



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

of BRITISH COLUMBIA

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

May 5, 2020

Dear Premier:

On behalf of the BC Liberal Official Opposition, I want to reaffirm our continued support of the provincial government's efforts to contain the COVID-19 virus and keep British Columbians as safe as possible. The health impacts of this virus have been devastating for many families, and our hearts are with all of those who have lost a loved one as a result of this pandemic.

The effort to combat this virus has truly been an all-in effort by British Columbians, who deserve our gratitude for the sacrifices they have made to help flatten the curve. Our front-line health professionals, and essential service workers like transit drivers and grocery store staff, deserve our special thanks for the incredible sacrifices they are making, day in and day out, on behalf of us all.

The tireless efforts of Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry, Minister of Health Adrian Dix, and their respective teams deserve our gratitude too. As your government prepares to introduce its re-opening plan this week, it is critical that your plan clearly defines a path out of the current restrictions.

The Official Opposition is calling on government to include the following actions as part of the economic recovery plan and ensure that we get B.C. on a trajectory to restore economic activity and get British Columbians back to work while at the same time keeping British Columbians as safe as possible:

- Establish an increased testing and monitoring plan to ensure we remain in control of the ongoing COVID-19 public health threat;
- Develop and release a transparent pandemic management plan, including a long-term procurement strategy for health supplies and PPE;
- Establish a timely review process for sector-by-sector re-opening plans developed by the private sector, including timelines;
- Launch a B.C. is Back economic growth and job creation plan for British Columbians, to include:
 - a 60-90-day holiday on Provincial Sales Tax, Hotel Tax and EHT;
 - a short-term commercial rent relief plan that includes a no-eviction backstop to help small businesses, particularly retailers, who have seen a significant loss of revenue;
 - an increase in our tourism marketing budget to attract visitors when it is safe to do so;
 - a rural B.C.-specific strategy that helps position rural B.C. for post COVID-19 prosperity; and

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- a moratorium on new regulations and policies that would add costs for B.C. businesses.

The people of British Columbia have been rightfully focused on what they can do to support government in our collective efforts to combat COVID-19. But they are also growing more and more concerned about how they will deal with the economic devastation that looms ahead.

Keeping British Columbians safe remains priority number one, but effectively communicating how government will lead economic recovery is critical as we navigate through this challenging time. British Columbians deserve no less.

The challenge in front of us may well be more difficult than fighting the virus itself. We are now in a deep recession, hundreds of thousands of people are out of work, businesses are in peril, and students are likely not back in school until the fall.

Now is the time to be bold and brave.

