

LETTER TO THE PROVINCE OF BC

September 13, 2021

RE: The Current Pulse of our Business Community

West Annex, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Hon. John Horgan, Hon. Adrian Dix, and Dr. Bonnie Henry:

Writing this letter to you is the last thing we want to be spending our time on. Main reason being is that we know as soon as we hit send it will likely be dissected, judged, applauded, and opposed. Such is the world we live in, and we can only imagine how much of this you are dealing with.

We do, however, feel the need to share with you the pulse of our community. Following your announcement regarding the Proof of Vaccine program we have; actively run polls, hosted general and food service roundtables, brought our Chamber board of local stakeholders together, been glued to press conferences and news stories to catch the most up-to-date information, and we have been fielding higher call volumes than we have ever encountered from business and community members whose views range as wide as the beautiful landscape of this Province. These calls have primarily expressed desperation, anger, bitterness, hopelessness, confusion, and overall uncertainty as to what the future holds.

What we are seeing, hearing, and feeling, is a community divided. The rhetoric and conflict fueled debates have sunk lower than we have ever seen, and the most challenging piece is that each person feels they are 100% right in their views and choices. We know we are not alone and that every community in the Province is experiencing this as well.

Today as the Proof of Vaccine Program rolls out, the food service industry and other SME's will bear the full force of this hitting them right at their front door. The food service industry in particular is one that has already decimated by labor shortages, rising wages, increased cost of goods, and an unpredictable operating climate. Like many industries, these hard-working SME's are feeling completely drained while trying to navigate constantly evolving mandates that they never thought they would have to be dealing with in order to remain open.

Columbia Valley Communities

- ▲ Akisqnuq First Nation
- ▲ District of Invermere
- ▲ Regional District of East Kootenay, Area's F and G
- ▲ Shuswap Indian Band
- ▲ Village of Canal Flats
- ▲ Village of Radium Hot Springs

Premier, we implore you to help those SME's directly impacted by today's program rollout with:


- Financial support to hire additional staff with specific skills needed to meet these new demands.
- Financial support to train employees in conflict management and enhanced customer service skills.
- Financial support for businesses to adjust their service models, examples being;
 - Ramping up their take-out supplies, which are very expensive.
 - Many rural areas don't have food service delivery providers, perhaps with support (staffing and operating), food service providers can offer free delivery.
 - Offering online gym classes.
- Financial support for technology to implement this program.
- Host information sessions, separately for public and for businesses to answer their concerns.
- Alignment of this program, by sector, throughout all Provinces in Canada to achieve continuity.
- Communication and messaging support to our out-of-province guests so that they are fully aware of what to expect when they visit BC. This is particularly important and relevant in border communities such as ours.

Premier, as we share the common goal of being an inclusive society and Province, we respectfully ask you to be acutely mindful of this with the decisions you make and consider that:

- Restaurants, Cafés, and Hospitality Establishments have always been a place for connection, for comradery, for joy, and for celebration with friends and family.
- Gyms and exercise facilities are hubs for improving physical and mental health.
- There are clear and legitimate reasons for some residents in our Province who are not able to receive a vaccination, and that if exemptions are to be granted that the process is swift, transparent, reputable, and implemented immediately.

We know your job isn't easy, very few are these days. Last year we were united with supporting sectors and frontline workers with celebratory parades, now we see boycotting and protesting. In short, we must find a way back to unity. Premier, you have the ability and the means to lead us on this, in fact, it is imperative that you do.

Thank you for receiving our letter, we stand ready to support our road to recovery, TOGETHER.



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