

June 22, 2020

Hon. Harry Bains
B.C. Minister of Labour
Box 9064, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Bains,

The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce appreciates the support your ministry and government has provided to employers and employees during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, more needs to be done to ensure long-term continuity for all involved.

Specifically, the Chamber is requesting that the government amend the Employment Standards Act to include a further extension to the period employees can be laid off before they are considered terminated. Presently, many businesses – primarily in the accommodations and tourism sectors – have been unable to reopen and bring their employees back. If those layoffs transform into terminations, employers will be left with significant severance costs and some businesses may be forced into bankruptcy or close permanently.

For those that do eventually reopen, termination means employers will lose the ability to recall skilled and experienced team members, while for the employees, termination will end access to benefits and the hope of resuming careers.

Extending the temporary layoff time limits to Aug. 31, 2020 would bring the province in alignment with federal initiatives including the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, as well as other provinces that have amended their temporary layoff time limits. Further extensions may be necessary as more businesses transition into reopening.

The current situation remains extremely challenging for business owners and their employees and if British Columbia's economy is going to recover from the pandemic, all reasonable measures must be taken to ensure support systems are in place. A ministerial order extending the temporary layoff period would provide employers and employees with certainty.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Krystin Kempton, President
Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

CC: John Horgan, Premier of B.C.
Eric Foster, Vernon-Monashee MLA
Andrew Wilkinson, Leader of the Official Opposition
Adam Olsen, BC Green Party Interim Leader
Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
Retail Council of Canada
BC Restaurant and Foodservices Association
BC Hotel Association
BC Alliance for Manufacturing
Canadian Chamber of Commerce
BC Chamber of Commerce
UDI Okanagan
Kevin Poole, Vernon Economic Development Officer
BC Federation of Labour