Sincerely,

Andrew Wilkinson, Q.C., MLA
Leader of the Official Opposition

Name of Proposal/Topic	Stakeholder Submitting	Cost (M)	Date Sent	Notes	Recommendation Count
tourism relief	Andrew Wilkinson MLA, Vancouver-Quilchena Michelle Stilwell MLA, Parksville-Qualicum Doug Clovechok MLA, Columbia River-Revelstoke		07-Jul-20	I am requesting that you immediately engage the federal government and request that British Columbia receive its fair share of tourism investment given the significant contributions made to Quebec and Atlantic Canada. Further, on behalf of our province, I am requesting you to publicly call on Ottawa to ensure that there is equitable treatment across all regions of our country during these unprecedented times.	2
opioid crisis	Andrew Wilkinson MLA, Vancouver-Quilchena Jane Thornthwaite MLA, North Vancouver-Seymour		16-Jun-20	1. British Columbia desperately needs a ministry properly equipped to handle this issue — your approach is a ministry with the smallest annual budget of any ministry — less than the sum spent by the Ministry of Health every four hours. 2. British Columbia needs a prescription drug monitoring program to help prevent cases of addiction in the first place. 3. Your government must fund proper scientific clinical trials related to the safe supply program to determine what actually works — just like any other medical intervention, it must be properly and publicly assessed and disclosed to scientific standards. 4. People who are addicted need a pathway to recovery — something that Alberta spends \$180 million per year on and something that your government spends almost nothing on. This is a	4
strata insurance market	Andrew Wilkinson MLA, Vancouver-Quilchena Todd Stone Official Opposition Critic for Municipal Affairs & Housing MLA for Kamloops-South Thompson		16-Jun-20	1. Implement a temporary tax holiday on the 4.4% Insurance Premium Tax applicable on strata property to leave these dollars in the pockets of strata owners. 2. Extend on a temporary basis the Property Tax Deferral Program to enable strata owners who have faced extraordinary additional expenses related to soaring strata insurance costs to defer a portion of their property taxes. 3. Implement changes to the Strata Property Act and regulations that ensure annual contributions are made to the strata corporation's Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) at levels acceptable considering the building's age, claims history and other unique circumstances; require strata corporations to have a depreciation report detailing necessary maintenance every year; and require a strata corporation to inform owners and tenants of any material change in insurance coverage, including an increase in any deductible, as soon as feasible. 4. Develop a mandatory education and training program for strata council members, with particular emphasis on risk mitigation. 5. Review the B.C. Building Code and implement new requirements focused on the prevention and severity of water damage events. 6. Require the B.C. Financial Services Authority to make public the data and information it is gathering from insurance companies to better understand the current climate of rapidly rising strata insurance.	6
seniors in long-term care (LTC) facilities	Andrew Wilkinson, Q.C. MLA Leader of the Official Opposition		10-Jun-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promptly launch a thorough independent review of LTC in British Columbia to clearly define where our LTC system performed well, and where it failed. • Create a comprehensive long-term human resources strategy to meet the growing demand for staffing in seniors' care • Support residents and staff to implement COVID-19 health and safety measures in LTC, home care and assisted living residences • Review funding sources for home care and assisted living, both private and public, to provide more of our province's seniors with the choice to remain in their own homes, while also ensuring that all seniors can expect the same quality of care and support across our province. • Provide British Columbians with a timeframe and clear guidelines for additional protective measures that will allow in-person visits and family members of seniors residing in LTC, home care and assisted living residences as outlined by British Columbia's Provincial Health Officer. 	5
Affordable Housing	Andrew Wilkinson, Q.C. MLA Leader of the Official Opposition		08-Jun-20	1. Working with local governments, implement opportunities to accelerate and reduce the cost of new housing development approval processes 2. To ensure existing rentals remain viable during COVID-19, enable landlords to apply directly for financial supports available within the B.C. Temporary Rental Supplement program if their tenants do not apply for this support and do not pay their rent, retroactive to March 2020. 3. Extend the same COVID-19 property tax reductions and deadline extensions that were announced for commercial land owners to housing developments for Class 1 properties, to avoid passing increased costs of pandemic-related delays onto homebuyers and renters. 4. Noting that the average rental apartment in Vancouver is more than 60 years old, implement the promised 'above guideline rent increase' regulations (AGIs) and establish more rebates and energy efficient improvements in buildings to encourage reinvestment into the aging stock of existing rental units so renters have safe and decent places to live.	4
Childcare	Andrew Wilkinson, Q.C. MLA Leader of the Official Opposition		01-Jun-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the risk that parents and children, providers and ECEs, are undertaking when they return; • Clearly define what is meant by a daily 'screening' of children, and assure providers that they can require a COVID-19 test of any child or worker as a condition of entry; • Establish a 'Provider Guarantee' which will ensure that no provider is forced into insolvency as a result of COVID-19; • Make personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies part of the ongoing basic Child Care Operating Fund program, including simple diagnostic tools such as thermometers; and • Publish a comprehensive report on the state of the system, including the numbers of spaces and providers lost, program saving or extra costs, the numbers of centres and spaces open and closed, and the number of children attending versus enrolled during the crisis. 	5

