

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS SECRETARIAT  
OFFICE OF THE PREMIER**

**MEETING NOTE**

**PREPARED FOR:** Premier John Horgan

**MEETING WITH:** Jay Inslee, Governor of Washington State

**DATE AND TIME:** April 24, 2020 / 1:30 PM

**LOCATION:** Phone Call

**OVERVIEW:**

This call is to discuss B.C. and Washington's COVID-19 situation and next steps, including managing future outbreaks and economic recovery.

You last spoke with the Governor on March 2. s.16  
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B.C. and Washington were two of the first jurisdictions in North America to be affected by COVID-19. s.16  
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	<b>B.C.</b> (as of April 23)	<b>Washington</b> (as of April 22)
<b>Confirmed Cases</b>	<b>1,824</b>	<b>12,282</b>
<b>Deaths</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>682</b>

**KEY POINTS:**

- On April 13, the Governors of Washington, Oregon and California announced a pact that focuses on the principles of residents' safety, science-guided decision-making and a commitment to work together.
- B.C. and Washington both agree that in order to reopen their economies, each must significantly ramp up testing, which will require increased amounts of testing supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Both B.C. and Washington are committed to ensuring their economic recovery plans include projects and programs that will positively contribute to shared climate change goals.
- On April 21, the Governor gave a prime-time address to talk about the status of the COVID-19 outbreak, timeline for lifting restrictions and a new framework for recovery. The Governor outlined a step-by-step process for relaxing social distancing orders, allowing some non-essential businesses to re-open and watching to see if the virus surges again.

- B.C. strongly supports restricting and monitoring cross-border travel between Canada and the U.S. On April 18, Canada and the U.S. agreed to extend current border restrictions for another 30 days.
- The federal correctional institution in Mission is currently the site of the worst COVID-19 outbreak in a Canadian prison, with at least 64 inmates and 11 staff testing positive for the virus.
- Due to the impacts of COVID-19 on Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW), Washington is likely to face a significant labour shortage at a critical time for food production.
- In both B.C. and Washington, there is need to support the vulnerable, including those experiencing homelessness or living in communal living where the virus could spread more quickly. B.C. is partnering with local governments, non-profits and the hotel industry and has secured almost 2,000 spaces throughout the province.

## DISCUSSION:

### Washington / Oregon / California pact

On April 13, the Governors of Washington, Oregon and California announced an agreement on a shared vision for reopening their economies and controlling COVID-19 into the future.

- While each state is building a state-specific plan, they agreed to a set of principles that form a West Coast framework:
  - Residents' health comes first;
  - Health outcomes and science – not politics – will guide decisions;
  - States will only be effective by working together.
- State public health leaders will focus on four goals that will be critical for controlling the virus in the future:
  - Protecting vulnerable populations, including a concerted effort to prevent and fight outbreaks in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities;
  - Ensuring an ability to care for those who may become sick – requiring adequate hospital surge capacity and supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE);
  - Mitigating the non-direct COVID-19 health impacts, particularly on disadvantaged communities;
  - Protecting the general public by ensuring any successful lifting of interventions includes the development of a system for testing, tracking and isolating. The states will work together to share best practices.
- The effort is largely aimed at making sure the region has enough test kits and contact tracing initiatives in order to closely monitor and maintain outbreaks as society opens back up.
- This partnership initiative (along with Midwestern and East Coast states forming similar pacts) is seen to be responding to ongoing federal failures to manage the crisis.
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- The pact will not require the states to reopen their economies simultaneously.

### Opportunities for Collaboration

#### 1. Access to testing supplies and PPE.

- On April 21, Inslee wrote to Vice President Mike Pence, requesting the federal government take steps to rapidly build a robust national testing system, including:
  - the establishment of an at-home testing program;
  - additional surveillance testing and validation of serological tests;
  - use the Defense Production Act to ensure an adequate supply of swabs, viral transport media, reagents and other supplies.
- If the first phase of reopening the economy includes significantly ramping up testing, these supplies will be vitally needed. <sup>s.16</sup>  
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#### 2. Ensuring economic recovery includes projects and programs that will positively contribute to shared climate change goals.

