

Dear Community Member,

COVID-19 continues to be a huge challenge to our province. As MLAs wrap up our second week back in the Legislature, we know that British Columbians are worried about their health, their homes, and their jobs.

Democracy in BC is unfolding with a unique hybrid sitting of the Legislature, a first in Canada. This week, I experienced chairing the virtual 2020/21 Budget Estimates. British Columbia should feel proud of the pioneering spirit of the Legislative Assembly staff and all MLAs working together to keep democracy alive and functioning.

Your economic recovery priorities - townhall

Even before COVID-19, our economy wasn't working for everyone. For 16 years, the previous government worked for people at the top and left everyone else behind. We can't go back to the problems of that past. In the telephone townhall that I did yesterday with the Minister of Agriculture, Lana Popham, we heard from you and the priorities that Vancouver Islanders believe the government should direct spending. 22% of people polled believe that making life more affordable should be top priority, 20% getting people back to work, 15% slowing COVID19, 14% tackling climate change, 12% improving health care, 10% supporting BC businesses, and 8% expanding education and training.

Great news for Seniors and those in Long term care

In my role as Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors, I was so pleased to join in the announcement of the opening of a new facility in Victoria – The Summit, a new Long Term and Dementia Care facility - which will have increased staffing levels and the number of direct care hours of 3.36 hours per day for each resident. As I said in that announcement, “for residents at The Summit, this means that they will receive more help with bathing, feeding and socializing opportunities”.

The British Columbia government is increasing staffing levels in residential care homes to make sure seniors are getting the quality care they need and deserve, Premier John Horgan announced. Premier Horgan said by investing \$240 million over three years, government will increase the direct care seniors receive to 3.36 hours per-resident day, on average, in each health authority, by 2021.

Further increasing the quality of life for seniors, last week our government was pleased to announce that loved ones will now be able to visit their family in Long Term Care facilities. One authorized visitor may visit their loved one in Long Term care which is welcome news for those who have been isolate. We have committed \$10-15 million per month, to hire additional staff to ensure a further reduction of the risk of visitors to our most vulnerable seniors in congregate care settings.

Economic Recovery, and Electric Vehicles

John Horgan and our BC NDP government are working to support economic, social, and environmental recovery – a recovery built around people and communities. That means supporting innovation in BC

and developing industries and jobs in all parts of the province that anticipate growing global demand for new, clean products and services. This week, the Premier announced new funding to support B.C. companies to develop new technologies for electric vehicles, so that we can continue building a low-carbon economy. Our government is providing \$4.18 million in new funding for the development of new technologies in the electric vehicle (EV) sector under the CleanBC Advanced Research and Commercialization (ARC) program.

Reforming the Police Act

This week we also struck an all-party Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act. Everyone deserves to be treated fairly in our province, but for many Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour, this hasn't always been the case. The committee will engage with communities and experts and recommend how our Police Act could be modernized to address systemic racism and to better meet today's needs with respect to mental health and harm reduction.

Accepting application for infrastructure funding to build stronger communities

The Province is now accepting applications from local governments, community groups and First Nations for nearly \$160 million in infrastructure grants to help strengthen communities throughout British Columbia. The funding targets projects ranging from recreation and cultural centres to drinking water and wastewater facilities.

Vancouver Island Music Fest – Virtual Concert

Though this year we won't be seeing Vancouver Island Music Fest in person we can join in this weekend for a special Facebook event put on by the festival. Find the event on [facebook](#): facebook.com/vimusicfest You may even see a cameo from yours truly.

And remember we want to hear your ideas on economic recovery. I encourage everyone to go to engage.gov.bc.ca/recoveryideas and take the survey to share your ideas.

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>

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