

## Economic Statistics

### Message:

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- Like all regions across Canada and around the world, B.C.'s economy has been hit hard by COVID-19 but our restart plan is continuing to show positive signs.
- In July, B.C. gained over 70,000 jobs.
- This is on top of the 118,000 jobs created in June.
- This means we've regained more than 58% of the jobs lost since the beginning of the pandemic.
- Unemployment also fell by 2% in July bringing B.C.'s unemployment rate to 11.1%
- In total B.C. has lost, 165,000 jobs since the beginning of the pandemic. [LFS, FEB '20 - JULY '20]
- Hard hit sectors in B.C. include Accommodation and Food Services and Wholesale and Retail Trade, which combined make up 44,000 or 27% of total job losses.
  - In July, these sectors also saw the largest gains with 48,000 jobs.
- The majority of job losses have happened to people who were making lower wages and youth unemployment remains high at 24%.

## **Background:**

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- Private sector forecasters expect that BC's real GDP will shrink in line with Canada's performance for 2020 (-6.8%), with a modest rebound in 2021.
- On April 21, the credit rating agency DBRS confirmed British Columbia's rating of AA (high) due the pre-COVID strength of BC's economy and "disciplined fiscal policy and management practices"

## **July Labour Force Survey (released August 2020)**

### *Unemployment*

- B.C.'s Unemployment rate is 11.1% (up from 5.0% pre-COVID) and slightly above the national unemployment rate of 10.9%
- Youth unemployment in B.C. stands at 24.1%.

### *Job Losses/Gains*

- In July, B.C. gained 70,200 jobs.
  - Majority of gains were part-time (48,500) with some full-time (21,700)
  - Combined, wholesale and retail trade along with food services and accommodation, increased by 48,300 jobs in July.
  - 58.4% of jobs lost during the pandemic have now been regained
- Total job losses remain at 164,900 since the COVID-19 pandemic began
  - March & April: -378,000 | May-July: +231,600
- Between July 2017 and February 2020 (pre-COVID) 60,500 jobs were created.
  - +44,400 full-time and +16,100 part-time

### *Wage Growth*

- Average wages in B.C. in June reduced by \$1.05 to \$28.78/hour.
  - This was expected as lower wage jobs began returning
  - As B.C.'s recovery continue, wages can be expected to reduce to the range of pre-COVID levels (\$29.13/h in February 2020)
- In pre-COVID era, between July 2017 and January 2020, B.C.'s wages increase by \$3.43/hour or 13.5%.

## COVID-19: Benefits Delivered

(Updated July 14)

### Emergency Benefit for Workers, \$1,000 payment:

- 644,179 people have applied
- 615,853 have been approved
- **607,734 have received benefit**

### Rental Supplement, up to \$500/month:

- 94,597 applications
- **84,786 renters have been approved**
- April supplements paid: 64,721
- May supplements paid: 78,081
- June supplements paid: 79,938
- July supplements paid: 60,274

### BC Hydro 3-month credit (average benefit \$477):

- 150,464 applications
- **125,259 approved, worth \$36 million**

# COVID-19: K-12 Restart Plan

## Highlights:

- On July 29<sup>th</sup>, the Minister with Dr. Henry announced that schools will be returning to Stage 2 in September.
- Opposition has been critical of the K-12 restart plan, citing lack of direction from the Ministry to districts, a lack of choices for parents and not making masks mandatory for older students and teachers.

## Main Message:

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**Quotes:**

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***Gord Lau, chair, Vancouver DPAC – CBC Early Edition  
– July 30, 2020***

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***Ida – Burnaby Parent of 7 – Vancouver Sun – Jul 30,  
2020:***

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***David Fallon – Vancouver Parent – Globe and Mail –  
Aug 1, 2020:***

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***Caribou-Chilcotin School District 27 Superintendent  
Chris Van Der Mark:***

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## ***School District 51 Superintendent Ken Minette:***

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***Dave McCristall (@davemccr) – Teacher and  
President of the Computer Using Educators of BC –  
Twitter – Aug 5, 2020:***

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## Background:

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- On March 17, under the direction of the Provincial Health Officer, Government directed all schools to suspend in-class instruction. After returning from spring break, districts were directed to provide remote learning options for most students, and to provide in-class support for children of essential service workers, and some students with complex needs.
- On May 6, 2020 the Premier announced B.C.'s Restart Plan. As part of this, on June 1 K-12 education moved from Stage 4 to Stage 3, with most receiving in-class instruction part time on alternating days.
- New guidelines for K-12 settings (PDF) were released on May 15, 2020 as a part of the Restart BC Plan.
- After the May 15 announcement, many teachers and parents expressed fears about health and safety on social media, saying not enough is known about how the virus affects children and going back for four weeks of learning was too rushed. A common question was why can students attend school even "if another person in their home has symptoms of COVID-19?"
- Two petitions also started circulating opposing the restart plan – one entitled "Keep BC Schools Closed until Sept 2020 receiving more than 35,000 signatures.
- On the night of the virtual education town hall, May 19, many teachers expressed frustration and concern that there was also a BCTF town hall on the same evening, which meant teachers weren't a part of the panel. Patti Bacchus started a poll after the townhall asking if people felt more or less reassured about sending their kids back to school. Over 70% said they were 'still worried.'
- In the week before June 1, teachers began expressing concerns that their school districts were not making accommodations for those who have pre-existing conditions, or who are taking care of someone who is immunocompromised. MLA Dan Davies weighed in to show support and criticize government.
- As June 1 approached, some teachers began encouraging everyone to call in sick. Other teachers also expressed concerns that PPE wouldn't be supplied for staff. Teri Mooring and the BCTF have now called on school districts to supply masks to school staff (Tweet June 3).
- The week of June 1, people were mostly positive on social media, with both parents and teachers saying it was nice to have kids back. About 10% of teachers had been accommodated to work from home, and most of the 90% showed up to teach students without calling in sick.

