



March 18, 2020

File: 0280-30
Ref: 191917

[Via Email]

As our province and country responds to COVID 19, I want to assure B.C.'s farmers, ranchers, seafood sector and food processors that the B.C. government is here to support you throughout the outbreak and recovery periods. Clearly, in an emergency of this scope, the only way forward is for all British Columbians and Canadians to join forces and work together.

To that extent, the Ministry of Agriculture is part of a cross-agency team engaged in the larger provincial and national response, and we will continue to reach out to you, to hear directly what the impacts from the COVID emergency are for you, and to ensure that your voice and your needs are part of our response.

As the Minister of Agriculture, I am listening closely to concerns raised by B.C. farmers, ranchers, fishers, food and beverage processors -- and many others involved in B.C.'s farm, fish and food sector. I'm hearing concerns about everything from revenue and market access to supply chains and labour.

I want you to know, all the topics are under active consideration. We have already begun work with our federal partners to review how existing and additional programs that help producers who experience income losses may be used or developed to help producers who experience revenue losses this year. We also understand the value and importance that seasonal workers have in helping B.C. producers raise, grow and deliver their products to market, and ministry staff are in on-going contact with our federal colleagues and industry leaders to look at options at how we can secure a stable and healthy labour supply for the growing season.

The Ministry is also in regular contact with B.C. farming organizations, other stakeholders, and government colleagues to plan and respond to disruptions in trade and goods, and we will continue to do our utmost so the people who grow, raise, produce and process B.C. food have access to the goods you need to complete that crucial work.

I know the commitment you have for agriculture, fish and food, but I also know you have many other concerns right now. You are parents, children, family members, neighbours, friends, and community leaders with concerns about your community and loved ones' wellbeing, front and centre.

.../2

On behalf of the B.C. government, I want to assure you when the British Columbia Pandemic Provincial Co-ordination Plan was implemented on March 6, efforts began to protect the people of our province from COVID 19, and to keep us all informed about what is happening, and what each of us, can and should do.

Please free to reach out to your ministry contacts with questions and concerns about your businesses, and for reliable and up-to-date information on the virus, what we all can do, and the response in general, please visit <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19> or contact the dedicated 1-888-COVID-19 or 1-888-268-4319 phonenumber with any questions about the virus or recommended action.

On behalf of all British Columbians I want to offer our deep gratitude to all farmers, food processors, fishers, transporters and others involved in our food system for the hard work that helps nourish all of us. We are doing our best to reach out to you to check-in, but please know, we are also here, and welcome your comments, concerns and ideas at AGR.minister@gov.bc.ca

The B.C. government's response is evolving and on-going. It is clear that this emergency will not be over quickly, and I assure you, neither will our government's support for B.C. farmers and food producers.

Sincerely,



Lana Popham
Minister