

COVID-19 Update: 20 March 2020

Mar 20, 2020 | [Chamber Blog](#)

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Good afternoon,

As one of the most incredibly stressful and volatile weeks of our lives nears an end, I want to express my heartfelt and ongoing concern for you, your staff, and your organizations. Team Chamber is committed during this time to providing you with the most recent information available, advocating on your behalf to government for support and addressing your questions and concerns to the best of our ability.

At the provincial government's [daily news conference](#), Premier Blaine Higgs announced the following measures which relate specifically to our members and the business community as a whole:

- **WorkSafeNB** is deferring premiums for businesses for three months.
- Though business **property taxes** must be paid by May 31, late penalties will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to see if the penalty can be waived due to undue financial challenges, such as having to close a business due to COVID-19.
- On Monday, March 23, a limited number of **Service New Brunswick** centres will reopen for essential transactions only – that cannot be done online or by phone. The list of essential services that will be offered at the service centres is listed on the [Service New Brunswick website](#).

Earlier today we compiled a list of businesses or industries that are unsure if they are required to close or are unsure about their obligations if they remain open, which has been provided to government. The government has released [an interpretive guideline](#), which addresses most of these questions and concerns. Because of the overwhelming responses, we have been told that we can expect another similar document tomorrow which will answer the questions and scenarios not covered by today's document, rather than individual responses to each case.

The provincial government has released a [more general document](#) which breaks down the business implications of yesterday's state of emergency declaration.

The government is asking businesses with questions to contact: nav@navnb.ca, call the Business Navigator line at 1-833-799-7966, or consult the [COVID-19 page specifically for businesses](#).

Today, Prime Minister Trudeau announced our border with the United States would be closed today, with exemptions for supply chains and trade. He also announced **a plan to "mobilize industry"**, which will:

1. Provide funds to help scale up production capacity to companies that current make needed medical supplies
2. Provide funds to help other manufacturing operations to retool in order to begin producing needed medical supplies. He said that the Auto Parts Manufacturing Association reached out to offer this type of assistance.
3. Develop [new and expedited procurement streams](#) to allow the federal government to purchase needed items from more suppliers more efficiently

The Canadian Payroll Association has produced a [COVID-19 payroll Q & A document](#) which address the most common questions about Records of Employment, layoffs and EI benefits.

BDC has provided some [initial details](#) regarding additional available funding and other relief and are hosting a webinar to explain more on March 25 – you can register [here](#).

Canada Business is encouraging business owners to [download their app](#) to get tailored supports to address your specific needs and questions about COVID-19.

Dr Jennifer Robson, Carleton University has compiled and shared information that addresses related to eligibility and access to employment insurance or the newly announced employment support benefit and emergency care benefit. Her research can be found [here](#).

In an effort to allow 811 health-care professionals to support more people who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, a [new online tool](#) to assess symptoms is available. Using this tool will help New Brunswickers determine when they should call the 811 line, which will reduce the volume of calls we have seen from people seeking basic information.

You are receiving this message because you are in our member database or via our email list. If you know other individuals or organizations that could benefit from our information, ask them to join our mailing list [here](#).

We also still want to hear how the COVID-19 Crisis is affecting your business and any specific ways that the government can support you at this time. Contact either myself or our Policy & Research Manager, Morgan Peters to share information or ask questions.

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Sincerely,



Krista Ross, CEO, Fredericton Chamber of Commerce