACC), which represents over 25,000 businesses and the Canadian Chambers of Commerce (CCC), which represents over 200,000 businesses. With the largest and most influential business organizations locally, provincially and federally, the Chamber network is the most unified, valued and influential business network in Canada and works together to shape policy and programs that will make a difference to businesses in our region.

Chamber Responds to New Provincial Health Measures

The Medicine Hat & District Chamber of Commerce has been steadily involved in calls and follow up to assist businesses with supports and information since the new restrictions were announced on December 8th. The government has introduced a mandatory provincewide mask requirement for all public spaces and workplaces. In addition, all indoor and outdoor social gatherings are prohibited, limiting contact to those in the same household.

Other new measures taking effect on Sunday, December 13 at 12:01 a.m. include several closures and reduced capacity that will unfortunately impact many businesses.

To help small and mid-sized businesses continue to survive this ongoing health crisis, the province is expanding and increasing the Small and Medium Enterprise Relaunch Grant. The government is lowering the revenue loss threshold to 30 per cent (from the original 50 per cent), and all eligible businesses in the province will also be able to apply for a second grant payment, offering up to a total of \$20,000 in potential funding. Visit Alberta.ca for details.

Businesses are encouraged to use the Chamber's Covid 19 website page for resources, to make sure they are aware of funding and to update plans in order to sustain business operations and limit risk that could result from closures or

further enhanced restrictions due to increased case counts.

Here are the supports available to your business or organization:

1. Small and Medium Enterprise Relaunch Grant (SMERG): This grant provides up to \$20,000 to Alberta businesses, cooperatives, and non-profit organizations that were ordered to close or reduce operations, and that experienced a revenue reduction of at least 30% due to public health orders.

2. Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS): Depending on your revenue, you may be eligible for a subsidy of up to 75% of employee wages retroactive from March 15, 2020 to June 2021.

3. Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS): Businesses, non-profit organizations, or charities, whether a tenant or property owner, with lost revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic may be eligible for a direct subsidy to up to 65% of their commercial rent or property expenses from September 27, 2020 until June 2021. Applicants eligible for the base subsidy may also be eligible for an additional 25% in lockdown support for up to 90% of expenses if your business is forced to close as a result of Alberta's new public health orders.

4. Canada Emergency Bank Account (CEBA): Through financial institutions, this program provides interest-free loans of up to \$60,000, \$20,000 of which is forgivable, to small businesses and not-for-profits to help cover their operating costs.

5. Employment Insurance, Canada Recovery Benefit, Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit, and Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit: These supports can help your employees if they are impacted directly by COVID-19.

6. The ShopHERE program, a partnership between the Chamber, APEX, Community Futures Entrepren Corp, Invest Medicine Hat and the City of Medicine Hat, launched earlier this year on July 13th to help businesses shift to an online format. This program was launched in recognition that businesses would need to build up their resiliency and find ways to enhance services and continue to operate and sell their products regardless of public health measures or restrictions.

The Chamber also developed a one stop shop of tools and resources and have continually been updating this information on the Chamber COVID-19 Information & Resources website page since the start of the pandemic. In addition, the Chamber has been posting weekly blog updates and e-newsletter communications. Businesses that have questions on supports and funding can reach out to the Chamber by phone, email or through their website and subscribe to their e-newsletter.

MONTHLY NEWS TUNE UP

Fighting COVID-19 and Strengthening Health Care

The Government of Canada will cover 100% of the cost of procuring vaccines for all Canadians, and the supplies needed to administer

them. In addition, the Prime Minister proposed the following health care areas in which to begin work, supported by new federal investments: improving long-term care and health care delivery for people across the country, increasing mental health services, coordinating on digital platforms and information sharing between jurisdictions, and making progress on a national, universal pharmacare program while lowering the cost of drugs.

2021 City Budget Update Aims to Address \$23M Gap

The City of Medicine Hat 2021 Budget Update presented on December 7th reflects the City's enhanced Accelerated Financially Fit Initiative, which aims to address a \$23M gap created by the loss of oil and gas dividend revenues from City-owned assets. Unlike other levels of government, municipalities are unable to plan deficit budgets. To achieve a balanced budget, the City must ensure expenses do not exceed funding. The original 2019-2022 Budget approved in December 2018 was based on the assumption of an annual property tax increase of 4%. The 2021 Budget Update was adjusted to include a 0% property tax increase for both 2020 and 2021 to support the community through financial hardships created by COVID-19 and other recessionary factors. This decision and the related reduction of \$7.3M in tax revenues added further pressure to the City's operating budget. While the 2021 Budget Update signals significant progress toward financial sustainability, City officials are quick to point out that more work needs to be done. Find more information on the City's website.

Alberta removes licence plate stickers

Due to advances in technology, starting Jan. 1, Albertans will no longer require expiry stickers on their licence plates as the province moves toward adopting reflective plates. Alberta drivers and vehicle owners will still be responsible for renewing their registration on time, and will still require a valid certificate of vehicle registration. Albertans can sign up to receive an electronic renewal notice through a registry agent, the Alberta Motor Association, or MyAlberta eServices.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

- Annegret's Chocolates
- Bodyology Wellness Inc.
- Cangas Propane
- Garlock Services Ltd.
- King Nothing Services Ltd.
- Lansdowne Equity Ventures Ltd.
- LPW Roofing & Construction
- No Limit Exteriors
- The Chic Crafter

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