

**STATEMENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 4 2021**

**CHAMBER NETWORK CALLS FOR COORDINATED APPROACH TO REOPENING
ONTARIO'S ECONOMY**

Chatham-Kent, Ontario – Today, the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce released the following statement:

“In the middle of a once-in-a-century pandemic, it is difficult to think beyond confronting the immediate demands of COVID-19,” said, Gail Hundt President & CEO, Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce “However, even as we continue supporting each other today, we must also begin looking over the horizon to ensure businesses are prepared for the province’s reopening and recovery. It is never too early to start planning how our province and economy can emerge stronger while doing everything necessary to avoid further lockdowns.”

Each region’s experience differs significantly across the province when it comes to transmission rates, tracking and tracing capacity, and other variables. The Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, along with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and many of the network Chambers, have written to the Premier so that when the time comes businesses of all sizes have a predictable and coordinated effort to ensure society reopens in a harmonized fashion that prioritizes individual safety as well as economic stability asking for the following:

- **A readiness plan with a focus on sectors and regions hardest hit.** It is critical that Ontario’s employers are aware of how reopening will take place step-by-step so they can properly prepare.
- **Advanced notice.** Businesses and their employees need sufficient time to prepare to get back to work.
- **Clear guidelines.** Businesses need to clearly understand the rules and how they will be enforced. Inconsistent and unclear public health guidelines cause confusion among businesses, employees, and consumers alike, and make it difficult for individuals to take appropriate action to protect themselves and their communities.
- **Fulsome communication.** Educational training via virtual workshops in advance of reopening would equip employers with practical information to help them keep staff and customers safe.
- **Workforce management systems.** Employers in Ontario should adopt a scalable digital software tool for routine self-screening and assessment by employees, as part of a comprehensive workforce management system.
- **Rapid testing.** Sufficient and timely testing and tracing gets employees back to work quickly, ensuring continued productivity and reduced strain on families.
- **Evidence-based decision making.** A strong testing and tracing apparatus ensures the province can accurately assess where and how the virus is spreading, so that efforts to target restrictions can be confidently based on solid data.
- **Continued supports for those who need it most.** Finally, continued timely and accessible supports for business will prevent further layoffs, closures, and bankruptcies.

- **Leveraging private sector to support vaccine distribution and deployment.** Businesses will be critical in supporting public awareness, logistical capabilities, and best practices.

“As the government explores options to safely re-open the economy, it is worth noting that businesses already adhere to a number of existing health and safety protocols and will do their part to support a safe re-opening. The business community will continue to prove their commitment to safety protocols to protect their worker and customers to keep their doors open,” added Gail Hundt, President & CEO Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce.

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Gail Hundt, President & CEO

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ABOUT CHATHAM-KENT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

With the support of 350 members, the Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce is the visionary leader and recognized voice to municipal government for local business. While representing our members diverse needs, we work diligently to enhance the economic prosperity for business and quality of life for the Chatham-Kent community. With long standing memberships in the Ontario and Canadian Chambers of Commerce, we deliver a respected voice to federal and provincial matters that affect day to day and continued success of Chatham-Kent business.