# COVID-19: Homelessness

## Highlights:

- The Opposition claims that we have no plan to deal with homelessness.
- They claim that the results of the 2020 Homeless Count are an example of “everything getting worse” under this government.
- The 2020 Count showed a 1% increase in homelessness in Metro Van since 2017, up 29 people to 3,634. Between 2002 & 2017, the number of homeless people in Metro Vancouver more than tripled (1,121 to 3,605 people).

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- We moved quickly to end tent cities in Maple Ridge, Whalley Strip and Nanaimo before the pandemic and Oppenheimer Park, Pandora Ave and Topaz Park since.

## Solution:

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- We inherited a crisis that demanded urgent action, a crisis we started tackling immediately when we formed government.
  - more than 2,600 people have had their lives changed by moving into new supportive housing in 30 communities.
  - Another 1,200 are under construction.
- COVID-19 has made it even more challenging – people who were already precarious may have been pushed into homelessness.
- Since the start of the pandemic, we've opened 3,000 spaces for people from encampments and others who were vulnerable.
- We worked with local governments and community groups to transition **over 600 people** to hotels, motels, and supportive housing—in less than a month.
- Outreach teams are working with community agencies to support those still living outside and help stabilize things – and police are also working to keep communities safe.
- It will take all of us working together – including the federal government to tackle these challenges.

# Taxes and Competitiveness

## Highlights:

- On August 11, the Business Council of B.C. released its Low Carbon Advantage calling for reduced carbon tax rate for export industries.
- On August 6, the Fraser Institute released a report claiming the EHT will result in \$3,000 in forgone wages for each worker.
- On June 29, Alberta announced part of its recovery plan would include lowering corporate income taxes from 10% to 8%. (BC's corporate tax rate is 12%)

## Message:

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- Working and middle-class families in British Columbia are paying lower taxes today than they did under the old government.
- Since the Opposition's last budget an average family with two kids, earning...
  - \$100,000 will see a **22% net reduction in taxes**
  - \$80,000 will see a **42% net reduction in taxes.**
  - \$60,000 will see a **60% net reduction in taxes.**
- This year, the Child Opportunity Benefit will begin providing up to \$2,600 for a family with two kids.
- Families will also save up to \$1,800 this year and every year since we've eliminated MSP premiums.
- At the same time, taxes in B.C. remain competitive.
- A family of four earning up to \$120,000 pays the lowest amount of provincial income tax in Canada.
- We also have the second lowest small business tax rate in the country.

### On BCBC's Low Carbon Advantage:

- Around the world, the demand for low carbon goods is increasing every day and B.C. is well positioned to increase our markets.
- Carbon pricing is the lowest cost way to reduce emissions, that incentives reductions and innovation into clean technology.
- We provide significant relief for large industrial operations including returning all of the carbon tax above \$30/tonne paid back to industry.
- We are reviewing proposals from all sectors across B.C. regarding our next steps in recovery.

### Cost of EHT on wages:

- MSP premiums were unfair to British Columbians.
- While every other province eliminated health premiums the old government doubled MSP fees raising costs for people and businesses.
- EHT is the lowest payroll tax in Canada and we have exempted 85% of businesses from paying the tax.
- In terms of wages, let's look at the numbers:
  - Under the first 2 years of our government average wages increase by \$3.43/hour (14%)
  - Under the last 2 years of their government, wages were flat – up less than \$0.50 (2%)



## On tax competitiveness:

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- For people and businesses, B.C. is a spectacular investment opportunity.
- Our natural advantage, beauty, land and weather, is unmatched anywhere in the world.
- Our cities are world class and our healthcare and services hold up our communities.
- And we remain very competitive on taxation.
- When it comes to provincial incomes taxes:
  - A family of four earning \$90,000: lowest in Canada
  - A family of four earning \$120,000: lowest in Canada
  - An individual earning between \$40,000 and \$125,000: lowest in Canada
- Our small business corporate tax rate is at 2% - amongst the lowest in Canada (only Manitoba is lower at 0%)
- Of provinces with payrolls taxes, ours is the lowest.
- Our provincial sales tax is also one of the lowest in Canada (B.C. and Manitoba at 7%, Saskatchewan at 6%, Alberta at 0%, all others between 8-10%)
- We are working close with the business community in developing our next steps for recovery.

## Restart & Recovery

### Highlights:

- The Opposition may ask for a jobs plan as we enter the recovery phase.

### Message:

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- We responded to these unprecedented times with unprecedented spending on people and businesses.
- With these support programs, our public health measures, and a safe restart plan, we've built the foundation for a strong recovery.
- **We are committed to keeping people safe while building a recovery that works for everyone.**

### Keeping People Safe

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- We are dedicated to keeping people healthy and safe by responding to the health crisis, listening to health experts like Dr. Bonnie Henry.
  - We immediately invested in critical health and other services when the pandemic hit.
  - We're strengthening our healthcare system and fixing problems in long-term care.

### Immediate relief

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- We brought in immediate relief for people and businesses hit hard by COVID-19:
  - The Emergency Benefit for Workers has helped over 600,000 with a \$1,000 payment.
  - Up to \$500/month rental supplement and we banned evictions for non-payment.

- Cut commercial property tax bills by 25%.
- All business taxes have been deferred to take the pressure off businesses.
- Boost to disability and income assistance.
- Critical funding for childcare centres.

#### A Safe Restart

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- Our Safe Restart Plan has allowed more and more businesses across B.C. to reopen safely.
- WorkSafeBC provided guidelines for each industry with guidance from the Provincial Health Officer, supported by the business community.
- We are seeing positive signs that our Restart Plan is increasing business activity and building confidence amongst workers and customers.

