

Division 5 residents, businesses and landowners,

Please find below a summary of 2 telephone town hall sessions that I was able to attend, on December 10th and 15th. I do my best to capture the questions and answers and as always apologize for any information that may be inaccurate or outdated. I just think that it is interesting to hear the questions being posed to the Province from, in this case, businesses and municipal elected officials. As well, these are my summary notes and have not been vetted or approved by Council, but are rather just for general information. I hope you get something out of them. I plan to send out a year end letter in the next week regarding County business and any updates that I think you may find important.

Please feel free to send this information to anyone you think may be interested. If anyone would like to be added to the distribution list please drop me an email, or if you would like to be removed from the distribution list I can do that as well.

Take care and all my best,

Angela Aalbers,

Division 5 Councillor, 403 507 1057

Telephone Town Hall with the Minister of jobs economy and innovation and Dr. Hinshaw, Dec 10th

Small enterprise relaunch grant (up to 20k with 5K already released early this year and an addition of 15K\$ grant made available recently). Please go to the [Alberta Biz Connect | Alberta.ca](#) for more information. The revenue reduction component has been reduced to 30% in the latest grant release versus the 50% revenue reduction in the first phase of the grant.

Q & A session

(Q) Can you explain why dance studios can have 1 on 1 but not for fitness instruction? (A) Dance studios are also supposed to be closed under the new metrics so this cannot occur.

(Q) Regarding show homes and realestate open houses, can they do 1 on 1 appointments? (A) Real estate open houses is an activity that would not fall under any specific restrictions but we would encourage online viewings.

(Q) When will expanded grant details be online and when can we apply? (A) They are posted now on the biz connect website [Alberta Biz Connect | Alberta.ca](#). First grant round was up to 5K\$ based on a drop in revenue of at least 50%. The latest grant is based on a revenue drop of 30%. As far as timing the portal will be alive early next week for the second round.

(Q) What capacity can food trucks operate at right now? (A) They would have no indoor component. No social gatherings are allowed, so the patrons would be expected to not social gather, but we would not expect the food truck owners to police this. There are no capacity restrictions on food trucks. Most important is that those working in the food trucks are adhering to the social distancing rules.

(Q) Will businesses get access to rapid testing, if so when? (A) We know that rapid testing used to replace the need for measures leads to outbreaks. So, we will not use rapid testing to replace the health measures we are putting in place. We are looking at a way to use the rapid testing to best serve Albertans, like in rural areas. We are looking at deploying rapid testing in senior facilities.

(Q) Once the 4 weeks are up, what are the metrics being used by the Chief medical officers to open hotels and casinos? We need to get our growth rate below 1, so that our new case numbers can shrink. Right now we are at a 9% positivity rate, which is very high. We need to bring our new cases down but we do not have a specific metric yet. We know we need to get our growth rate to below 0.8%. We need to also get our new cases down.

(Q) Physiotherapist can work but not athletic and massage therapist. Why is this? (A) We recognize that there are many people that benefit from these services, but these have just fallen to the side of the line to limit close contacts. We are letting the regulated health professionals continue and all the other services have to stop.

(Q) What about businesses that opened in 2020 that cannot compare 2019 revenues in order to apply for the business grant? (A) We are reviewing this right now, it took us 6 weeks to get the grant up and running so we were focusing on that and we are now reviewing a support structure for those businesses that opened in 2020. Stay tuned.

(Q) Are children under 2 considered part of the retail capacity numbers for the restrictions in place? (A) We hadn't considered an infant that was being carried. I would say if they are carried they should not be included in the capacity numbers but if they are able to walk alone or independently they would count towards the capacity limit.

(Q) Tourism association of Alberta – we are requesting a travel tax credit or voucher program to stimulate consumer spending? Will the government consider this? (A) We allowed the operators to keep the tourism levy abatement, which will be extended beyond the original deadline of end December. We will gladly take a look at further policy ideas.

(Q) Can you clarify the difference between outdoor fitness up to 10 which is allowed under the current measures versus outdoor socialization which is not allowed? (A) We are doing the best we can to limit close contact, so limiting outdoor parties and sitting around a campfire. We consider outdoor recreation and fitness an important safety component for physical and mental health. Distancing should be maintained while engaging in the outdoor recreation or fitness activity.

(Q) The grant of 20k\$ is not enough to deal with the issues we are facing. Chartered banks have been hesitant to release the funds from the larger federal government? What can the province do to deal

with this? (A) We have heard frustration on the larger federal programs, but it is hard to comment without the specifics. Reach out to us on the biz connect sites.

(Q) What is expected of businesses when there is a positive case of an employee or a guest/client? (A) It would depend on the nature of the business. Contact tracing is not able to reach all cases in a timely manner which does leave business trying to navigate these issues on their own – check the information on the website. If you become aware of a positive case, you try and figure out who they have been exposed too and ask them to go home, get tested stay home for 14 days. If it is a client, if you have a list then you could contact other clients. WRT to cleaning protocols it should be on our website.

(Q) Can customers enter a bakery or café, order take out and then leave? (A) Grab and go is allowed and is permitted.

(Q) Is it possible for business rent facilities / spaces to families, like hotel pools and arenas for private use? (A) I can't answer this right now, but we are taking this back for consideration, look for information on this coming.

