



Bismillah hirRahman nirRaheem

*In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.
Abundant Peace, Blessings and Salutations upon the Prophet Muhammad (S)*

Thursday May 14th, 2020

Attention: Respected Imams and Masjid Board Members in Alberta, Canada

Subject: **URGENT: Strong Recommendation to Not Reopen Masajid Until Further Discussion**

Assalamo Alaykum,

I pray this email finds you and your loved ones in the best of health and Iman, Ameen. I am writing to you as co-chair of the Canadian Muslim COVID-19 Task Force (CMCTF), a collaborative platform forged on March 12, 2020 to unify the responses of 25 Muslim religious, medical and community service organizations across Canada to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you may know, several provinces have laid out plans for a graded relaxation of work and social restrictions, and understandably there will be interprovincial differences with regards to reopening frameworks and timelines. **It has come to our attention that without much notice and as part of provincial reopening plans, houses of worship in Alberta have been permitted to allow up to 50 congregants as early as today, and some Masajid and Islamic centres are considering reopening based on these recommendations.**

I fully appreciate the eagerness to reopen especially given the importance of the Masajid to our daily lives, the signal of approval from provincial authorities, the fact that we are amidst the blessed last 10 days of Ramadan and the immense financial and community pressures that our Masajid are facing during this pandemic.

Having said that, **I would like to strongly urge you to please consider holding off on any plans for reopening until a thorough and detailed plan is in place for our Canadian Masajid.** No other provincial health authority that we have been in touch with across the country has plans to reopen houses of worship in the first phase of reopening, and certainly not before Eid ul Fitr. There are significant exposures and risks posed by religious gatherings with this pandemic, that have been clearly documented around the world including in North America, amongst both Muslim and non-Muslim gatherings. Furthermore, while the Albertan government has released some guidance for houses of worship (<https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-relaunch-guidance-places-of-worship.pdf>), these recommendations are generic, do not readily apply to the Muslim context and our Masajid have not had the time to adequately and safely implement all of the recommendations. As with previous pandemics, during phases of reopening, the threat of a second and more deadly wave of infections is very real, and we are already seeing this in China, South Korea and Singapore.

As Muslim religious leaders and custodians of our Masajid and Islamic centres, **we have a responsibility to not rush into decisions that could risk even placing one person's life at risk, let alone an entire community's.** Further, our Muslim congregation and worship has unique risk factors for perpetuating the spread of infection and placing lives at risk, including proximity while praying and

duration of prayer, imperfect infection control practices, multi-generational households, members from high risk groups including the elderly, those with chronic medical conditions, or from lower-income backgrounds. For these and several other reasons, organizations such as the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in the UK, the Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA) and the Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA) in the US have issued statements and fatwas that have chosen to err on the side of caution while developing a roadmap with expert Muslim religious and public health input, for the eventual reopening of Masajid in their countries.

Inshallah we have a **meeting this coming Saturday May 16th, 2020 at 3PM EST (1PM MDT) with Imams, leaders of our Masajid and medical professionals in order to discuss and finalize our roadmap for reopening Canadian Masajid**, which may be implemented at different times across the country, but at least will be done so with consistency and uniformity across each province. Inshallah reopening in this planned manner will safeguard the health and lives of our congregants, while allowing as many of us as possible to be able to meet our religious obligations.

I would like to personally invite you to attend this meeting and would be more than happy to provide the online meeting details if you express your interest by replying to this email.

Thank you for your consideration, cooperation and understanding. I look forward to speaking with this coming Saturday and Inshallah we will all get through this together by working together.

Jazakamullah Khaiyran,

Dr. M. Hashim Khan MBBS FRCPC

Co-Chair, Canadian Muslim COVID-19 Task Force (CMCTF)
cmcovidtf@gmail.com | www.cmcovidtf.com | @cmcovidtf