#### Targeted supports for hard hit sectors

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- We're not waiting to act - we've provided additional support for some of B.C.'s hardest hit sectors:
  - Fast-tracked process to expand patios and allowed **restaurants** to purchase alcohol at wholesale prices, saving them up to 25%.
  - \$10 million in grants to **tourism** orgs, to support marketing campaigns for this summer.
  - In **agriculture**, \$10 million to help stabilize labour supply for B.C. farms during COVID

- We're building a long-term recovery that will help British Columbians secure a good job and future.
  - An economic recovery built around everyday people.
  - Helping people get the training and education to get good jobs.
  - Building roads, mass transit, and bridges that will boost the economy and create good jobs.
  - And we'll continue to manage COVID-19 so our economy works for people.
- Recovery is going to be tough, but we are compassionate and capable in B.C.
- This is our chance to build our recovery and an economy that works for everyone.

### ***Engagement on recovery:***

- We will continue to engage and solicit feedback from across the province.
- The Opposition is overlooking the need to monitor sectors in this restart process so we can adjust the kind and level of support needed for the recovery.
- As we have seen, the economic landscape can change very quickly – we want our investments in the recovery to have the greatest impact possible.

***On lowering taxes for businesses...***

- B.C. continues to have a competitive tax system - we cut small business taxes by 20% and now have the second lowest rate in the country.
- Since the pandemic began, we have provided \$700 million in tax relief for businesses by cutting property tax bills by 25%.
- We have also taken the pressure off businesses by deferring many businesses taxes.
  - This includes the EHT, the PST, the tobacco tax, the motor fuel tax, and the carbon tax
- We know that support for hard hit businesses will protect jobs and is essential for a strong recovery.
- We will continue to support BC businesses as we build an economic recovery that puts people first.

\$1B in cost shared  
dollars for hard  
hit transit  
and municipalities

A FEDERAL

PAID SICK LEAVE  
PROGRAM

**Validators:**

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Anita Huberman, CEO of the Surrey Board of Trade,  
said in response to July's Labour Force Survey:

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[Aug 7, SBoT Release]

Craig Alexander, chief economist for Deloitte Canada  
said:

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[June 25, Deloitte]

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[June 25, Deloitte]

TD Canada, one of Canada's largest banks, said:

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[TD Canada Outlook, June 17]

Martin Thibodeau, regional president of RBC Royal  
Bank, said:

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[BiV Article, June 23]



## Public Health Response – COVID-19

### Message:

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- We've followed Dr. Henry's advice to protect people.
- We got the federal government to close the US border to protect British Columbians.
- We were the first province to bring in a border screening program, making it mandatory for people to have a self-isolation plan or be put in quarantine.
  - 72,000 people processed and 142 quarantined
- We continue to operate a call centre to support returning travellers & ensure they are quarantining.
- We protected our seniors with single site restrictions at 501 care homes and increased worker wages. We even helped private care homes get PPE early on.
  - 8,800 workers are now working at a single site
- We've helped all care homes implement guidelines for safe visitation – and made new investments to support those visits for seniors and their families.
- We brought in new job protections so people could self-isolate without fear of losing their job.
- We launched the COVID-19 Supply Hub for PPE.
- We're hiring 500 new contact tracers to increase contact tracing and help keep communities safe as we continue our COVID-19 restart plan.



## Other recent Health investments:

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- Even as we respond to COVID-19, we're continuing to improve healthcare for people across B.C.
- We announced a new regional cancer care centre at the second Surrey Hospital.
  - The Leader of the Opposition sold land set aside in the 90s for a new Surrey Hospital.
- We opened a second Urgent Primary Centre in Surrey, and announced new permanent location for the Maple Ridge centre – opening in September.
  - 17 UPCCs have been announced across B.C.
- We announced a bigger, bolder plan for the new Richmond Hospital tower to add even more new services for people in Richmond.
- We announced a new primary care network to serve people on the North Shore with 62 new doctors, nurses and more coming over the next four years.
- We opened a new nurse practitioner clinic for people in Nanaimo in June, and have a clinic in Surrey opening at the beginning of September.
- We're adding nearly 500 new long-term care beds in the Interior – the largest one-time increase beds in that region in over 15 years.

## COVID-19: Key supports

### Highlights:

- Key Government supports for people and businesses.

### Message:

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#### People

- The **Emergency Benefit for Workers** provides a **\$1,000-dollar payment** to people lost their income.
  - Has helped over 550,000 British Columbians
- A **top up to the BC Climate Action Tax Credit** will provide up to an additional \$451 in July for a family of four. (\$174.50 for adults. \$51.25 for kids)
- Temporary Rental Supplement provides up to \$500/month to reduce the cost of rent and ensure landlords continue to receive income.
  - Over 80,000 renters are benefiting
- A 3-month credit for BC Hydro customers who've lost income. Average credit of \$477
  - Over 100,000 applications have been approved worth more than \$30 million.
- We brought in **job-protected leave** for people unable to work because of COVID-19.
- We got the federal government to commit to providing **two weeks paid sick leave**.
- For the many people who carry student loans, we suspended all repayments until September 30<sup>th</sup>.

- We secured over 3,000 spaces at hotels and community centres in over 45 communities to support people experiencing homelessness, incl:
  - More than 800 spaces in Vancouver, including 261 for people from Oppenheimer Park.
  - More than 500 spaces in Victoria, including 344 for people who had been living on Pandora Avenue and in Topaz Park.
- We're providing safe hotel rooms for women and children leaving violent relationships.
- \$300 per month COVID-19 crisis supplement for people receiving income or disability assistance.

## Businesses

- We cut property tax bills for businesses by 25%, providing \$700 million in immediate relief
  - Average urban business will save \$5,600
- We moved quickly to defer many business taxes until the end of September
  - This includes the EHT, the PST, the tobacco tax, the Municipal and Regional District Tax, the motor fuel tax, and the carbon tax.
- Small businesses that were forced to close can have their hydro bills forgiven for three months – saving an average of \$363.

- We moved to enhance the commercial rent relief program – which provides a 75% reduction in rent for hard hit businesses – by preventing evictions of commercial tenants that could qualify.
- We allowed restaurants to purchase alcohol at wholesale prices, saving them up to 25%.
- We provided \$10 million in grants to tourism organizations, to support marketing campaigns for this summer.
- We brought forward concerns of businesses to improve access to federal programs:
  - the 75% wage subsidy
  - loans for small and medium businesses
- We have provided emergency funding to support child care centres – over \$150 million to support more than 4,500 child care centres.

## Supports for Businesses

### Highlights:

- Key Government supports for businesses since the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Message:

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- Businesses across British Columbia have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We know the survival of businesses, especially small businesses, is critical to every community and to our province as a whole.
- That's why we provided immediate support for businesses and people.
- By not shutting down the economy entirely, we avoided some of the worst impacts on businesses seen in other jurisdictions.
- We worked hand-in-hand with the business community, providing guidelines for their reopening, as soon as it was safe to do so.
- We are closely monitoring businesses across all sectors during this restart process, to see where additional supports are most needed.
- We are soliciting feedback from businesses in every region, to get their ideas about how we can ensure B.C. has a strong recovery.

## List of supports for businesses

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- Small businesses that were forced to close can have their hydro bills forgiven for three months – saving an average of \$363.
- We enhanced the commercial rent relief program – which provides a 75% rent reduction for businesses – by preventing evictions of commercial tenants.
- We listened to the concerns of businesses and successfully advocated to improve federal programs:
  - the 75% wage subsidy
  - loans for small and medium businesses

## Hard Hit Sectors

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- We allowed restaurants to purchase alcohol at wholesale prices, saving them up to 25%.
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*On lowering taxes for businesses...*

- B.C. continues to have a competitive tax system - we cut small business taxes by 20% and now have the second lowest rate in the country.
- Since the pandemic began, we have provided \$700 million in tax relief for businesses by cutting property tax bills by 25%.
- We have also taken the pressure off businesses by deferring many businesses taxes.
  - This includes the EHT, the PST, the tobacco tax, the motor fuel tax, and the carbon tax
- We know that support for hard hit businesses will protect jobs and is essential for a strong recovery.
- We will continue to support BC businesses as we build an economic recovery that puts people first.

# Tourism Supports

## Highlights:

- On July 21, the Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC) called on government to allocate \$680 million of the \$1.5 billion of recovery funding to support the tourism sector.
- The Opposition has been critical of BC's approach to tourism recovery. They have called on BC to develop a tourism specific recovery plan and to engage with Canada to secure additional tourism funding.
- The Opposition has raised the concerns of specific tourism operators, such as Landsea Tours and Adventures in Vancouver or Hoodoo Adventure Company in Penticton with government.

## Contrast:

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- British Columbians worked hard, made sacrifices and followed the advice of Dr. Henry and that's what allowed us to begin Phase 3 of our Restart Plan.
- We are very fortunate to be in a position for British Columbians to safely and respectfully travel around our beautiful province.
- Following Dr. Henry's advice is how we got here and I think we should all continue to encourage people to follow her advice to keep our case numbers low.



## Main Message:

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- The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted British Columbians, and all sectors in our economy.
- Our government knows that the tourism sector has been hit particularly hard and we acted right away by providing supports for people and businesses.
- Minister Beare has been working very closely with the tourism industry – she has numerous calls with representatives from the sector on weekly basis.
- We welcome the submission from the Tourism Industry Association of BC to our recovery process.
- In May, we provided \$10 million to nearly 60 of BC's Community Destination Marketing Organizations.
- This funding helped them hold onto staff and pay their bills. It also helped these organizations to support local businesses in BC communities.
- We have been working hard to advocate for BC's tourism sector to the federal government.
- We were pleased to see initial supports from federal government in early June – we received \$1.5 million to support BC Tourism Resiliency programs and Indigenous tourism businesses.
- Our government will continue to work closely with Canada and I am confident we will continue to see federal funding support for BC tourism.

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## Validators:

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- **Vivek Sharma, Vice Chair of Tourism Industry Association of BC, (July 21, 2020, CKNW)**  
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- **Walt Judas, CEO of Tourism Industry Association of BC (July 7, 2020)**  
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- **Mayor Sue McKortoff, Osoyoos (June 2020)**  
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- Vivek Sharma, Vice Chair of Tourism Industry Association of BC, (July 21, 2020, CKNW)

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- Walt Judas, CEO of Tourism Industry Association of BC (July 7, 2020)

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- Mayor Sue McKortoff, Osoyoos (June 2020)

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# Mental Health & Addictions / Overdose

## Highlights:

- The Opposition continues to claim that “everything has gotten worse” under the current government – pointing to increased overdose deaths tied to COVID.
- Prior to the pandemic, deaths in 2019 were down 36% over 2018 (979 deaths in 2019, down from 1,546 deaths in 2018).
- That was the first time deaths went down since 2012.
- No other province has responded to the Canada-wide COVID-19 increase in deaths with an accelerated response across the continuum of care: harm reduction, safe prescription alternatives and treatment beds.

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## Solution - Overdose:

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- These devastating losses are felt across B.C. These are our family, our friends, and our neighbours.
- Before COVID-19, there was so much more to do, but we were going in the right direction.
- Last year deaths were down 36% - the first time deaths had gone down since 2012.
- COVID-19 changed everything. The Coroner has been very clear, people are dying right now because of a drug supply that's more toxic than ever.
- We have a long and challenging road ahead of us.
- But I'm tremendously proud that we're the only province responding by significantly scaling up our response across the full continuum of care.
- We just announced \$10.5M for 29 new overdose prevention services, and more nurses and social workers to connect more people to treatment.
- We're working with Dr. Henry to roll out prescription alternatives to separate people from toxic drugs.
- We just opened 20 new youth treatment beds in Chilliwack, and a 75-bed Mental Health and Substance Use Wellness Centre at Royal Columbian.
- We also have 50 to 70 new recovery beds underway.
- We need everyone to join us to keep people safe.

