

## **Summary**

Some would say that the COVID-19 pandemic is the largest crisis the global community has seen in the past 100-years. It has shown no bias to humankind and reminds us of how fragile we are despite our technological advances in every sector of our life.

A lifestyle that we once knew has changed, impacting the smallest of communities within British Columbia, and as we are challenged to work towards a new economy, we must recognize the differences among regions and sectors.

The Resource Municipalities Coalition recognizes the importance of working together to build and maintain the physical and social infrastructure required to improve the quality of life for British Columbians by developing a sustainable future, therefore the Coalition supports this government initiative to get people back to work while safeguarding our livelihoods - encourages government to look ahead and invest in building an economy that is ready for tomorrow.

While a restart of back to work is important to our economy, the how is equally as important, it must be from the basic premise that no matter the sector, leaders must institute health and behavioral protocols to maintain physical distancing and prevent a resurgence of the pandemic – *getting people back to work as quickly and safely as possible*.

As the province looks to building BC's recovery and addresses gaps exposed in the economy and society, government must also recognize and act on the differences among regions and sectors throughout the province – recognizing the benefits of one region or sector to another, now and in the future. The province must lead by developing opportunity that is diverse and forward thinking, reflective of the many strong economic drivers of this province. It is not a time for a one-size-fits-all approach but rather, to recognize the differences between rural and urban lifestyles and work forces, recognizing the supports between the rural and urban communities, and recognizing that each sector supports the other, forming an economic link between rural and urban communities.

## **Putting Value into Recovery**

The Resource Municipalities Coalition provides comment and recommendations on priorities that the province has identified as building blocks to a stronger BC.

## **Strengthening our Health Care System**

The impact of the pandemic to our health care system is unprecedented and is providing insight to gaps that must be addressed. The foremost concern must be for those that are bringing us through an event that has either had little or no impact too some; or has paralyzed others. Our health care system is seen by many as an absolute, it will always be there and support us in our greatest moment of need, and for the most part it has. However, the frontline workers of these institutions have been exposed to stress never experienced before in their careers – from not knowing what was coming through the door.

- We must address the support systems required to manage mental health concerns that have arisen or are about to. As important as PPE, the support network and temperature of health care workers are valuable to our social network. Providing the support networks so they too, can receive the level of health care they deliver.
- Long-term care facilities, assisted living and independent living facilities have been especially challenged from the onset of the pandemic and effective policy must be struck, to ensure adequate staffing and limiting movement of healthcare workers between multiple sites are key to helping prevent further spread of COVID-19 or other infectious diseases.

As with all segments of the health care sector, access to social support, equipment, PPE and appropriate levels of staffing will ensure the BC health care system is ready for future threats and ensure that British Columbian's will have access to the care they need.

### **Creating and Restoring**

There are great opportunities to increase employment within the province of British Columbia and government needs to ensure that the proportion of low-quality jobs does not overrun the availability of high-quality jobs.

In the last decade we have seen low-quality jobs exceed the high-quality jobs by as much as 60%, leaving families struggling to afford necessities of life. Entry level and what are commonly referred to as low-quality jobs are essential in the development and growth of our economy and are often the frontline staff that meet the consumers everyday needs; the challenge is that these are often low-wage, low-hour positions that cannot sustain a family or even a single person.

- The province, recognizing the need for these positions must work with business to improve low-quality jobs. Whether through incentives or changes within the employment act, government must support both business and employees to ensure sustainability for both.
- Developing programs that support the transition of low-quality jobs to high-quality jobs becomes another element in achieving good-paying and sustainable jobs. British Columbia is a province with a wealth of opportunity for such a transition by utilizing its resource sectors. The resource sector remains one of the few remaining sectors that youth can enter the workforce and learn transferable skills that provide them with the opportunities to engage in high-quality jobs.

Through the development of equal opportunities for geographically remote communities through actively supporting quality education and social services, will attract the skills needed and provide skill development to occur without leaving the rural communities.

## **Becoming More Self-Sufficient**

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented several deficiencies within our ability to meet consumer demand both from a perspective of essential materials and supplies to everyday consumer needs. The ability to ensure all British Columbians have access to fundamental basics such as food, medical services, and personal safety and hygiene products must be foremost in self-sufficiency development which then in turn will ensure a prosperous and sustainable economy.

### Food Security

- Agriculture is changing and addressing the constraints on access to land or water is becoming increasingly critical as population growth projections for British Columbia are between .7% and 1.2% between 2019 and 2041.
- Expand on British Columbia's ability to produce high-quality, safe, nutritious agriculture products to British Columbians by improving access to fruits and vegetables, dairy, livestock, poultry, and seafood grown or raise within BC. This can be done supporting the development of urban agriculture, encourage private sector to use locally sourced food products, implement food rescue programs, encourage bee friendly communities, and develop education programs that support awareness and health impacts to communities.

### Medical Services

- Vulnerable persons of British Columbia have been denied access to services due to the impacts of the pandemic, putting British Columbians at risk due to dependencies on social service networks that were not available. The impacts of the pandemic, unprecedented as they may have been, should not shut down an entire medical support network for those that are dependent upon it. Effective health care is considered an absolute and must remain so, despite outside influences.
- Screening programs that support British Columbians general health and well-being should never be cancelled. Mitigation of crisis impacts requires constant oversight management allowing for British Columbians to be able to access screening programs.

