

Dear Constituents,

During this holiday season and as we approach 2022, it feels important to think of all that we have to celebrate and to be grateful for. We are in a better situation than we were last Christmas. It has been a difficult year, but we also saw an increase in social interactions, businesses began to open in a larger capacity, and we saw some reprieve from the stresses that have been always present in our minds for almost two year of pandemic.

These freedoms and relaxing of restrictions were made possible by the over 90% of adults getting vaccinated over the last year. The largest vaccination program in BC history started just over 1 year ago. It has helped us safely gather, go to hockey games, see live music and be involved in organized sports again. [B.C. marks one year of COVID-19 vaccine rollout](#)

Even with some breakthrough cases, the vaccine has proven to reduce the severity of symptoms. And being vaccinated has been the number one way to stay out of the hospital. Unvaccinated people in B.C. are 7x more likely to get COVID-19, 30x more likely to be hospitalized, and 50x more likely to end up in the ICU. ([Vaccine effectiveness confirmed in latest B.C. COVID-19 data](#)).

This Christmas we can be together, but in the face of the Omicron variant we will once again have to reduce or contacts. Today, the Public Health Officer announced new health orders so that we can flatten the curve created by Omicron, (<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0230-002414>):

- limiting indoor, personal gatherings, including in rental and vacation properties to the household/residents plus 10 individuals, or one additional household maximum if all are aged 12 and older are fully vaccinated;
- requiring the BC Vaccine Card for organized events of all sizes and ensuring the QR code is scanned at events;
- seating requirements and restricting movement between tables at food and liquor-serving premises, and reinforcing the need to wear masks when not seated;
- limiting venues of 1,000 individuals or more to 50% of the seated capacity with reinforced masking requirements and scanning of the BC Vaccine Card QR code;
- pausing all sports tournaments while the order is in effect; and
- all New Year's Eve organized gatherings and events will be restricted to being seated-only events, with no mingling or dancing allowed.

This is difficult to hear no doubt, but I hope you will reflect on who you are doing this for. Perhaps you have an elderly person in your life who you want to protect. Maybe you have someone in your life who is going through immunosuppressing treatment. Perhaps you have a business where you want to protect your clients and ability to remain open. Maybe you have a health care worker in your household that you are helping to support. Wherever you find your inspiration we ask that you find ways to keep gatherings small and safe this Holiday Season.

Even as COVID takes a new turn, our government of BC continues to support those things that British Columbians love.

Family camping, recreation opportunities acquired for Tribune Bay Provincial Park

The Province has acquired two properties totalling 9.6 hectares (23.7 acres) that are intended to be added to the 95-hectare (235 acres) park known for its unique rock formations, sprawling white sandy beach and warm, shallow bay. The purchase will connect Tribune Bay Provincial Park to the 135-site Tribune Bay Campground with this addition of forest land and beachfront. The two properties, purchased for \$11.2 million, include the last remaining beachfront on Tribune Bay and adjoining forest land in addition to the existing private campground. The Province will operate the campground as it is until it develops long-term plans to improve visitor experience at Tribune Bay Park. Future improvements on the newly acquired lands could include walk-in sites catering to active transportation, like cycle touring, hiking or kayaking. <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021ENV0078-002389>

B.C. commits almost \$30 million for event recovery fund for fairs and festivals

We're so excited that people can once again safely enjoy their local fairs, festivals and events with their friends and family! Supporting event organizers through these grants means keeping their doors open, creating new jobs, and bringing people together again. Eight different organizations in the Comox Valley have received funding for; 1) Vancouver Island MusicFest; 2) Snow to surf race; 3) CVAG - Return to Water: Close to Home/Far for Home; 4) Comox Nautical Days Festival; 5) BC SeaFood Festival; 6) 2022 Open BC Junior Women's and Junior Men's Curling Championship; 7) Courtenay's Canada Day Celebrations; and 8) CVEX Fall Fair.

Progress update on old growth, worker supports

In November 2021, our government announced its intention to work in partnership with First Nations rights and title holders to defer harvest in 2.6 million hectares of our most at-risk ancient, rare, and large stands of old growth forests – equal to 6,400 Stanley Parks. During the past month, the Province contacted all 204 First Nations in BC and asked them to indicate whether they were interested in immediate deferrals, discuss deferrals within the engagements that are ongoing (existing treaties, agreements, or other government-to-government arrangements), and/or if they need more time. The vast majority expressed an interest in engaging further and require more time to review the technical information and/or incorporate local and Indigenous knowledge before making a decision. The province is providing \$12.69 million over three years to support First Nations in this work. Many forest companies are hitting the pause button while these discussions with First Nations are underway. The province is providing nearly \$19 million for the remainder of 2021/22 to support people, businesses, and communities impacted, as deferrals are implemented.

For further details, please read the full release at <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021FLNRO0096-002406>

Supporting People

Our government has focused on supporting us through the pandemic, addressing climate change, building a green future, taking major steps forward on a path of reconciliation with First Nations, and supporting people through a number of emergencies this year. Good things have been achieved this year and we know that there is still much more to do.

I'd like to thank-you for all that you are doing to support our neighbours, working toward a better future for our children, and lifting the holiday cheer. We have so much to be thankful for. Merry Christmas! Happy Holidays! Happy New Year! May you find peace in this winter holiday season

