

Jan. 28, 2022

Adrian Dix

Minister of Health

HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Ravi Kahlon

Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery & Innovation

JEDC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Melanie Mark

Minister of Tourism, Art, Culture & Sport

TAC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Harwinder Sandhu

MLA for Vernon-Monashee

Harwinder.Sandhu.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Re: Reopening B.C.'s event sector

Minister Dix, Minister Kahlon, Minister Mark and MLA Sandhu

The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce is hearing the concerns of members and wishes to express its concern about the current status of B.C.'s event sector and the long-term viability of an industry that employs thousands of people and generates billions of dollars in revenue.

Specifically, weddings, corporate gatherings, community events, fundraisers and celebrations of life have largely been sidelined by the pandemic since March 2020. Not only has that negatively impacted event planners - mostly small entrepreneurs - and their employees, there has been losses for associated businesses, including caterers, venues, suppliers, retailers and photographers. Not able to work means challenges to support their families and community.

Restrictions have resulted in a loss of contracts and refunds, and the prospect of new bookings is reduced because of ongoing uncertainty around future health orders and possible event cancellations. Adding to the situation are health orders that often lack clarity (what is the difference between a sponsored or ticketed party and a sponsored or ticketed event?).

Our Chamber is convinced that events operated by industry professionals can provide a safe environment for all participants utilizing similar health protocols as followed by restaurants, retailers, fitness centres and theatres. We understand Dr. Henry's concerns that certain events and venues lend themselves to attendees letting their guards down and engaging in actions which

may result in increased transmissibility however the ongoing ebbs and flows of relaxing and tightening restrictions must be tempered. A plan to work with business to get back to normal business activities even if there are restrictions for certain events and activities to take place must be developed. Vaccine rates are high so let's be mindful of all, including our front line workers, who wish to improve their mental health with connections and events.

To assist with economic recovery in our communities, the Greater Vernon Chamber would make the following recommendations:

- That the Government immediately form a consultation process with event industry representatives to establish a process that allows events to resume, including, but not limited to, capacity, masks, proof of vaccination, sanitization and security;
- Public health orders that include clear definitions for events and restrictions for specific event format;
- Clear and understandable language in public health orders and other information (shift from “personal gatherings,” “organized indoor events” and “organized indoor events at venues.”)
- Continued payroll and rent support programs so event companies have access to cash flow as they reopen.

In many communities such as Vernon, events of all sizes are not only essential to our economy, but these functions create vitality and diversity for our residents and visitors. The event planning sector in B.C. must survive.

If there is any further information that we can provide, please contact us. Thank you for your attention to this important matter and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Robin Cardew
President
Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

CC. Shirley Bond, Official Opposition Interim Leader
City of Vernon Mayor and Council
District of Coldstream Mayor and Council
Regional District of North Okanagan Board of Directors
City of Vernon Economic Development & Tourism
Okanagan-Shuswap Chambers of Commerce
Event Planning Sector