



Ref: 61247 / 42139

May 7, 2021

Her Worship Mayor Lisa Helps
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6
Email: LHelps@victoria.ca

Dear Mayor Helps:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding your support for British Columbia's (BC) hotel workers and tourism industry workers. We very much appreciate the time you have taken to write on this important matter.

The BC Government recognizes that it has been an incredibly difficult year for the tourism and hospitality industry. The pandemic has led to significant hardship for tourism workers, operators, and communities. The Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport continues to work closely with the tourism and hospitality sectors to address these challenges. As you may be aware, Gavin McGarrigle, Western Regional Director for Unifor, and Stephanie Smith, President of the BC Government and Service Employees' Union, brought the workers' perspective to deliberations and recommendations by our government-appointed Tourism Task Force last fall.

It may interest you to know that the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport has implemented the first three of the Tourism Task Force's recommendations and is currently working on the remaining recommendations. The report is publicly available at: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/tourism-and-immigration/tourism-industry-resources/tourism_task_force_final_report_-_dec_9.pdf.

The BC Government also continues to advocate for strong supports from the Federal Government and as a result of some of this advocacy we were pleased to see the extension of the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy. We also recognize that the hospitality sector is largely represented by women and youth, and as a result these groups have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. That is why we have put in place targeted programs in support such as the StrongerBC Future Leaders Program and the hiring of 1,400 laid-off tourism workers to help run mass immunization clinics.

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In addition, the Ministry of Labour is committed to a continued collaborative approach in working with representatives of workers and employers to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people and businesses. This has included time-limited extensions of the minimum temporary lay-off period (which expired at the end of August 2020). In addition, a streamlined variance process was developed and implemented in the Employment Standards Branch (ESB) to allow employers and employees to jointly apply for further extensions of the temporary layoff period.

As you may be aware, given the unique circumstances and importance of this issue to so many workers in the hotel sector, in 2020, the Minister of Labour appointed Sandra Banister, a labour law and civil litigation lawyer, to conduct a review as follows:

- Determine what steps are being taken by employers and unions in the hotel sector to confront the issues raised by recall in the face of prolonged business impacts of COVID-19.
- Consult with unions and employers and the relevant sectoral organisations to gauge their reactions to a proposed regulation advanced by one union to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on recall rights.
- Summarize the findings in a report (without recommendations) to the Minister of Labour by August 20, 2020.

On Monday, August 31, 2020, Sandra Banister's report was publicly released. You may wish to view the report, and the Minister of Labour's accompanying statement at:
<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020LBR0029-001616>.

The BC Government continues to work closely with the sector to ensure that workers stay connected to the industry and are safe while working.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,



Harry Bains
Minister of Labour



Melanie Mark
Hli Haykwhl Wíi Xsgaak
Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport