

COVID-19

Businesses weigh if Canada bubble is 'short-term gain' for 'long-term pain'



John Wishart, CEO of the Chamber of Commerce for the Greater Moncton Area.
Photo: Brunswick News Archives

🕒 Published 4 days ago



Savannah Awde | Legislature Bureau

The premier will consider re-opening to more of Canada if cases stay low over the next few weeks, prompting mixed reactions from the business community.

As Premier Blaine Higgs announced the bubble expansions to two Quebec border regions Thursday, he said the province has considered opening up to regions in other provinces — but hasn't because of possible hurdles.

“We were advised by public health that it would be difficult to monitor that, the whole premise of it might be difficult,” he said.

“But that’s not to rule that out, you know, I’d like to think that sometime down the road, in another month, a few weeks, we’ll be in a position to say we need to move closer to the rest of Canada, and maybe that’s the next step.”

Greater Moncton Chamber of Commerce CEO John Wishart said that while the Atlantic bubble has not brought the level of business that the region hoped for, some businesses aren't eager to welcome back the rest of Canada.

“We have to ask, is it getting too late to have an impact this summer?” he said.

Wishart noted that many companies the chamber has spoken with aren't willing to send employees on business travel for the rest of 2020, and that it's likely too late to reap the benefits from summer vacationers.

“Is the possibility of a short-term gain worth the potential of a long-term pain if numbers of COVID-19 do increase, and it means a drastic shutdown of operations?”

But Saint John Chamber CEO David Duplisea doesn't believe it's too late for a bigger bubble to have a positive effect, noting Southwestern New Brunswick's "beautiful falls."

However, he has heard business owners question whether the province has the screening capacity for a larger reopening.

“Does New Brunswick actually have the capacity for screening, the procedures and policies for screening enforcement? That’s a big fear,” he said.

“And if we do open up to a Canada-wide bubble, how do we enforce the policies and what do they look like?”

In particular, Duplisea noted "mixed messages and confusion" when it comes to the province's authority to stop travellers into the province and consistency of the rules applied at the border.

"There's a general acceptance that they do want a Canada-wide bubble perhaps, but they want to make sure that it's properly enforced."

Most businesses in the Fredericton area have accepted the idea of expanding out of the Atlantic provinces, Chamber CEO Krista Ross said.

She added that most are still seeing fewer sales than usual, and this has stoked a lot of anxiety for what the year ahead holds.

"What will happen when these [government] programs finish, where will we be? Where will their businesses be? And for those that would typically have, for example, the summer being their strong season, if they don't have a strong summer what will the fall hold for them?" she said.

For businesses with seasonal declines over the winter, Ross added that owners are doing everything they can to survive the colder months.

"They're doing what they can to address what they can and have sales where they can support the maintenance of the business and just sustain themselves, but it's probably a

guarantee that we'll lose some business this year."

But keeping businesses operational isn't just about the bubble — Ross is urging New Brunswickers to support local businesses, as part of the Canada United effort between chambers across provinces.

"If we want to keep these businesses operating in our community, we need to make the choice to support them. We need to visit their businesses, we need to share their social media posts, we need to encourage others to support local businesses as well, because they're really the backbone of our community," Ross said.

🕒 Published 4 days ago



Comments

My profile

Post a comment

2500 characters remaining

Post

All Comments 1

Chris_Mulholland_ 2 days ago

Would need to make masks mandatory and police willing to issue tickets to CFA's who disregard rules

Reply ↩

Report 🚩

