



June 8, 2020

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Her Worship Mayor Lisa Helps
City of Victoria
mayor@victoria.ca

Jeff Bray, Executive Director
Downtown Victoria Business Association
jeff@downtownvictoria.ca

Elysia Glover, Executive Director
Community Micro Lending
info@communitymicrolending.ca

Catherine Holt, CEO
Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce
ceo@victoriachamber.ca

Stephen Pearce, President
Think Local First
info@seafirstinsurance.com

Dear Mayor Helps, Mr. Bray, Ms. Glover, Ms. Holt, and Mr. Pearce:

Thank you for your letter dated March 30, 2020, providing suggestions as to how we can help businesses in B.C. cope with the negative financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. I appreciate you taking the time to write.

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting all aspects of people's lives, including jobs, savings and most importantly one's own health and the health of loved ones. Our government is committed to

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working with our partners across B.C. and Canada to do everything we can to keep all people healthy, safe and supported.

Our government announced a \$5 billion COVID-19 Action Plan to help British Columbians affected financially by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our plan builds on the Government of Canada's plan and is focused on protecting people's health and safety, bringing financial relief for people and businesses alongside the federal government, and building B.C.'s plan for economic recovery in partnership with the business and labour community.

The measures within our COVID-19 Action Plan are an important first step and we will continue to take action to counter the impacts from COVID-19. We are committed to doing what it takes to support people throughout B.C. as we get through this together. Our immediate goal is to provide some relief for businesses struggling with cash flow today. The aim of the federal benefits, B.C. tax deferrals, BC Hydro relief and \$700M in reduced School Tax rates for businesses is to provide some breathing room that commercial property owners and their leaseholders need in the short-term.

In addition to receiving property tax relief, small businesses in British Columbia may be eligible for a 75% reduction in monthly rent. Commercial landlords are being encouraged to apply for the new Canada Emergency Rental Assistance program on behalf of their commercial tenants affected by COVID-19.

On June 1st, our government announced an emergency order issued under the *Emergency Protection Act* to prevent landlords eligible for CECRA from evicting their tenants for unpaid rent payments through to the end of June 2020. The order is intended to encourage more landlords to apply for the CECRA program while giving some temporary relief to businesses who have been hardest hit by the pandemic. Further information can be found online at: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020FIN0034-000988>

An Economic Recovery Task Force has been established to ensure the Province's economic response to COVID-19 is effective and responsive to the needs of British Columbians. The Task Force will help ensure the benefits of provincial programs are reaching their intended targets and complement federal programs, while also discussing long-term economic recovery following COVID-19. Further information regarding the Economic Recovery Task Force can be found online at: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PREM0046-000618>.

Be assured that we will continue to work with business leaders and organizations across the province on how to best support and respond to the needs of businesses of all types and sizes.

We will continue to help people, families and businesses so that British Columbians are supported.

For information on B.C.'s Action Plan and other government resources and updates, visit:
www.gov.bc.ca/covid19

Thank you for your comments and suggestions. They have been noted and will be considered as we continue to help people, families and businesses during this pandemic so that British Columbians are supported.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carole James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carole James
Minister and Deputy Premier

cc: Honourable John Horgan, Premier