

MLA Newsletter - The road forward

Dear Constituent,

A week ago, the world learned of the discovery of 215 children buried in unmarked graves at a residential school in Kamloops. This horrific revelation has caused further grief and trauma for friends and families of indigenous people and those whose loved ones may yet be revealed in other locations. It is heartening to know that people throughout BC are joined together in care and compassion to make space for the healing.

It has been an important week to think about the kind of world we want to re-enter, as we work to re-open the province. Over the last year this government has been focused on exactly that. Everything that has been set in place since this government formed are the pieces towards building a more equitable BC.

Champions of Childcare

In our continued efforts to work towards affordability, this government is providing more childcare. Parents in B.C. have struggled to find affordable child care, which disproportionately impacted women. As of this week, New Democrats have funded [nearly 26,000 new licensed child care spaces](#), exceeding our original three-year goal. In the Comox Valley since 2018 the BC Government has invested a total of \$17,728,068, parents have saved \$8,530,496 through fee reductions and benefits, 213 new licensed childcare spaces have been introduced, and 29 Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) have received wage enhancements totaling \$246,559. In just three years, we've funded more than twice as many spaces as the previous government did in an entire decade. This means more parents can afford to go back to work or school, knowing their kids are being cared for and nurtured and the affordability of life and having a family in the Comox Valley has improved. And we know that there is a lot more to do.

Recovery Benefit

June is the last month for claiming your recovery benefit. This is the one-time payment of up to \$1000 for eligible families, or \$500 for eligible individuals. If you have not already applied, you have until June 30, 2021. [Visit this page to apply](#). If you have already applied, do not apply again – [visit this page](#) if you still have questions or haven't received your benefit.

Minimum Wage

This government is looking forward to moving into a new period that includes everyone. This week, we [increased the minimum wage in B.C. to \\$15.20 an hour](#) and eliminated the discriminatory lower minimum wage for liquor servers – these workers will now make the regular minimum wage. Front line workers include many hard-working people who still struggle to make ends meet, including grocery store workers, servers, and cleaners. Our government believes that these and all workers should make a fair and dignified wage.

Intentions Paper

June is National Indigenous Heritage Month when we acknowledge, learn, and reflect on the rich diversity of First Nations within BC. Reconciliation and policy change is the very basis for the Intentions Paper that the government introduced this week to modernize forest policy by putting the rights of

indigenous people at the forefront of consultation. Premier Horgan said: “It’s absolutely vital that we do not repeat the colonial activities of the past by dictating to First Nations what they do on their territories today.” In partnership with First Nations titleholders, this new approach will ensure the benefits of forestry are shared more widely and fairly with Indigenous people. Our Intention addresses the rapid decline of available timber and promotes higher value wood products like mass timber. What we are implementing in B.C. is a complete paradigm shift, not only in how we administer forestry policy, but how we engage with First Nations, and build an economy that is truly sustainable.

Doing our part

As our government does our part to support small and medium businesses, improve employee wages, get more affordable childcare spaces and work in partnership with First Nations for forest management, we ask you to do your part and get vaccinated. In fact our vaccination rates are still increasing but they have slowed. The re-opening plan only works if there is a higher rate of vaccination than we currently have. Without preaching to the choir, we hope you will help us reach out to people who may not have had the opportunity to be vaccinated yet. We want to support our service sectors, tourism sectors, and eventually take off the masks, and for that we need higher rates of vaccination.

Sincerely,

Ronna-Rae Leonard
MLA Courtenay-Comox

COVID Resources:

- For medical info, visit bccdc.ca or call 811
- For provincial supports and BC’s Restart Plan, visit 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](https://worksafebc.ca)
- Take the self-assessment at covid19.thrive.health
- For seniors looking for additional support, or for those looking to support seniors, call 2-1-1 or visit bc211.ca

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

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Ronna-Rae Leonard MLA for Courtenay-Comox

437 5th St, Courtenay BC

Ph: 250-703-2410

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

MY OFFICE REMAINS OPEN TO ASSIST BY PHONE OR EMAIL

www.ronnaraeleonard.ca



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