

Sent via email

February 1, 2022

The Honorable Adrian Dix
Minister of Health
HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honorable Ravi Kahlon
Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery & Innovation
JEDC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honorable Melanie Mark
Minister of Tourism, Art, Culture & Sport
TAC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Re: Reopening B.C.'s events sector

Dear Minister Dix, Minister Kahlon, and Minister Mark,

The Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce is the largest business association serving Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Anmore, and Belcarra. We represent 800+ businesses from every sector, most of whom qualify as small- to medium-sized businesses.

Our member businesses connected to the events sector – if they are still somehow in business at all – are fighting to survive. Our Chamber is urging you to reconsider the current status of restrictions for events, as the long-term viability of this vital industry that employs thousands of people and generates billions of dollars in revenue, is quickly moving past the point of being able to recover in the foreseeable future.

Specifically, weddings, corporate gatherings, community events, fundraisers, and celebrations of life have largely been sidelined by the pandemic since March, 2020. Not only has this negatively impacted event planners – mostly small entrepreneurs – and their employees, there have 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.

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

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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 must be developed to get this crucial sector back to work, even if there are restrictions for certain types events and activities. 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 Tri-Cities Chamber makes 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
- Continued payroll and rent support programs so event companies have access to cash flow as they reopen.

In communities across B.C., 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.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Leslie Courchesne
Chief Executive Officer

CC. The Honorable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety & Solicitor General, MLA for Port Coquitlam
The Honorable Selina Robinson, Minister of Finance, MLA for Coquitlam-Maillardville
Fin Donnelly, MLA for Coquitlam-Burke Mountain
Rick Glumac, MLA for Port Moody-Coquitlam
City of Coquitlam Mayor Richard Stewart and Council
City of Port Coquitlam Mayor Brad West and Council
City of Port Moody Mayor Rob Vagramov and Council
Village of Anmore Mayor John McEwan and Council
Village of Belcarra Mayor Jamie Ross and Council
Tri-Cities Chamber members representing the events industry