

Dear Community Member,

Since the beginning of the pandemic here in British Columbia, our provincial government has been listening to people to find out what they need. While COVID-19 has touched all of our lives in some way or another, we know that the impacts have been varied across our community, and we have all been facing different struggles. That's why it's more important than ever that we have a government that takes the time to listen and understand the experiences of people in our province.

Minimum Wage UP

This past week, B.C.'s general [minimum wage increased](#) 5.4% to \$14.60 an hour. This is one more step on our path to a minimum wage of at least \$15, expected to be in place by 2021. This increase will support many essential workers on the frontlines during COVID-19, because retail, food service, and accommodation workers make up 93% of those earning minimum wage in our province.

Small Business Protection from Eviction

After listening to the concerns of many business owners, the provincial government announced that [more businesses would be protected from eviction](#) during the pandemic. Over the past few weeks we heard that many businesses were eligible for the federal government's Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program (CECRA) but were frustrated because their landlords refused to apply. This week's announcement means that businesses that are eligible for CECRA cannot be evicted, giving their landlords more incentive to apply for the federal rent assistance program.

Funding for business innovation

An additional resource for innovators, ICET – Island Coastal Economic Trust announced a program for a small capital grant of up to \$15,000. This is meant for time-sensitive initiatives that support immediate, short-term COVID-related business and industry restart, resilience and sustainability. This is an opportunity for small businesses facing closures and operational restrictions to get some help. Full info can be found here: <http://www.islandcoastaltrust.ca/program-guidelines>

Speaking out against racism

I also want to acknowledge that this week has been a difficult one for many in our community, including Black, Asian, Indigenous people, and other people of colour, their allies, and all of us working for racial justice. The protests across the US and Canada have been timely reminders that here in BC we still have a lot of work to do to eradicate racism from our communities and our justice system. By listening to and taking our lead from Indigenous people and people of colour, we can build a more just future for everyone. Take a moment to oppose racism and take the #differentTogether pledge. Find the info here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/cerb-application.html#eligible>

Seniors Week

Finally, last week we celebrate Senior's Week and as Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors I hope that we all took time to reach out to the seniors in our lives in extended our gratitude. My message for Seniors Week can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbcVuyImBq8> and my joint statement with Premier Horgan can be found here: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PREM0029-000979>

As always, you can find more information about our government's COVID-19 response and Restart Plan at gov.bc.ca/COVID19. If you have any questions or need any assistance with provincial supports, please reach out. My office is currently open via phone and email to support you. You can reach us by phone at; 250.703.2410 or email at; Ronna-Rae.Leonard.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Sincerely,

Ronna-Rae Leonard

MLA Courtenay-Comox

COVID Resources:

- For medical info, visit bccdc.ca or call 811
- For provincial supports and BC's Restart Plan, visit gov.bc.ca/covid19 or call 1-888-COVID-19 (1-888-268-4319) or text 604-630-0300
- For employer guidelines on returning to work safely, visit WorkSafeBC
- Take the self-assessment at covid19.thrive.health
- For seniors looking for additional support, or for those looking to support seniors, call 2-1-1 or visit bc211.ca

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RonnaRaeLeonard/>

Instagram: @ronnaraeleonard

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYLQfuaKQV-itCluryo2hQg>

Website: <http://ronnaraeleonard.ca/>

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