

Newsletter March 19<sup>th</sup>

One year pandemic anniversary – BC and Courtenay-Comox enjoys optimistic economic and social outlook

Dear Community Member,

Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021 marked one year since a state of emergency was declared in B.C. in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It marks also the resilience of British Columbians working together to keep each other safe and unified in our effort to overcome this public health crisis. Yes, we have missed important family events and have celebrated milestones and holidays in different ways. But the work we have done has allowed us to see the light at the end of the tunnel – even while we are still in the tunnel. So far, we have administered over 444,000 doses of vaccine.

We are making progress on our vaccine roll out plan. 400,000 British Columbians will get their shots by mid-April with the goal of offering the vaccine to everyone who wants it by the end of the summer. Yesterday, we announced that the AstraZeneca vaccine will be available to all front-line workers including teachers, grocery store clerks, workplaces in congregate and other setting deemed high risk by WorkSafeBC. In this particular circumstance, you should not call to book your appointment, but if you are in these settings, your employer will be in touch with you to arrange your time to be vaccinated. Find the list of all front-line workers: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/plan>

As we await our turn for a vaccination and we keep to the actions that we know stop the spread of COVID-19, this government continues to support the British Columbians, Businesses, and Local initiatives.

Programs for British Columbians:

1) Largest-Ever increase to income assistance

We know that this pandemic has impacted people in such different. This week, we also announced the largest-ever increase to [income assistance, disability assistance, and the senior's supplement](#). Among the many concrete benefits, those on income and disability assistance will receive an extra \$175 each month – a *permanent* increase that continues our poverty reduction strategy. Supporting British Columbians is key to a strong, sustainable economic recovery, and this is a major step in toward sustained support for all British Columbians as we approach our post-covid world.

- 2) Previously known as the Home Adaptations for Independence (HAFI) program, the BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations (BC RAHA) program has been launched and features several changes including, but not limited to: removing the need to obtain a quote for standard accessibility adaptations; ensuring more equitable access to funding by region and type of home adaptation; and increasing access to occupational therapists or other qualified professionals for assessments. Administered through Housing BC, this program helps seniors and people with disabilities adapt their homes for independent living. Interested applicants and those looking to learn more about BC RAHA can visit: [www.bchousing.org/BC-RAHA](http://www.bchousing.org/BC-RAHA)

#### Local Projects:

- 1) The Kus-kus-sum project in Courtenay is getting \$700,000. Through BC's Economic Recovery Plan, funding will help restore wetlands while creating 40 jobs and protecting the natural environment for future generations at Kus-kus-sum. As I mentioned to the paper: "Kus-kus-sum is an incredibly important project for our community and I'm so excited to see us building on our previous commitments to continue this project. This additional funding will support the strong partnerships we've built over the years and enable the K'omoks First Nation, the Comox Valley Project Watershed Society and community partners to continue the vital work of turning the old mill site into a place where local wildlife can once again thrive." See the full story here: <https://www.mycomoxvalleynow.com/76531/courtenays-kus-kus-sum-project-getting-funding-boost-from-province/?fbclid=IwAR08IKtphoxThKo9ZI2LvfxC4VmTGbDjY7k-irLUnchR3x6f6YtX2WgJZ4>
- 2) We also announced funding this week for the Courtenay Airpark. As part of B.C.'s COVID-19 economic recovery plan and B.C. Air Access Program grants, the province is providing \$9.28 million to enhance airport infrastructure. See the story here: <https://www.cheknews.ca/airports-in-tofino-and-courtenay-to-receive-essential-upgrades-754085/>

#### Programs for businesses:

- 1) Expansion of Launch Online Our government announced [the expansion of the Launch Online Grant Program](#) this week. These grants will allow small businesses to build or expand their e-commerce capacity. This means more online stores, online bookings and local products and services delivered to more people throughout the province. This program will help small

businesses, particularly those run by Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, to reach more customers, grow their business, and continue their post-pandemic recovery.

- 2) This is also a reminder that there have been some improvements to increase access to the BC Small and Medium Business Recovery Grant, including connecting you with professionals that can help you with your application. Make you take advantage:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/economic-recovery/business-recovery-grant>

**Commented [LR1]:** I thought there was also a service industry component to the expansion??? If so, good to add.

As more and more people become vaccinated, and more optimism increases, we reflect on the economic recovery that BC has already achieved, including rebounding to near pre-pandemic levels and adding 26,000 jobs in February. We can already see how the supports from this government are helping British Columbians. See the CBC story here: [B.C. economy rebounds to near pre-pandemic levels, adding 26,600 jobs in February](#)

#### Celebrating Francophone in BC

The First Francophonie Day was proclaimed March 20, 2002 in recognition of the social, economic and cultural contributions that francophones and francophiles have made in British Columbia. The theme of this year's B.C. Francophonie Day is « Aller bien au-delà en temps de pandémie » (Going Beyond in Time of Pandemic). [Province celebrates B.C. Francophonie Day | BC Gov News](#)

Our government continues to work to make life better for British Columbians, and to continue to respond to this pandemic. My constituency office is available by phone or email. Available hours are Monday to Thursday 10am-4pm, and Fridays by appointment only. You can reach us at 250.703.2410 or [Ronna-Rae.Leonard.MLA@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Ronna-Rae.Leonard.MLA@leg.bc.ca) if you have any questions or need assistance with provincial supports.

Sincerely,

Ronna-Rae Leonard

MLA Courtenay-Comox

COVID Resources:

- For medical info, visit [bccdc.ca](http://bccdc.ca) or call 811

- For provincial supports and BC's Restart Plan, visit [gov.bc.ca/covid19](http://gov.bc.ca/covid19) or call 1-888-COVID-19 (1-888-268-4319) or text 604-630-0300
- For employer guidelines on returning to work safely, visit [WorkSafeBC](http://WorkSafeBC)
- Take the self-assessment at [covid19.thrive.health](http://covid19.thrive.health)
- For seniors looking for additional support, or for those looking to support seniors, call 2-1-1 or visit [bc211.ca](http://bc211.ca)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RonnaRaeLeonard/>

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MY OFFICE REMAINS OPEN TO ASSIST BY PHONE OR EMAIL

[www.ronnaraeleonard.ca](http://www.ronnaraeleonard.ca)



*It is a privilege to live and work on the traditional lands of the K'omoks First Nations.*

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