

June 22, 2021

John Horgan
Premier of B.C.
Premier@gov.bc.ca

Selina Robinson
Minister of Finance
FIN.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Melanie Mark
Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport
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Lana Popham
Minister of Agriculture, Food & Fisheries
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Harwinder Sandhu
MLA for Vernon-Monashee
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Re: Interior Provincial Exhibition

Premier Horgan, Minister Robinson, Minister Mark, Minister, Popham, MLA Sandhu

The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce writes to you on behalf of its 600-plus members and the need to ensure the viability of economic anchors in the North Okanagan during and after the pandemic.

Specifically, we write in support of the Interior Provincial Exhibition, which occurs annually for five days in the North Okanagan and is a celebration of agriculture, tourism and community. A 2017 study indicated that the IPE attracted 10,052 out-of-region visitors and an economic impact of \$6.6 million. Other data from the study includes:

- Aggregate spend in restaurants/bars - \$1.469 million
- Aggregate spend on transportation (parking, fuel, etc.) - \$1.664 million
- Aggregate spend in grocery/liquor stores - \$1.210 million
- Aggregate spend on retail - \$1.635 million
- Aggregate spend on commercial lodgings - \$659,397

Beyond the out-of-region visitors (defined as travelling 100 kilometres or more), thousands of people attend from the Okanagan-Thompson-Shuswap and they have a considerable economic impact on local retailers, transportation and vendors.

For many merchants, equipment suppliers, accommodators and home-based entrepreneurs, the IPE is a major source of revenue while many non-profits depend on the funds they raise at the fair through food concessions, raffles and other activities.

Not surprisingly, the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the IPE being cancelled in 2020 and 2021. This lack of revenue has had a significant impact on the IPE, which is a not-for-profit, particularly as there are some fixed costs beyond the five days of the fair. Staff is required year-round to plan for next year's festivities.

We appreciate that your government is focused on the immediate reopening of the economy as Covid vaccinations occur. But there is also a need to look to 2022 and subsequent years to ensure prosperity returns to all parts of the province. In the Okanagan, tourism and agriculture are key economic pillars and the Interior Provincial Exhibition is critical to both of those sectors. Immediate measures must be taken to ensure the long-term viability of the IPE and that it can survive Covid.

On behalf of our membership, we request that your government meet with representatives from the Interior Provincial Exhibition to fully understand the challenges they are experiencing and that you identify a strategy to financially assist the IPE.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Krystin Kempton, President
Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

CC. Interior Provincial Exhibition
Shirley Bond, Interim Leader of the Official Opposition
Sonia Furstenaus, Leader of the B.C. Green Party
Greg Kylo, Shuswap MLA

Mel Arnold, North Okanagan-Shuswap Member of Parliament
City of Armstrong Mayor & Council
Township of Spallumcheen Mayor & Council
Armstrong Spallumcheen Chamber of Commerce
Okanagan Indian Band Chief & Council
Splatsin Chief & Council
City of Vernon Mayor & Council
Regional District of North Okanagan Board of Directors
District of Coldstream Mayor & Council
City of Enderby Mayor & Council
Village of Lumby Mayor & Council
Columbia-Shuswap Regional District Board of Directors
Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
Tourism Vernon
Tourism Shuswap
Okanagan-Shuswap Chambers of Commerce
B.C. 4-H
B.C. Association of Agricultural Fairs & Exhibitions