- On an April 22 podcast appearance with presumptive Democratic Party nominee and former Vice President Joe Biden, Governor Inslee reiterated his message on climate change along with fighting the pandemic. He proposed COVID-19 and climate change are two “existential crises” facing America and should be treated with equal vigour.
- The state is eager to lock in climate thinking, looking at funding climate-oriented projects and pressuring the federal government to transform jobs and the economy.

### Canada-U.S. Border Closure

- B.C. is working with CBSA and Public Health Agency of Canada to monitor arrivals at YVR and land border crossings, ensuring all arrivals (except essential and exempted workers) have self-isolation plans, and providing supports (e.g. accommodation) for those in need for the 14 day self-isolation period during which they regularly receive check-in phone calls from B.C. staff.
- Since April 10, more than 10,750 individual passengers have arrived in B.C. As of April 22, 262 individuals/groups/families have required self-isolation supports and 87 have been provided accommodation.
- On April 18, Canada and the U.S. agreed to extend current border restrictions for another 30 days.

### Federal Correctional Institution in Mission, B.C.

- The federal correctional institution in Mission is currently the site of the worst COVID-19 outbreak in a Canadian prison, with at least 64 inmates and 11 staff testing positive for the virus.
- Fraser Health is assisting with testing of all inmates and staff.

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- Correctional centres have space to support physical distancing.
- To reduce the number of people in custody, BC Corrections has the authority to grant temporary absences to individuals serving intermittent sentences, where it is considered appropriate and safe to do so. This process has resulted in granting temporary absences, which are reducing the intermittent population.
- BC Corrections is currently conducting risk assessments for non-violent, sentenced individuals for consideration for early release.

### *Issues in Washington Correctional Facilities*

- On April 22, more than 300 inmates were released from Washington prisons due to COVID-19. Most cases have occurred at the Monroe Corrections Complex.

### United Poultry outbreak

- On April 20, provincial health authorities announced 28 cases of COVID-19 at a federally permitted and inspected Vancouver poultry plant (United Poultry Ltd.).
- Vancouver Coastal Health has shuttered the plant and sent employees home to self-isolate.

### Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW)

- On March 27, federal travel restriction exemptions were announced for seasonal workers in agriculture, agri-food, and seafood processing jobs. Key requirements include a mandatory 14-day quarantine.
- On April 10, B.C.'s Public Health Officer issued an order for TFWs to be quarantined in a centralized, provincial location (i.e. hotel) for the federally required 14-day isolation period. The province has committed to paying for the accommodations and three meals a day for these agriculture workers.
- B.C. staff are on hand at YVR and at the hotels to greet TFWs as they arrive and help facilitate their transportation to the centralized isolation locations.
- Over 750 workers have arrived since April 10. More flights are being finalized for the next few weeks.

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- In a typical year, approximately 2,000 TFWs would be expected January through March; 4,000 TFWs in April – May for pruning/seeding/planting; and 7,000 TFWs in June – July for mid-season harvest. For 2020, close to 2,000 TFWs were in B.C. prior to the border closure.

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Approximately 1,000 TFW are expected to reach B.C. during April and May under federal travel restriction exemptions.

### *Issues in Washington*

Washington currently has 10,000 TFW in state, with 20,000 arriving next month. Officials are monitoring the first outbreak in farm work housing - 30 cases so far. Washington's cherry crop is coming soon.

### Vulnerable Populations

- On March 25, B.C. announced a new temporary rental supplement, halting evictions and freezing rents in B.C. Housing-funded building.
- B.C. is partnering with local governments, non-profits and the hotel industry and has secured almost 2,000 spaces throughout B.C. to support the vulnerable including those experiencing homelessness or living in communal living where the virus could spread more quickly.
- On March 26, the Province provided \$50 million to bolster seniors' supports at community service agencies throughout British Columbia including expanding bc211, a province-wide information and referral service to match volunteers with seniors whose support network has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### U.S. Health Industry Concerns / Financial Challenges

- Like B.C., most elective surgeries in Washington have been cancelled in order to increase hospital capacity. However, unique to the American health care system, coupled with the high cost of treating COVID-19 patients, empty beds have created a revenue crisis for many hospitals. Some Pacific Northwest hospitals have laid off staff and sought federal bailouts.