## **Solution – Treatment:**

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- We are taking a four pillars approach and building a full continuum of care so more people can get the treatment they need become healthy again.
- We're increasing the number of beds. We just opened 20 new youth treatment beds in Chilliwack, and a 75-bed Wellness Centre at Royal Columbian.
- We also have 50 to 70 new recovery beds underway, and more to come.
- We are working with First Nations Health Authority to upgrade First Nations-run treatment centres (two new, and six replacement/renovated facilities).
- We expanded access to low or no-cost mental health and addictions counselling at 29 organizations across B.C., and expanded it virtually during COVID-19.
- We helped Foundry centres go virtual during COVID and announced the 8 locations for new Foundrys – which will bring our total to 19 across B.C.
  - NEW: Surrey, Burns Lake, Comox Valley, Cranbrook, Langley, Squamish, Port Hardy and Williams Lake.
- We've brought in tough new regulations to improve care in recovery homes and protect people.
- We opened B.C.'s first mental health and substance use urgent response centre in Surrey.

## **Validator Quotes:**

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### ***On announcement of funding for 50 to 70 new beds:***

Copyright

- Brenda Plant, chair, B.C. Addiction Recovery Association (Jul 10, 2020)

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- Keir Macdonald, CEO Phoenix Society (Jul 10, 2020)

Copyright

- Melissa de Genova, Vancouver City Councillor (July 11, 2020)

## Background:

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- In June 2020, there were 175 suspected illicit drug toxicity deaths, representing a 130% increase over the number of deaths in June 2019 (76).
- **From April to June 2020, approximately 15% of cases with fentanyl detected had extreme fentanyl concentrations (exceeding 50 micrograms per litre) as compared to 8% between January 2019 and March 2020.**
- A review of completed cases from 2016-19 indicates that the top-four detected drugs relevant to illicit drug toxicity deaths were fentanyl (83%), cocaine (50%), methamphetamine/amphetamine (34%) and heroin (15%).
- Vancouver Coastal Health Authority has the highest rate of illicit drug toxicity deaths (33 deaths per 100,000 individuals) followed by the Northern Health Authority (32 deaths per 100,000) in 2020. Overall, the rate in B.C. is 29 deaths per 100,000 in 2020.
- In the first six months of the year 2020, 70% of those dying were aged 19 to 49, males accounted for 80% of deaths, and 85% of illicit drug toxicity deaths occurred indoors.
- As reported on July 6 by the First Nations Health Authority, the toll of the illicit drug toxicity crisis on First Nations in B.C. is rising again in 2020, with a 93% increase in deaths among First Nations people in B.C. from January to May of this year, representing 89 deaths of First Nations individuals.
- First Nations people represent 3.4% of the province's population, yet accounted for 16% of all illicit drug deaths in B.C. from January to May 2020, a rate of more than five times higher than other B.C. residents.
- In May, the Provincial Health Services Authority launched its Lifeguard app to help prevent overdoses. The app is a made-in-B.C. resource to reduce risk for people who use substances.
- According to BC Emergency Health Services, paramedics respond to an average of 2,000 overdose calls per month in British Columbia. **However, there has been a recent increase in overdose calls in May and June, with paramedics responding to more than 2,300 calls per month.**
- No deaths have been reported at supervised consumption or drug overdose prevention sites.

## Jobs & COVID-19

### Highlights:

- July's Labour Force Survey reported an increase of 70,200 jobs in B.C.
- The Opposition has been critical of government for not releasing its recovery plan and detailing the \$1.5 billion set aside for B.C.'s recovery.

### Contrast:

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- I am proud of British Columbians coming together to bend the curve and reduce transmission.
- I'm also proud of businesses and workers in B.C. doing everything they can to reopen safely.
- I'm also pleased to see how many British Columbians are taking part in the discussions around building a recovery for everyone.
- We need to stay vigilant, while supporting the ongoing efforts to reopen the economy safely.

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Message:

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- In July, B.C. created 70,200 jobs.
- This is on top of 118,000 jobs created in June
- That was only possible because of our strong public health response and the immediate relief measures we put in place.
- This is evidence that our Safe Restart Plan is working.
- B.C. has now regained over 58% of the jobs lost due to COVID-19, but we still have a long way to go.
- B.C. has lost 165,000 jobs since the beginning of this pandemic.
- Sectors like tourism are facing more severe impacts of this pandemic, thanks in large part to the closure of the U.S. border.
- Together, we must work to keep people safe, while supporting businesses reopen and build a strong recovery that works for everyone.
- We remain focused on ensuring B.C.'s recovery is inclusive, especially as young people, women and lower wage workers have faced the brunt of the economic impacts.

## Validators:

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Ian Tostenson, CEO of the BC Restaurants Association  
said:

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[July 12, Global News]

Craig Alexander, chief economist for Deloitte Canada  
said:

Copyright

Copyright

[June 25, Deloitte]

Copyright

Copyright

[June 25, Deloitte]

TD Canada, one of Canada's largest banks, said:

Copyright

Copyright

[TD Canada Outlook, June 17]

Martin Thibodeau, regional president of RBC Royal Bank, said:

Copyright

Copyright

[BiV Article, June 23]



## **Background:**

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- Private sector forecasters expect that BC's real GDP will shrink in line with Canada's performance for 2020 (-6.8%), with a modest rebound in 2021.
- On April 21, the credit rating agency DBRS confirmed British Columbia's rating of AA (high) due the pre-COVID strength of BC's economy and "disciplined fiscal policy and management practices"

## **July Labour Force Survey (released August 2020)**

### *Unemployment*

- B.C.'s Unemployment rate is 11.1% (up from 5.0% pre-COVID) and slightly above the national unemployment rate of 10.9%
- Youth unemployment in B.C. stands at 24.1%.