### Personal Safety and Hygiene Products

- The ability of British Columbian business to adapt and respond to the crisis are applauded and government should support and encourage this diversity of all businesses that are capable of re-tooling their day-to-day operations for crisis situations.

- Government support of health services preparedness for medical emergencies must be at the same level of response as any other sector within the province. Understanding that the magnitude is significant, it would support robust social services that British Columbians have come to depend on.

### **Improving Education**

Improving education is a combination of the environment and curriculum, rather than only the curriculum. As the pandemic has impacted the bastilles of education – leaving but a remanence of what we once embraced, we have been forced to accept that all will not be as it was.

- Called upon by many over the years, addressing overcrowding, the environment, has come to the forefront as schools struggle to find suitable arrangements to accommodate ever increasing class sizes. Class sizes that were already impairing the ability of schools to deliver students ready and able to reach their goals.

Government must recognize that the challenge of recovery is much dependent on how it positions the province for future economic growth, with our education system being the foundation of this opportunity.

- Making funding of the education system through infrastructure, teachers and programs will support student opportunities to succeed and strengthen the provinces long-term economic sustainability.

The mere act of building new schools, only to curb the negative impacts of the environment - classroom overcrowding, will alone not build an education system.

- Support for growth and development of teachers, instructors, and everyone that works with our future leaders and innovators must be strong, aggressive, and effective to ensure sustainable economic growth of our communities, our province.

### **Taking Advantage of BC's Abundant Clean Energy**

The province of British Columbia is rich with resources that produce clean energy; clean energy that is marketable to a global economy, a clean energy that is supported by the natural resource sectors of the province.

*Energy - makes everything we do possible and is the basic requirement of our standard of living.*

Clean energy or renewable energy opportunities are promoted as creating more jobs, delivering higher short-term economic returns, and delivering long-term cost savings; however, government investment must consider the entire energy sector.

- Government must recognize the need for non-renewable resources that support the development and maintenance of the renewable sector. Whether the resource contributes to the

production of energy, is a component of an energy source, or a result of energy, non-renewables will have a role to play.

- As the province advances initiatives like CleanBC, it must promote the relationship between these resources and the specific role they play in the development of energy within our province and equally their contribution to consumer demand. Clean energy is derived in part by the utilization of non-renewable resources to construct and advance longevity of these opportunities.
- As we recognize and educate the need for both renewable and non-renewable resources to co-exist as part of a progressive transition plan, government is encouraged to take a holistic view and not dismiss the value of all resources to a carbon-neutral economy – our resources are our strength.
- Additionally, the Coalition encourages government to consider an often-overlooked aspect that contributes to a carbon-neutral economy, energy efficiency - must be incorporated within the measures and metrics by which the province promotes our successes in the transition. The use of less energy is equally as important as carbon-neutral energy and can easily be supported through policy, subsidies, and ease of access to programs and/or materials.

### **Moving Forward on Meaningful Reconciliation**

Connecting with our community partners is paramount in ensuring sustainable economic growth and development of our unknown future ahead. The British Columbia economy is about all British Columbians and the value that each member of our community brings in connecting, advancing, and securing a sustainable future.

The Coalition municipalities pride themselves in the positive and progressive relationships that they have developed with their neighbors and recognize the benefits that one community has with the other. As a province we must recognize that Indigenous engagement, capacity, and economic development is key to the province's recovery.

### **Building the Critical Infrastructure**

Infrastructure is the basis of economic development and growth; it is also a contributor to approximately one quarter of our carbon emissions; reliable and relevant infrastructure is needed to connect supply chains and effectively move goods and services across borders. Infrastructure connects households to high quality opportunities for employment, healthcare, and education. Infrastructure is the binding agent of the economy's success.

- The provincial investment needs to be aggressive, strategic, and forwardly motivated. Stimulus contribution must be contributing to a sustainable economy by encouraging and securing investor confidence in the province's future. While infrastructure is stereotyped as being roads, bridges

and water and sewer opportunities, infrastructure must also encompass the foundations of our social services like healthcare, education, and community.

- By addressing Infrastructure shortfalls throughout the province, government can build the foundations of the province's new economy while incorporating opportunities to advance net-zero energy ready buildings in the development of new school and healthcare infrastructure.
- Provincial support for making British Columbia's transportation cleaner requires safe and effective transportation networks throughout the province to support the economy. Therefore, government must consider the construction of roadways, highways, and bridges with a more carbon neutral approach through increased recycling of steel, asphalt and aggregates, enhanced use of alternate binders in concrete and the use alternative fuels in equipment.

### **Ensuring that BC is on Strong Fiscal Footing**

While the province looks to develop strategies that ensure a strong fiscal footing for the province; the province must take advantage of this once-in-a-generation investment opportunity - it is critical that the province invests in building an economy relevant and ready for tomorrow.

The development of policy and the mechanisms to support policy must come together as one and should be a collaboration of government, community, and industry, ensuring that the development of policy, mitigates adverse impacts to ecosystems, monitor cumulative impacts to a healthy natural environment, ensure citizens receive effective social services that improve quality of life and build a sustainable future are considered.



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