

Dear Community Member,

This week, our government presented [Budget 2021: A Stronger BC for Everyone](#). Budget 2021 is about helping people now and creating the conditions for a strong economic recovery. It's about responding to the challenges of the pandemic and preparing us for the future. I'd like to share just some of the highlights about how this budget will work for you:

- **[Protecting people's health and safety](#):** We're investing \$900 million to bolster COVID-19 testing, contact tracing and the vaccine rollout, as part of \$4 billion in total new health and mental health investments. Budget 2021 also features the largest mental health investment in BC history. We're building a better network of mental health supports for youth and expanding the response to the overdose crisis.
- **[Investing in people and communities](#):** New investments will support people and make life more affordable. This includes free public transportation for kids 12 and under, doubling the number of \$10-a-day child care spaces, and a \$2 billion investment to build homes for middle-income families.
- **[Supporting BC's businesses](#):** Ongoing supports will help businesses to get through the pandemic and plan for a resilient future. We're providing incentives for employers who hire more people this year, relief grants for bars, restaurants and gyms impacted by current circuit-breaker public health measures, and expanding the Grow BC, Feed BC, Buy BC strategy to support our farmers and food producers.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have faced challenges that we never could have imagined. But British Columbians are resilient, and your provincial government has your back. Together, we'll make health care better; create new opportunities for people; and help our BC businesses grow.

### **The Final Stretch – needed restrictions**

Of course, before we get there, we must do our most difficult work yet in participating in our public health goals. The ban on public indoor dining and indoor social gatherings has been extended until May 25<sup>th</sup> – the day after the long weekend. In addition, new travel restrictions will limit the amount of non-essential travel. The details of these can be found here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/info/response> (THIS LINK WILL CHANGE AS WE GET THE INFO)

### **Paid leave for workers to get COVID-19 vaccine**

To help make sure we get everyone, including workers, through this time, this government has introduced new legislation to make it easier to get vaccinated. People shouldn't have to lose out on pay or risk losing their job to protect their own health and improve the safety of our communities. This would give people up to three hours of paid leave to get each dose of the COVID-19 vaccine so workers who miss shifts can do so with peace of mind that their wages and employment are protected. The best vaccine is the first one offered, because the more people that are vaccinated, the safer we all are.

We also celebrated Earth Day this week. Click on the link to see the full address from George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change

Strategy: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021ENV0026-000747>

My constituency office is available by phone or email. The office is open 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)

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Ronna-Rae Leonard MLA for Courtenay-Comox

437 5<sup>th</sup> St, Courtenay BC

Ph: 250-703-2410

Community Office Hours: Monday to Thursday, 10 am to 4 pm

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[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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