

September 1, 2021

Premier Horgan
BC Legislature

Dear Mr. Horgan,

We are at a crossroads! Dr. Henry and you are the directors of traffic. You two, get to decide the fates of millions of British Columbians. A huge responsibility and incredible pressure that must be hard to bear. It is probably like the pressure that business owners across the province are feeling as they prepare to close, lose, or be boycotted by their friends and community. They will watch their hard work disappear or have the unenviable task to lay off employees. The normally passionate and patient business owners who have complied, struggled, and supported decisions made by government are quite simply - exhausted.

Now we have reached this crossroads. A four way stop that will pit business owners against community members. It will turn innocent and ill-equipped business owners into the gatekeepers of a dysfunctional health system. Vulnerable business owners asking employees to mediate and manage situations far beyond their comfort and ability. Sir, this is a lose, lose outcome that I fear will result in irreparable results. How will we recover from Covid if we have a broken community?

We have done our work Mr. Horgan. We surveyed our citizens and our members. We had critical conversations. We listened and sought out feedback and input from our professional networks across the province. The result is confusion, frustration, fear, and anger. Typically vibrant, productive, intelligent professionals and community builders are at odds and unable to support each other and find solutions against a growing discourse of mistrust and anguish flanked in human rights issues far beyond the scope of our understanding. We have been dragged into a debate over people's choices and discrimination. Networks are crumbling and communities will follow. We all define success in a different way, a community crippled economically, emotionally and at war with their neighbors is not success no matter what the Covid statistics report.

Our businesses are broken and cannot endure the mental, emotional, and financial outcomes of your newly imposed restrictions. We implore you to review our survey results and consider a new path. Businesses have had enough. We need you to be brave and take action to find a solution that isn't on the backs of our SMEs. We respectfully ask you to consider a different alternative to adding another unbearable barrier to the already vulnerable business owners across the province.

We know there is compassion in the Covid-19 struggle, and we need some of it for our businesses and your citizens.

We ASK of you:

- Make your guidelines, consistent, clear, and transparent. There is confusion and misunderstanding in the communities. We need well thought out plans and foresight for an action that will result in positive long-term change.
- Communities and businesses need time to recover, repair and prepare
- Ensure a path forward that will not be sidetracked or delayed through any political influence resulting from the Federal Election
- Roll out the Orders prepared and complete with:
 - financial supports available
 - non-compliance consequences outlined and accessible
 - enforcement expectations

- accessibility to the Labour Laws as applicable to employees
- justifiable reasons supporting your actions
- Allow restaurants and small business to remain operating at Phase 3 requirements, to continue to recover from the past 18 months
- Have a comprehensive plan of action to improve vaccination rates
- Have a comprehensive plan of action to improve vaccination accessibility
- Share with us the full scope of the plans being announced, including:
 - Percentage of vaccination required to remove the restrictions
 - Percentage of vaccination required to achieve Phase 4
 - Acceptable percentage of active cases to resume Phase 3
- Provide clear and reasonable options for those who choose against vaccination for medical or personal choice

Please do not paint the entire province with a broad brush. We are not all equal. We are not all the same. The Northeast has a different experience with Covid. The Indigenous have a different experience with Covid. Rural communities have a different experience with Covid. We have different needs, resources, and outcomes. Our cultures are clashing. We are different and we need to be heard.

Mr. Horgan, we think you need time to sort this mess out and consider other options, and our businesses need time to plan, adjust adapt, and decide if they have it in them to go another round before throwing in the towel. At which, they will go home to become another government dependent, stay at home ex-business owners.

Yes, this is a major crossroads. It is time for the Government and BC Health Authority to pivot. It is time to give our businesses a break. The onus is now on you. Not us. It is no longer okay to make small businesses the enforcer of an impossible medical crisis. There must be another way. We want to help.

Government is responsible – be accountable. Make the right choice and pivot today to a better plan of attack on Covid-19 and the variants that continue to mount. We need a new path; this one is worn out.

Thank you for your heartfelt consideration.

Sincerely, on behalf of the Fort St. John and District Chamber of Commerce

Cheryl Montgomery
Executive Director

Chuck Fowler, President
Justin McKinnon, 1st Vice
Peta Best, Treasurer
Julie Ziebart, Past President
Jared Braun, Director
Judy Desjarlais, Director
Jennifer Snider, Director
Carina Wallis, Director
Julie Roach-Burns, Director
Adam Reaburn, Director
Brad Lussier, Director
Brenna Burns, Director

CC:

Premier: Premier@gov.bc.ca

South Peace MLA: Mike.Bernier.mla@leg.bc.ca

North Peace MLA: Dan.Davies.mla@leg.bc.ca

Minister Anne Kang (Advanced Education and Skills Training): AEST.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Lana Popham (Agriculture, Food and Fisheries): AGR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister David Eby (Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing): AG.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Mitzi Dean (Children and Family Development): MCF.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Lisa Bear (Citizens' Services): CITZ.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Jennifer Whiteside (Education): EDUC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Bruce Ralston (Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation): EMLI.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister George Heyman (Environment and Climate Change Strategy): ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Selina Robinson (Finance): FIN.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Katrine Conroy (Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development): FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Adrian Dix (Health): HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Murray Rankin (Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation): IRR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Ravi Kahlon (Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation): JERI.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Harry Bains (Labour): LBR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Sheila Malcolmson (Mental Health and Addictions): MMHA.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Josie Osbourne (Municipal Affairs): MAH.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Mike Farnworth (Public Safety and Solicitor General): PSSG.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Nicholas Simons (Social Development and Poverty Reduction): SDPR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Melanie Mark (Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport): TAC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Minister Rob Fleming (Transportation and Infrastructure): Minister.Transportation@gov.bc.ca

Media Inquiries to
Cheryl Montgomery
250.261.4486
info@fsjchamber.com

*To promote and enhance local businesses to
strengthen our communities*