

The Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
via email: premier.correspondence@ontario.ca

re: Timmins in dire need of a COVID assessment centre for work-related travel

Dear Premier Ford:

On behalf of The Chamber and our members, thank you for your continued leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Timmins Chamber has proven a strong partner to the province in disseminating vital programs and services to the business community, and we are pleased to continue this collaborative relationship.

As the current provincial health status balances on the edge of a fourth wave, we understand that business owners, operators, and their employees must adhere to strict COVID-19 guidelines for work-related travel. Of particular note, anyone travelling outside of Canada must be able to produce a negative COVID-19 Laboratory-based molecular test administered by an assessment centre.¹

The Chamber understands the need for such measures and that there may be a cost associated until a more officiated form of proof becomes mandated. At present, the only assessment centres and labs administering this paid test can be found in Sudbury or North Bay. Consequently, entrepreneurs and employees in Timmins and surrounding areas face additional barriers to acquiring a COVID-19 test before any international travel. As you can well imagine, the fee for this test would be further exacerbated by the need to make roundtrip commutes of 600 kilometres or 700 kilometres respectively, only to have test results in hand that correspond with their travel dates. Because of our natural resource-driven economy and contribution to the mining supply networks, business owners and operators are frequently required to travel across the US border, and this requirement will undoubtedly lead to business disruption.

Premier, it is critical that Timmins businesses focus on financial continuity, recovery and growing workforce shortages and not bear the further burden of employee drive times, accommodations, per diems, and other costs associated with acquiring a laboratory-based molecular test result. Thus, we urge the province to open access to paid COVID-19 Laboratory-based molecular tests in Timmins so that employees do not need to commute long distances to acquire a test result for work-related travel.

The resiliency of our economy will be chiefly focused on how local and regional economies can source recovery options from within. It is imperative that, until such time as uniform legislation is passed to regulate how international business-related travel will occur, the province does all that it can to support local communities, business, and their employees, who must continue to adhere to current measures that impose further, unnecessary financial burdens to their operations.

We would be happy to discuss this issue further and look forward to working with you and your government on solutions that support the health of Ontarians and our economy.

Sincerely,



Keitha Robson
Chief Administrative Officer
Timmins Chamber



Melanie Verreault
2020-21 President
Timmins Chamber

¹ COVID-19 test and testing location information. COVID. (n.d.). <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-test-and-testing-location-information#mandatory-testing-at-airport-and-land-borders-with-the-united-states>.



The **CHAMBER.**

Cc. The Hon. Christine Elliot, Minister of Health
The Hon. Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade
The Hon. Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development of Ontario
The Hon. Greg Rickford, Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry
MPP Gilles Bisson, Timmins
Mayor George Pirie, Mayor for the City of Timmins
Rocco Rossi, President and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce
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