Small business support	Andrew Wilkinson Leader of the Official Opposition		27-May-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • temporary tax breaks — not simply deferrals — on PST, the EHT, and the Hotel Tax; • a small business hardship grant as other provinces have already done; • a moratorium on new regulations and policies that would add costs for B.C. businesses; • funding from the WorkSafeBC surplus to secure personal protective equipment; and • a short-term commercial rent relief plan that flows relief directly to tenants if landlords do not apply, and that includes a no-eviction backstop. 	5	s.13
Hockey team support	Jackie Legart MLA Fraser Nicola		26-May-20	Urge government to consider taking immediate action to support the Cents and other BCHL teams.	1	
hospitality industry	Andrew Wilkinson, Q.C., MLA Leader of the Official Opposition		13-May-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double the tax deduction for business related meals to 100%; • Help municipalities to expedite permits for patio and outdoor dining for food and liquor service; • Consider any increased patio or outdoor space a continuation of an existing provincial liquor approval and not require additional applications or fees; • Permanently allow restaurants with a liquor or food primary licence to deliver alcohol offsite; • Allow restaurants, bars, and hotels to purchase liquor at wholesale prices from any liquor store, as was recommended by the government's own panel over two years ago; and • Create a small business hardship grant of up to \$5,000 a month, based on 15 per cent of a business's monthly sales revenue, as both Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia have already done. 	6	
actions to support both businesses and workers	Andrew Wilkinson, Q.C., MLA Leader of the Official Opposition		11-May-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide greater clarity on the rules for reopening businesses of all types; • Provide and advertise a single source for those seeking information on re-opening, instead of expecting them to visit multiple sites with conflicting information; • Create a central information hub for B.C. small business to find PPE that meets WorkSafeBC standards, with clear prices stated to prevent price gouging; • Give refunds to employers from the WorkSafeBC surplus for their costs of PPE — up to a maximum of 30% of the premiums they have paid, since WorkSafeBC will see reduced claims in 2020; and • Match the actions of other provinces and the Federal government to ensure that the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) supports employees directly by offering a retroactive rebate or credit on the WorkSafeBC premiums and payroll taxes being applied to these wages. 	5	
Economic Recovery Plan actions	Andrew Wilkinson, Q.C., MLA Leader of the Official Opposition		05-May-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an increased testing and monitoring plan to ensure we remain in control of the ongoing COVID-19 public health threat; • Develop and release a transparent pandemic management plan, including a long-term procurement strategy for health supplies and PPE; • Establish a timely review process for sector-by-sector re-opening plans developed by the private sector, including timelines; • Launch a B.C. is Back economic growth and job creation plan for British Columbians, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o a 60-90-day holiday on Provincial Sales Tax, Hotel Tax and EHT; o a short-term commercial rent relief plan that includes a no-eviction backstop to help small businesses, particularly retailers, who have seen a significant loss of revenue; o an increase in our tourism marketing budget to attract visitors when it is safe to do so; o a rural B.C.-specific strategy that helps position rural B.C. for post COVID-19 prosperity; and o a moratorium on new regulations and policies that would add costs for B.C. businesses. 	9	
Economic Recovery Task Force	Greg Kylo MLA, Shuswap John Rustad MLA, Nechako Lakes		01-May-20	<p>ensuring B.C. Timber Sales volume is being made available to the market and that specialty producers have the ability to compete for the fibre they need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - deferring stumpage payments until the end of the year, - lowering stumpage rates to reflect the recent drop in lumber prices, - taking into the consideration the higher costs due to the pandemic in field operations, logistics, and production, and - freezing recent initiatives (like the Provincial Caribou Recovery Program and establishment of more old growth reserves) and regulatory changes until the postpandemic forestry and economic landscape is understood. 	4	
Furthering the Production and Marketing of Beef Cattle in the Cariboo	Donna Barnett		27-Apr-20	provide support for ranchers to ensure food security	1	
Support for Newspapers during COVID 19	Donna Barnett		20-Mar-20	Support of keeping our newspapers as part of the Provincial Communications plan	1	
Total					58	



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May 11, 2020

Dear Premier:

On behalf of the BC Liberal Official Opposition, I am writing further to our letter of May 5, 2020 on the reopening of the British Columbia economy.

Last week, you outlined a broad plan that would allow different components of the economy to reopen, while continuing the efforts of Dr. Henry to protect all residents from the health impacts of COVID-19. We fully support the need to maintain public health and safe workplaces, while also restoring economic activity.

However, since your announcement opposition MLAs offices have received a multitude of inquiries and concerns related to the exact procedure and cost to reopen in ways that protects workers and customers at the same time.

Businesses report conflicting information coming from WorkSafeBC, local health authorities and from provincial officials – they are desperately looking for clarity so they can begin the work of rebuilding our economy.

