

Some businesses may ask for proof of vaccine: Chamber



Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce CEO David Duplisea is pictured in this file photo. Photo: Emma McPhee/Telegraph-Journal

Andrew Waugh | Political Editor

It's possible that New Brunswickers will have to prove they've been vaccinated against COVID-19 to gain entry into some businesses, according to the CEO of the Saint John Chamber of Commerce.

But David Duplisea acknowledges doing so "is a slippery slope," that there's lots to sort out from a "human rights and legal standpoint," and there's not enough clarity from governments about exactly what businesses can and can't ask.

"Members are a little undecided [about vaccine passports], because they don't know if they're allowed to demand that their customers be vaccinated," Duplisea said. "So with a vaccination passport of some kind, there will have to be a lot of communication as to [whether] businesses are allowed to request that their customers have the passport, or are they not

allowed."

But he added that some businesses who are chamber members want to do just that – "Proof of vaccination, or you're not coming into my establishment," Duplisea said.

Last week, Quebec announced that if there's a fourth COVID wave in the fall, it could require proof of COVID vaccination as a condition of entry to bars, gyms, and some other venues. Government officials stressed that doing so would be considered a last resort, but could prevent lockdowns being imposed.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has already acknowledged that vaccine passports will be required for international travel, but hasn't yet suggested they'll be needed anywhere else.

Premier Blaine Higgs recently told Brunswick News that businesses have the right to ask for proof of vaccination, and suggested mandatory vaccinations might be allowed in workplaces where physical distancing isn't possible. Duplisea said demanding employees be vaccinated is a nonstarter, but rapid testing them certainly isn't. Four chambers of commerce recently started handing out rapid testing kits to interested businesses, and Duplisea said 900 have been sent out in Saint John.

And even though Higgs has given businesses the green light to ask questions of employees and customers, Duplisea said some chamber members still aren't sure where they'll legally stand if they follow the premier's advice.

If there's no further clarification on the rules, Duplisea said, "businesses will do what they need to do to open safely, and continue to serve their customers."

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