

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**August 26, 2021**  
**Vaccine Verification Program (passport)**

The Fort St. John and District Chamber of Commerce first and foremost would like reiterate our mandate as stated below is “To Promote and Enhance Local Businesses to Strengthen our Community.” We are deeply concerned over the recent announcement by the PHO Vaccine Verification at businesses, public venues and events. Our priority is our members and community and the support of economic development and recovery.

The FSJ Chamber sees 3 critical conversations happening within this one announcement and would like to address them individually.

**1) Support by the BC Chamber of Commerce for this action.**

The FSJ Chamber was not contacted, nor contributed to the conversation regarding support of this initiative between BCCC and the Provincial Government. We were not given an opportunity to provide input or feedback on behalf of our membership / region. Discussions between the FSJ ED and the BCCC CEO – Fiona Famulak took place immediately after the announcement to express our concerns and disappointment upon not being consulted. Measures will be implemented in the future to ensure the voice of our region is being heard in future decisions pertaining to our membership and advocacy.

**2) Vaccine Verification Program**

The FSJ Chamber has engaged with both the BCCC network across the province as well the documents provided by the Government PHO to ensure we have gathered the information in regards to the implementation of this program. We have concerns regarding:

- a) **Implementation** - Staffing requirements, employee rights, costs, timelines, accessibility for seniors, etc.
- b) **Enforcement** – we question how this program is going to be enforceable either through the self policing of businesses, local enforcement or provincial enforcements
- c) **Impact** – What will this cultural segregation do to impact our community’s social, mental and economic status and how does it ensure recovery outcomes.
- d) **Inequity** – What is the standard used to deem some activities / sectors safer than others? IE Grocery Store is safer than a yoga studio
- e) **Compromise** – What compromises / alternatives are being made available for those choosing not to vaccinate due to personal or medical issues?
- f) **Metrics** – What are the Governments measurements for success to discontinue the program? What percentage do we need to reach in vaccination / cases / closures for this program to end? What is the longterm outcomes and end date for this program.
- g) **Alternatives** – We would like to know what alternatives were explored before this decision was approved.
- h) **Acknowledgement** - of an ongoing Human Rights dialogue.
- i) **Compliance** – We have found this resource regarding non compliance for businesses and the consequences of establishments but non compliant.

<https://www.fasken.com/en/knowledge/2021/08/24-british-columbia-introduces-covid19-vaccine-cards>

The FSJ Chamber also would like to see the long term plan moving forward to promote and increase the vaccination numbers if that is what their program matrix is founded on. What initiatives are they implimenting to increase:

- a) Awareness
- b) Accessibility (hours and locations of clinics)
- c) Health Care Worker support

### 3) **Members amd Community**

The Fort St. John Chamber cares about our business membership, our community, our health and our future. The Chamber is here to support our community and businesses through this pandemic and economic catastrophe. It is imperative that our message is that of our membership. To ensure that, we have been answering phone calls, messages and inquiries. We are collecting input from businesses, other Chambers, Government resources. In addition we have created a Survey that we would like businesses and citizens (members and non-members) to participate in and share with your networks so that we can collect the statistical data necessary to respond to our elected officials in an informed and educated manner about what our region wants and needs. The data collected will benefit us all in understanding the full scope of the impact of decisions specifically affecting us in the FSJ Region.

To take the survey please go <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8H2G3RK>

- a) We will continue to provide information and education to our businesses to ensure they are aware of compliance and regulatory expectations, so they can effectively make informed decisions about remaining open or closing.
- b) The FSJ Chamber office will continue to provide resources to businesses for:
  - a. Best practices / solutions to continue to operate
  - b. Funding options available
  - c. Support programs available
  - d. Business support and advice for Marketing and Communications
  - e. Networking – Our first In Person Back to Business Mixer is Sept 9 at the Lido, please pre-register. This is an opportunity to come and share your feedback about our current state of affairs.

We want to ensure our membership and community that we are taking the current PHO regulations very serious and are working to ensure our Northern Voice is heard as well ensure our businesses are equipped and prepared with the information they need to continue to remain open.

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#### **For More Details:**

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*To promote and enhance local businesses to strengthen our communities*