In addition, members of the public and businesses are having great difficulty sourcing and affording safety measures and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

The Official Opposition is, therefore, calling on your government to take the following immediate actions to support both businesses and workers:

- Provide greater clarity on the rules for reopening businesses of all types;
- Provide and advertise a single source for those seeking information on re-opening, instead of expecting them to visit multiple sites with conflicting information;
- Create a central information hub for B.C. small business to find PPE that meets WorkSafeBC standards, with clear prices stated to prevent price gouging;
- Give refunds to employers from the WorkSafeBC surplus for their costs of PPE – up to a maximum of 30% of the premiums they have paid, since WorkSafeBC will see reduced claims in 2020; and

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- Match the actions of other provinces and the Federal government to ensure that the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) supports employees directly by offering a retroactive rebate or credit on the WorkSafeBC premiums and payroll taxes being applied to these wages.

Now is the time to take advantage of WorkSafeBC's significant surplus to keep workers safe and avoid further compensation claims as we navigate through B.C.'s economic recovery. Maintaining healthy and safe workplaces is critical to restoring economic activity while keeping workers as safe as possible.

I should also note that I was pleased to hear that the finance minister is considering our suggestions to provide immediate relief to British Columbians through a tax holiday on Provincial Sales Tax, hotel tax and Employers' Health Tax.

We urge you to move quickly on providing this relief so that British Columbians can get back on their feet, as we all work together to defeat the virus.

Now is the time to be bold and brave.

Sincerely,

Andrew Wilkinson, Q.C., MLA
Leader of the Official Opposition



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Honourable John Horgan, MLA
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May 27, 2020

Dear Premier:

I am writing to express concern for the over 500,000 small businesses throughout British Columbia that are facing imminent closure due to significant gaps in the Province's economic recovery plans.

Over the past few weeks, I have heard from small businesses in every corner of the province who have told us that the available support programs are failing to provide them with any meaningful financial support. Most existing provincial and federal programs are inaccessible to the vast majority of businesses, or they are simply not practical to get relief to businesses fast enough to keep them in business. Many are facing the gut-wrenching reality of permanent closure this summer unless more effective support is immediately made available.

We all know that commercial rent relief is desperately needed right now, and yet the joint provincial-federal program — the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program (CECRA) — is not available to most businesses in need. This program requires the participation of landlords, a growing number of whom have already said they will refuse to participate. Additionally, for a business to be eligible they must have seen a 70 per cent decline in revenue, a figure that excludes a vast number of businesses that still urgently need help. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, half of all small businesses say they will not be able to pay June rent without assistance.

Many small businesses also find themselves excluded from relief programs like the property and school tax deferrals, which only apply to landowners and not the majority of B.C. businesses who are tenants.

The available supports are simply not getting to small businesses who need them, and at this point, **we are not aware of any small business in the province that has received any direct cash relief from your government.**

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Therefore, the Official Opposition is again calling on your government to take immediate actions to support economic recovery in this province, including:

- temporary tax breaks — not simply deferrals — on PST, the EHT, and the Hotel Tax;
- a small business hardship grant as other provinces have already done;
- a moratorium on new regulations and policies that would add costs for B.C. businesses;
- funding from the WorkSafeBC surplus to secure personal protective equipment; and
- a short-term commercial rent relief plan that flows relief directly to tenants if landlords do not apply, and that includes a no-eviction backstop.

Finally, regarding a proposed national sick leave program, hard-working small business entrepreneurs simply cannot afford to take on any additional costs as they rebuild. No employee should have to choose between their health and a paycheck. Likewise, closing small businesses because of unsustainable increased costs means *everyone* loses their income. That is why federal support is needed to fund any national sick leave program so as not to put the financial burden of such a program onto the shoulders of small businesses.

Ninety-eight per cent of businesses in B.C. are small businesses, and they employ over 1 million British Columbians. Today, many of these businesses are on the brink of bankruptcy. You cannot afford to delay support to them any longer, or we risk losing thousands of small businesses that strengthen our economy and enrich our communities.

We urge you to act quickly to get real and effective supports into the hands of B.C. small businesses, as time is running out for many. There can be no economic recovery if we do not come together to help small business get back on their feet.

Sincerely,

Andrew Wilkinson
Leader of the Official Opposition