### *Job Losses/Gains*

- In July, B.C. gained 70,200 jobs.
  - Majority of gains were part-time (48,500) with some full-time (21,700)
  - Combined, wholesale and retail trade along with food services and accommodation, increased by 48,300 jobs in July.
  - 58.4% of jobs lost during the pandemic have now been regained
- Total job losses remain at 164,900 since the COVID-19 pandemic began
  - March & April: -378,000 | May-July: +231,600
- Between July 2017 and February 2020 (pre-COVID) 60,500 jobs were created.
  - +44,400 full-time and +16,100 part-time

### *Wage Growth*

- Average wages in B.C. in June reduced by \$1.05 to \$28.78/hour.
  - This was expected as lower wage jobs began returning
  - As B.C.'s recovery continue, wages can be expected to reduce to the range of pre-COVID levels (\$29.13/h in February 2020)
- In pre-COVID era, between July 2017 and January 2020, B.C.'s wages increase by \$3.43/hour or 13.5%.



## Strata Insurance

### Highlights:

- On June 16, the BC Financial Services Authority's (BCFSA) interim report concluded premiums have increased an average of 40% across BC.
- The Opposition is calling for: waiving taxes on insurance premiums; extending the property tax deferral to all owners; & a fund for deferred maintenance.

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**Message:**

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- This is an urgent problem for the thousands of people living in condo or strata buildings – especially during this already challenging time.
- **This is an extremely complex issue in the private insurance industry that's been years in the making.**
- We tabled legislation that will address some of the underlying factors behind these increases:
  - requiring brokers to disclose their commission, at times in excess of 20%
  - taking action to end the kickbacks paid to property managers,
  - closing loopholes around depreciation reports created by the old government
  - bringing more transparency to the industry,
  - and giving strata owners tools to do their part.
- We are committed to doing what we can to reduce the risk profile to bring costs down for people.
- This is a first step to help people living in condos now as we continue to work on this complex issue.
- We are continuing to work with the insurance industry and strata stakeholders.
- The BC Financial Services Authority continues its work to identify more action we can take to support people.

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***“This condo doesn’t have any repair problems. It’s not about depreciation reports and maintenance”***

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- We know there are lots of factors: earthquake risk, flooding, the private market.
- That’s why we’re taking action on a range of items, doing what we can to lower risk to bring down costs for people. Things like:
  - Guidelines for what stratas have to insure
  - Transparency on commissions & ending kickbacks

## Quotes:

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- Chuck Byrne, the executive director of the Insurance Brokers Association of B.C., said the government's changes

Copyright

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[CP, June 23]

- Tony Gioventu, the executive director of the Condominium Home Owners' Association of B.C., said:

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[The Province, July 2]

Copyright

[CKNW June 23]

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[Media avail, June 23]

Copyright

[CKNW, June 23]

- Aaron Sutherland, Vice-President of the Insurance Bureau of Canada, said:

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[Twitter, June 23]

## Background:

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- The Strata Property Act requires that that all strata corporations obtain and maintain full replacement value property insurance and liability insurance.
- As a first step to address challenges, through amendments to the Strata Property Act and Financial Institutions Act, as well as associated regulatory changes, government's bill will:
  - End the practice of referral fees between insurers or insurance brokers and property managers or other third parties.
  - Set out clear guidelines for what strata corporations are required to insure to help strata councils make informed decisions on their insurance policies.
  - Require strata corporations to inform owners about insurance coverage, provide notice of any policy changes, including increasing deductibles, and allow stratas to use their contingency reserve fund when necessary to pay for unexpected premium increases.
  - Protect strata unit owners against large lawsuits from strata corporations if the owner was legally responsible for a loss or damage, but through no fault of their own.
- The legislation also paves the way for government to make further regulatory changes to:
  - Identify when stratas are not required to get full insurance coverage.
  - Strengthen depreciation reporting requirements, including limiting the ability to use existing loopholes in the legislation to avoid completing depreciation reports.
  - Change the minimum required contributions made by strata unit owners and developers to a strata corporation's contingency reserve fund.
  - Require brokers to disclose the amount of their commission, which has been reported to be at times in excess of 20%.
  - Strengthen notification requirements to strata corporations of changes to insurance coverage and costs, or an intent not to renew.

## *BC Financial Services Authority's Report*

- On June 16, the BC Financial Services Authority (BCFSA) published its interim report into the rising cost of strata insurance in BC and determined the strata insurance market to be 'unhealthy' and "not fulfilling the needs of British Columbians."
- The report found that premiums have risen by approximately 40% across the province in comparison to last year and deductibles increasing by 50% in Metro Vancouver and upwards of 100% in other regions.
- BCFSA's findings indicate many local and global factors are behind these increases.
- These include: methods for determining prices that are focused on size of coverage not cost, recent losses resulting from minor claims for water damage, poor maintenance practices, the use of insurance to 'fill gaps' left by other forms of protection, and a compounding risk of earthquakes in BC.
- The BCFSA used its authority, as the regulator responsible for safeguarding confidence and stability in British Columbia's financial sector, to obtain detailed information from major industry participants for this report.
- At BC's suggestion, insurance was discussed at an interprovincial conference call on condominiums in early November 2019. Provinces reported rising insurance costs and a participant reported that in Toronto, five condominium corporations could not obtain insurance.
- The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the Province's Insurance Act and Financial Institutions Act.
- The BC Financial Services Authority has the responsibility to regulate provincially incorporated insurance companies.

## Site C

### Highlights:

- On July 31, BC Hydro filed the 2019 Site C Annual Report and the Quarterly Progress Report with the British Columbia Utilities Commission (BCUC).
- Both reports identify overall project health and cost being at risk and the Quarterly outlines additional cost and schedule pressures due to COVID-19.
- The Opposition says when they were government, the Site C project was on time and on budget.
- They also say government is failing to properly manage the project and are questioning the cost of the review being conducted by Mr. Peter Milburn, Special Advisor to Minister Ralston.

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## Solution:

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- Our government has been clear – Site C is not a project we would have started.
- But we weren't willing to ask British Columbians to take on \$4 billion in debt with nothing in return.
- This would have put badly needed investments in schools, hospitals and other infrastructure at risk.

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- In March, BC Hydro significant scaled down the project and focused only on essential work and meeting critical milestones.
- This was done in line with the advice from the Provincial Health Officer to ensure the safety of workers and local communities.
- Thanks to this approach, we are on track to achieve river diversion, a key step in constructing the project this fall.

- BC Hydro is now in the process of safely scaling construction activities back up, in line with advice from public health officials.
- I have been clear that I am concerned with the reports that BC Hydro recently filed with the BC Utilities Commission.
- BC Hydro has initiated a re-baselining process of the Site C project to review the cost and time required to complete the project.
- I also have brought on Mr. Peter Milburn, a former Deputy Minister to the member of Abbotsford West, as a special advisor.
- Mr. Milburn will play an important role in examining the project.
- He will provide me, and our government, with independent advice and a fresh perspective.

# Forestry

## Highlights:

- Following Paper Excellence announcing the curtailment of its Mackenzie pulp mill, the Opposition said government should do more to make more fibre available and keep BC mills and forest operations competitive.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, BC deferred stumpage rates for eligible companies, postponed changes worked with the silviculture sector to ensure the 2020 tree planting season could go ahead in a safe way and made changes to allow pulp and paper companies to defer their BC Hydro bills for 3 months.
- In September 2019, BC provided \$69 million for new supports for forest workers and communities, which includes \$875,000 in community grants.

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## Solution:

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- Our government is working hard to support people in the forest sector during this global pandemic.
- We acted quickly to deliver relief for British Columbians including a \$1,000 BC Emergency Benefit for Workers.
- We deferred stumpage fees for 3 months. Eligible forest companies now have access to \$80 million they wouldn't have otherwise, which they can use to help pay their employees, contractors or other bills.
- We made changes so pulp and paper mills can defer their BC Hydro bill payments for 3 months.
- We worked with the silviculture sector, the Provincial Health Officer and other partners to develop safe guidelines for this season's tree planting season.
- To provide some stability, we postponed changes to the Manufactured Forest Product Regulation and to the Coast-wide implementation.
- The MLA for Delta North and Parliamentary Secretary on the file, is now leading the expansion and use of mass timber in BC buildings.
- We will keep working hard and engage with industry, workers, communities and First Nations to build a sustainable future for forestry in BC.

### *On mill closures and curtailments:*

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- I'm pleased to say that since March 2020, 32 mills have resumed operations, bringing thousands of British Columbians back to work.
- Our government's approach is to put workers, their families and communities first when it comes to the challenges facing the forest sector.
- We took action and announced \$69 million in funding for new supports for workers, contractors and communities in BC's interior.
- This funding will ensure that workers have access to the services they need – from training, to work placement, to early retirement.
- We are actively processing approximately 1,000 applications for the early retirement program.
- To help workers find new employment opportunities, we've opened job placement offices in 100 Mile House, Fort St. James, Fort St. John, Mackenzie and Clearwater.
- Our supports also includes \$875,000 in grants to 11 Interior communities that have been hardest hit by the challenges facing the forestry sector.
- We will continue to support workers and their families to make sure our forest communities remain resilient, especially during these challenging times.

## Validators: Government Actions and Support

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- Hardy Wentzel, Structurlam CEO (June, 2020)

- Wentzel said

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(Castanet, June 26 2020)

Copyright

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(April 2020)

Copyright

## **MLA Morris, Prince George-Mackenzie:**

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- On Paper Excellence Curtailing Mackenzie Mill (CKPG, June 2020)

Copyright



## Background:

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- Throughout 2019 and 2020, a number of major Interior forestry companies in British Columbia announced curtailments at their BC sawmills.
- Companies said this was due to lower lumber prices, reduced demand, high log costs, softwood lumber border tariffs and issues in accessing timber, and starting in March 2020, many have attributed this to impacts of COVID-19.
- Media has reported on a leaked consultant's report prepared for the old government in 2015 that warned of significant impacts from the end of the mountain pine beetle harvest would cause on the sector and predicted the closure of up to 13 mills.
- BC acted quickly to relief and support in response to COVID-19, including a \$1,000 boost to any employee eligible for EI or the new Federal Emergency Benefits for those who don't qualify for EI.
- In April 2020, BC deferred stumpage fees for eligible companies for three months with interest, leaving them with \$80 million to pay employees, contractors and other bills.
- Also in April, BC took action to allow major industries, including pulp and paper mills, to have the opportunity to defer 50% of their bill payments for 3 months.
- In response to the pandemic, BC worked with the silviculture sector, the Provincial Health Officer and other partners to develop guidelines to keep people safe during the 2020 tree planting season.
- In June 2020, BC postponed changes to the Manufactured Forest Products Regulation (MFPR) and the Coast-wide implementation of the variable fee-in-lieu of manufacture on log exports that were scheduled to come into force on July 1, 2020, until Sept. 30, 2020, and December 2020 respectively.
- Also in June 2020, Premier Horgan appointed Ravi Kahlon, Parliamentary Secretary for Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development and MLA for Delta North to lead the expansion and use of mass timber in BC buildings.
- Compared to June 2019, average stumpage rates for the Coast have declined by more than 18% and in the Interior, rates declined by almost 35%.

# Community Benefits Agreement

## Highlights:

- The Community Benefits Agreement has been applied to a number of major infrastructure projects.
- The Opposition has suggested CBAs are resulting in 'more money for less highway' and is unfair to non-union companies and employees.

## Message:

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### **Long term benefits for workers**

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- These projects will be used as a launching pad for people's lifelong trade careers and continue to build up our skilled workforce.
- It will help apprentices get the work hours needed to finish their ticket, and leave behind a legacy of a diverse, trained workforce.

### **Contrast:**

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## Background:

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- The Community Benefits Agreement announced on July 16, 2018 allows government to make sure that local people and communities get long-lasting benefits from public investments into major infrastructure projects, while maximizing the number of contractors that can bid on major infrastructure projects.
- Under the CBA, a diverse and qualified workforce will be supplied for select major public infrastructure projects through a newly created Crown corporation, BC Infrastructure Benefits Inc. (BCIB).
- BCIB will hire the project's construction workers, and will work with unions and contractors to dispatch labour, as well as manage payroll and benefits.
- Signatories to the Community Benefits Agreement are BCIB, and the Allied Infrastructure and Related Construction Council (AIRCC), which represents many of B.C.'s building trades.

### Key benefits of the negotiated labour agreement include:

- **Local people and businesses:** When local workers have greater access to work in their communities, local people will invest and stay in their communities.
- **Apprenticeships:** Increased apprenticeships in the skilled trades is essential to the development of British Columbia's workforce.
- **Training:** The development of construction skills for persons other than the Red Seal apprentices is essential to the development of British Columbia's workforce.
- **Indigenous and under-represented groups:**
  - This agreement provides opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and other under-represented groups on government infrastructure projects, free from discrimination and harassment.
  - In addition, Indigenous peoples, women, and other groups will now have priority access to employment and training opportunities.
- **Wages:** Wages have been negotiated to align with industry wages, based on prevailing construction rates.
- Since 1963, PLAs have been used by BC Hydro and the Allied Hydro Council to build dams in our province, with each one constructed on time and on budget.

## Bill 23 – Workers' Comp Changes

### Highlights:

- Bill 23 makes modest improvements to the Worker's Compensation system as well as eliminates the 90-day waiting period before an addition to the schedule of presumptive diseases made by WorkSafeBC can take effect.
- After consolation and review of the evidence, WorkSafeBC determined to add COVID-19 and other viral pathogens to the list of occupational diseases wherein it could be presumed a worker has contracted the disease as a result of their employment if their workplace is identified as being at higher risk.

### Message:

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- For too many years we have heard from injured workers in B.C. that the system isn't fair and doesn't work for them.
- Bill 23 is the first attempt in 20 years to improve the Workers Compensation Act, ensuring workers get the support they need, while keeping premiums low
- These changes include:
  - increase the maximum salary amount
  - allowing WorkSafeBC to provide preventative medical treatment which could save money in the long term
  - strengthening the ability of WorkSafeBC to investigate workplace safety infractions
- We expect no increases to premiums in the next two years as a result of this bill.
- In fact, businesses will continue to pay less than the actual cost rate thanks to the ongoing subsidy.

- Our government's approach has been measured and follows a significant review conducted by Mr. Parr.

- Our approach is fair to businesses who will not see increases to premiums in the short-term.
- It's also fair to workers who haven't seen any improvement in Workers Comp in 20 years.
- During the pandemic, businesses have been allowed to defer their premiums for six months without interest or penalties.
- WorkSafeBC is also waiving premiums for employers receiving the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy.
- And businesses are receiving a subsidy on premiums, paying only \$1.55 when the actual cost rate is \$1.68.
- Since we were elected, WorkSafe premiums that businesses pay have continued to go down.
- We stand by our decision to make long overdue improvement to Workers Compensation while keeping premiums low for businesses.



# First Nations' Travel Concerns

## Highlights:

- First Nations across the province continue to express concerns about travel through their territories.

## Main Message

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- We know that some First Nations are concerned about the impact this virus could have on their communities and elders and we continue to work with them.
- The decision to move into Phase 3 of B.C.'s restart plan was made with the guidance of provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry.
- The First Nations Health Authority has been engaging closely with First Nations directly to support their response throughout the pandemic, including as the Province moves to restart.
- We launched a new framework to ensure people living in remote communities have access to critical health care that meets their unique needs during the pandemic and into the future.
- Provincial officials have had ongoing dialogue for the last few months with Nations on the north-central and west coasts to discuss pandemic response, identify concerns, and share information.

- It's important that we continue to meet and hear about their circumstances and thoughts as we move forward, and that we share the latest information.
- For all of us, everyone's safety is our top priority, and we continue to believe the best way forward is through dialogue.
- Many communities across the province have begun to welcome visitors, and we continue to work with communities to help build their confidence in the B.C. restart plan, including local tourism.
- I would note Tofino and the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation put out a joint release welcoming the return of visitors to the area.
- Additionally, on July 22 the Nuxalk Nation and Bella Coola Valley Tourism Association made a joint announcement about welcoming BC residents back to the valley with precautions.
- Dr. Henry reminds British Columbians that they need to be respectful of communities and how ready they are to welcome visitors.

## Background

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- On Aug 7, the leadership of three northern Nations: the Kaska Dena, Taku River Tlingit First Nation, and Tahltan Nation, announced support for each Nation's advisories to avoid non-essential travel and activities for recreation and hunting to their collective territories.
- On Aug 4, the First Nations of Gitga'at, Gitxaala, Kitselas, Kitsumkalum, Lax Kw'alaams, and Metlakatla wrote to the Premier urging the government "to consider stronger measures to protect the people of the north coast region." They are primarily concerned about sports fishing enthusiasts coming from "BC urban centres and many parts of Alberta."
- The Hesquiaht First Nation is expressing concerns that boaters continue to show up on their shores, despite efforts to keep visitors away during the pandemic. (CHEK, Aug 9)
- On July 16, Dr. Henry participated in a meeting with leaders from the Tsilhqot'in, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Heiltsuk First Nations.
- In late June, an op/ed by Joe Alphonse, Judith Sayers, and Marilyn Slett raised concerns about a lack of consultation on reopening and listed four key concerns: culturally-safe contact tracing, screening, rapid testing, and reporting of COVID-19 cases in neighbouring communities.
- On June 15, the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council wrote to the Premier expressing concerns with the restart plan and listing those same four conditions.