### Washington Protests and Large Crowds

- During an April 22 press conference, Governor Inslee reiterated that his "stay-home" order is "the law of the land" and that Washingtonians have been overwhelmingly compliant.
- He addressed growing resistance to his stay-home orders and said that law enforcement was in place, if needed. The Governor has emphasized that the state was reviewing public health data on a day-to-day basis and that "it would be ridiculous to guarantee" specific state actions too far in advance.

### Washington State Business Assistance and Stabilization

- Total state unemployment claims climbed to over 585,000, nearly twice the peak recorded during the 2008 recession. This suggests the state's unemployment rate might be as high as 15%.

- Young adults are bearing the financial brunt of the COVID-19 crisis. 37% of those between 18 to 29 years old said that either they have, or someone in their household has, lost a job or been laid off because of the coronavirus outbreak. 48% have taken a pay cut or had their hours reduced.

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- Like B.C., Washington has had a flood of requests since assistance began. For example, the small business grant (\$10,000 available for businesses employing less than 10 people) saw 10,000 applications in 48 hours.

#### *Economic Supports B.C. is Providing to the Business Community*

- Canadian Federation of Independent Business' most recent survey (April 20) reported that only 25% of B.C. businesses are fully open with 60% of respondents feeling they will require continued financial help.
- The BC Chamber, Greater Vancouver Board of Trade and the Business Council of BC conducted the second BCMindReader.com COVID-19 Impact Pulse Check Survey from April 9-17. 54% of businesses (up from 48% in the first survey) state they have experienced revenue decreases of 75% or more. Key challenges to recovery include attracting customers/revenue (79%), having enough operating cash (55%), and rehiring staff (28%).
- The federal government is providing COVID-19 support to small businesses through a combination of tax relief, wage subsidies, access to credit and financial stability measures.
- The B.C. government is coordinating its small business supports with the federal measures and has deferred or reduced some taxes, provided additional funding to certain sectors such as arts and culture, established the Economic Recovery Task Force and allocated \$1.5 billion to long-term recovery.
- B.C. recently provided up to \$700 million in relief by reducing commercial property tax bills by an average of 25% through an enhanced reduction to the school property tax rate.
- The Premier has struck an Economic Recovery Task Force comprised of business leaders and key government officials to discuss a plan for economic recovery in B.C.

#### Washington Economic Recovery

- Inslee is not pursuing an economic recovery task force. Instead, he will be forming three small leadership groups to advise him on public health/healthcare systems; safe work/economic recovery; and social supports for the most vulnerable and those affected by COVID-19.
- On April 21, Governor Inslee gave a prime-time address to talk about the status of the COVID-19 outbreak, timeline for lifting restrictions and a new framework for recovery.

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- Inslee outlined a step-by-step relaxing of social distancing orders, allowing some non-essential businesses to re-open, and watching to see if the virus surges again.
- Inslee envisions a reverse process of how the state shut down in March in response to the virus outbreak. He suggests some of the first things to be shut down during the outbreak (like large gatherings) could be the last to reopen.
- However, before any existing restrictions are lifted, state and local public health officials want to see a sustained decline in new cases, hospitalizations and deaths.
- Inslee has made clear that some form of social distancing is likely to extend for weeks, if not months.

### Recovery Guidelines/Framework

3 principles:

1. Protect the health of Washingtonians first
    - a. Broad testing
    - b. Identify and quarantine
    - c. PPE for all who need it
    - d. Health system resiliency
    - e. Prepare for vaccine
  2. Get people back to work – safely
    - a. Reopen in phases
    - b. Rigorous cleaning
    - c. Protective equipment
    - d. Physical distancing
    - e. Screening
    - f. Teleworking
  3. Support communities through the recovery
    - a. Housing and food security
    - b. Social and emotional support
    - c. Education and childcare support
    - d. Internet infrastructure
    - e. Equitable access to services
- 1,500 workers focused on contact tracing will be in place by 2<sup>nd</sup> week of May – comprised of state employees from Health Department, National Guard, volunteers and many others.
  - The state must be processing 20-30,000 tests/day for contact tracing plan to work.

### **Contact:**

Bobbi Plecas

Deputy Minister, Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat

### **Prepared by:**

Craig Windrim

Manager, U.S. Relations, Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat