



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Honourable John Horgan, MLA
Premier of British Columbia
West Annex
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8V 1X4

June 2, 2020

Dear Premier,

COVID-19's impact is being felt deeply across all sectors throughout the province, with the tourism industry being especially impacted. Tourism operators, restaurants, and small business owners are all trying to figure out how to best navigate this unprecedented challenge.

As you are well aware, our province benefits greatly from the tourism sector, which is one of the largest small business employment generators in British Columbia. Over 19,000 tourism businesses operate in British Columbia, employing over 160,000 people and generating over \$20 billion in revenue each year.

The tourism industry alone contributed almost \$1.7 billion in provincial taxes in 2018 and the sector's direct contribution to B.C.'s gross domestic product was \$8.3 billion. Most tourism businesses are also locally owned, small and medium-sized enterprises that directly contribute to their local communities. For example, nearly half of B.C.'s tourism businesses (42 per cent) are located outside of the Vancouver-Lower Mainland region — the area hardest hit by the pandemic. In fact, the fastest growth in the sector over the last decade has been in the Cariboo-Chilcotin Coast region, where tourism is up approximately 50 per cent.

Given the regional importance of the sector, and as B.C.'s new COVID-19 case count continues to decrease, the Official Opposition is asking government to consider regionally-specific approaches to opening up economic activity where it is safe to do so.

We request the Premier, in close consultation with the Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, consider and articulate the conditions under which a region-by-region approach to safely opening the province could be undertaken, so that regions hit hardest by the pandemic economically can accelerate their rebounds.

The BC Liberal Caucus has been reaching out directly to British Columbians throughout this pandemic and it is clear based on their feedback that, despite having lower COVID-19 case counts, certain

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regions are being hit disproportionately harder by the economic impacts that have resulted from sector-wide closures. Therefore, it seems reasonable to at least consider tailored, regionally-based, reopening plans with safety driving the decision-making process.

To be clear, we support the safe, cautious, and responsible approach taken to date. We are looking for consideration on if, and how, regionally-based reopening could be undertaken in a way that does not unduly increase any further risk to British Columbians.

This request supplements the earlier calls from the Official Opposition for broader economic actions such as temporary PST relief, a commercial rent relief plan, and the need for funding for businesses and non-profits to secure personal protective equipment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrew Wilkinson
MLA, Vancouver-Quilchena
Leader of the Official Opposition