(Q) When will the vaccine be made available for front line retail workers? Will this only be available at the hospital? (A) Vaccines are being administered through AHS. There are no direct programs for retail staff, vaccinations will be characterised on risk factors and age.

(Q) Are there low interest capital development loans for businesses, say over a 10 year time frame? (A) We can take a look at this

(Q) Why weren't restaurant patios allowed to remain open after we have made such a large investment in our infrastructure? (A) It is due to the growth of the virus. Patios were open before because the growth and transmission was not that high. Now we just need to limit the chance of contact. We will take this back because we appreciate the investment that restaurant owners have made in their outdoor patios. We are diagnosing only a portion of the cases, which is only 25-50% of the cases that are actually occurring. We need to bend this curve down and once we do we will consider reopening some of these lower risk activities.

(Q) Edmonton sport and social club – sports was the first thing put on the chopping block. As we start seeing the number improve, is there going to be a differentiation between individual sports, such as pickle ball and tennis versus contact sports? (A) A lot of the issues weren't occurring during the sporting activity, but rather during the socializing that occurs around sports.

(Q) Is there guidelines for a forecast of when we will be reopen? Businesses need a reasonable expectation of when they can reopen? (A) We don't have an idea right now, if the vaccine distribution goes to plan it should have wide distribution by second half of 2021.

(Q) I am concerned about the declining mental health and addictions. Can we educate people on healthy choices? (A) We have put an additional 50M\$ into mental health alone due to the pandemic. We just need to be there for people and show compassion.

Telephone Town Hall with Premier Kenny, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Dr. Hinshaw, Dec 15

Q & A session

Lac la Biche (Q) Enhanced CPO need to self-isolate for 14 days if they come in contact with a positive COVID case. We need the same AHS directives, like a health care worker not being required to quarantine. (A) We will take this back to our emergency operations center so that we could possibly use the same standards however, there needs to be an occupational health and safety person available to ensure that PPE is being used correctly, and that there is someone that can assess the situation to ensure there is no breach of PPE.

Sylvan lake (Q) Why can massage therapist not work under the new metrics introduced? (A) We have drawn the line at regulated health professionals but we are working on policy options for consideration regarding massage therapy and other therapies that are not regulated as this is a consistent request. We recognize that not allowing this is having a negative health impact.

Town of Ponoka (Q) What is the plan for vaccinating elected officials to show leadership? (A) Elected officials are in the same que as everyone else. If you are not in an age or risk category, you won't be first to get the vaccine.

Town of Edson (Q) We have seen a large increase in cases and have recently shut down our outdoor rinks, but we do believe we will be able to rent ice and pool time to households in a safe manner. Can we have an exception for small communities to do this? (A) The downside is that it does put the onus on those renting it out to know who is in the household or not. We couldn't make a rule for one part of the province, so the direction we are providing is that these facilities need to stay closed. We may consider the renting of facilities when the numbers reduce.

Village of Irma (Q) Are the hospital workers getting compensated for reporting covid cases? (A) No there is no incentive for healthcare workers. 3.5% of covid cases across the country need hospital care, meaning that if the total cases increase the number of hospital cases increase as well. The average age of covid deaths is 82 but the average age of covid hospitalization is 60.

Town of Coaldale (Q) January 11th is when the restriction are supposed to come off. What will it look like for our recreational user groups? If it is a staged approach what will it look like because it will be helpful for bookings? (A) We just don't know. Based on the current plateau we are reasonably optimistic, but there is just not enough data yet. We just need some more time. We know we need to give our summer event organizers a heads up of what is happening so they can prepare their events schedule, but it really is a "just stay tuned for more information". 8-9 days after our thanksgiving weekend plus some Halloween parties set us up for where we are today. We know that Christmas is going to be risky so we just need to wait and see.

Town of Banff (Q) When the cases go down is the province going to expand the testing into asymptomatic testing? Would the province consider partnering with municipalities and businesses to do more testing? (A) We are trying to find the right optimal testing policy setting. When we had lower case counts we were able to do more asymptomatic testing, but this is not the case now. Rapid testing kits are now being rolled out to long term care facilities, but are approved for testing those with symptoms and not asymptomatic. Perhaps this could be rolled out in future. Rapid testing is not meant to replace health measures though because they are not as accurate/sensitivity. They will be an addition too and not a replacement for health measures. Even with PCR testing, people have tested negative during their incubator period and then went on to be a transmitter. January 11th is a fluid date and we will be following the data so do not hang your hat on a particular date or time. This will just be a check in point and all restrictions may not be lifted.

Town of Onoway (Q) How do you chose onsite testing facilities? (A) The decision on where swabbing can happen is made by AHS who look at staff and infrastructure.

Lethbridge (Q) What is your advice for those traveling international this holiday season? (A) Defer those visits. We will create exceptions for end of life visits. If they are permanent residence from Alberta they can come home. If not they should defer their travel plans.

Red Deer (Q) With the restrictions of gatherings over the holidays people are booking travel to hot spots. What is the policy and position on this? (A) We have not changed our general recommendation on avoiding non-essential travel to the US. If people are doing this they are enhancing their risk. Just as a note, there have been 659 deaths from influenza in the last 10 years and we have already surpassed that with COVID deaths.