

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Farkas calls on province to safely re-open fitness facilities

Saturday, Feb. 27, 2021 Calgary, AB – Jeromy Farkas, mayoral candidate, is calling on the province to plan for an immediate and safe re-opening of gyms and fitness facilities.

“Today, I am calling on the province to work with industry for an immediate, safe re-opening plan for fitness facilities that have been forced to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Farkas, a dedicated Ironman competitor who is currently the Ward 11 Councillor.

“We are in a mental and physical health crisis that has been propelled to unprecedented levels due to the pandemic,” said Farkas, “The data clearly demonstrates that transmission is extremely low in these facilities and I am confident these small business owners can work with the province on responsible guidelines.”

The “Path Forward” plan for re-opening Alberta “sets a more predictable path for easing restrictions, while protecting the health system”. Once hospitalizations are within range of the benchmark, decisions to move to the next step will be considered. The benchmarks for Step 2, which includes easing of indoor fitness, have been met and call for a moving between steps as early as March 1, 2021.

According to the Alberta Coalition of the Fitness Industry Council of Canada (ACFICC), which represents over 200 gym/fitness/dance/martial arts studios across the province, statistics show a transmission rate of COVID-19 of 0.0037%.

“From June to November we hosted 16,000 workouts with zero cases of COVID-19, yet we have been forced by our provincial government to be fully closed for 6 out of the last 11 months,” said Emily Slaneff, strategic advisor for the ACFICC and owner of Crush Camp – an East Village fitness studio that has been closed for months.

“The average facility is currently losing \$20,000 per month and operating at less than 5% of pre-pandemic revenue, and yet I doubt our mayor will forgive our property taxes at the end of the year. We need comprehensive, ongoing financial assistance and the ability to re-open our facilities,” said Slaneff.

There is no shortage of data that fitness leads to lower health care costs, less burden on our health care system and increased quality of life. According to a recent UK study in *Medical News Today*, low rates of cardio and muscle fitness result in 98% higher chances of depression and 60% that of anxiety.

Earlier this week, Mayor Naheed Nenshi drew outrage with comments implying that gyms do not make a significant difference to mental or economic health. This was a slap in the face to members of the fitness industry who have been forced to shutter – many of them forever.

“One-on-one personal training is simply not affordable for most people,” said Farkas, “There are around 100 fitness facilities in Calgary, most of them small businesses. They need our help, and they need it now.”