



February 25, 2022

Honourable Nicholas Simons
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Simons:

Thank you for agreeing to serve British Columbians as Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.

In this past year, as a member of Cabinet, your work has contributed to this government's efforts to support British Columbians as they face the impacts of COVID-19. People throughout the province continue to work together to stay safe and rebuild their lives and communities from the effects of the pandemic. Our government remains committed to getting through the pandemic and its after effects by building on this resilience and focusing on what matters most to people.

British Columbians voted for a government focused on their priorities: providing better health care for people and families, delivering affordability and security in our communities, and investing in good jobs and livelihoods in a clean-energy future.

I expect you –with support of your ministry – to focus on the commitments detailed in our platform, *Working for You*, along with the following foundational principles:

- **Putting people first:** Since 2017, our government has focused on making decisions to meet people's needs. That focus drove our work in our first term and will continue to be our priority. British Columbians are counting on the government to keep them safe and to build an economic recovery that works for everyone, not just those at the top. Keeping people at the centre of everything we do means protecting and enhancing the public services people rely on and working to make life more affordable for everyone.

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- **Lasting and meaningful reconciliation:** Reconciliation is an ongoing process and a shared responsibility for us all. The unanimous passage of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* was a significant step forward in this journey. True reconciliation will take time and ongoing commitment to work with Indigenous peoples as they move toward self-determination. Our government – and every ministry – must remain focused on creating opportunities for Indigenous peoples to be full partners in our economy and providing a clear and sustainable path for everyone to work toward lasting reconciliation.
- **Equity and anti-racism:** Our province's history, identity and strength are rooted in its diverse population. Yet racialized and marginalized people face historic and present-day barriers that limit their full participation in their communities, workplaces, government, and their lives. Our government has a moral and ethical responsibility to tackle systemic discrimination in all its forms – and every ministry has a role in this work. While our caucus elected a record number of women, more work remains to address gender equity. Delivering on our commitments to address racial discrimination will require a commitment by all of government to ensure increased IBPOC (Indigenous, Black and People of Colour) representation within the public service, including in government appointments. Our efforts to address systemic discrimination must also inform policy and budget decisions by reviewing all decisions through a Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens.
- **A better future through fighting climate change:** In 2018, our government launched our CleanBC climate action plan. CleanBC puts British Columbia on the path to a cleaner, better future by building a low-carbon economy with new clean-energy jobs and opportunities, protecting our air, land and water and supporting communities to prepare for climate impacts. It is every Minister's responsibility to ensure your ministry's work continues to achieve CleanBC's goals.
- **A strong, sustainable economy that works for everyone:** We will continue our work to support British Columbians through the pandemic and the economic recovery by investing in health care, getting people back to work, helping businesses and communities, and building the clean, innovative economy of the future. Our plan will train the workforce of tomorrow, help businesses hire and grow and invest in the infrastructure needed to build our province.

The pandemic has reminded us that we're strongest when we work together. Delivering on our commitments to people will require a coordinated effort with your cabinet and caucus colleagues, supported by the skilled professionals in the public service. You will also support your cabinet colleagues to do their work, particularly where commitments cross ministry lines.

British Columbians expect their elected representatives to work together to advance the broader public good despite their partisan perspectives. That means seeking out, fostering, and championing good ideas, regardless of their origin. I expect you to reach out to elected members from all parties as you deliver on your mandate. Further, you will build thoughtful and sustained relationships through public and stakeholder engagement plans that connect with people to incorporate their perspectives early in the policy development process. These plans must include measurable outcomes and ensure active dialogue and ongoing outreach in your ministry's actions and priorities.

Over the course of our mandate, I expect you will make progress on the following items:

- Continue to be responsive to the challenges presented by COVID-19 and work with your cabinet colleagues to support an inclusive economic recovery.
- Build on our government's Poverty Reduction Plan, TogetherBC, and the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Basic Income to determine the best approach and path forward to reducing poverty long-term and providing opportunities for jobs and skills training.
- Continue to work with people across the province to develop and introduce comprehensive accessibility legislation in Spring 2021 to open doors to opportunity and participation.
- With support from the Minister of Agriculture and Food, lead work to increase food security for people in need by expanding government support to food banks and developing program partnerships with food producers, grocery stores and not-for-profits to develop discounted food market, food recovery and food redistribution programs.
- Build on the work of so many around the province to make BC a global leader in the fight to end period poverty by creating a multi-sectoral Period Poverty Task Force to develop a comprehensive, long-term response to period poverty in BC.
- Continue work on the Re-Imagining Community Inclusion Initiative to improve services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Support the work of the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness, including those living in encampments.

To assist you in meeting the commitments we have made to British Columbians, you are assigned a Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility. You will work closely together and

ensure your Parliamentary Secretary receives appropriate support to deliver on the following priorities, outlined in the mandate letter issued to them:

- Engage with advocates, communities, and businesses to ensure the new accessibility legislation is effective and well-understood.
- Work with the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Housing to ensure the next iteration of the BC Building Code includes changes that will make new buildings more accessible for all people.

You are also assigned a Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-Profits. You will work closely together and ensure your Parliamentary Secretary receives appropriate support to deliver on the following priorities, outlined in the mandate letter issued to them:

- Build on efforts to date to ensure charitable organizations and the non-profit sector are engaged and supported through the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery.
- Continue to support and engage charitable organizations and the non-profit sector by acting as the advocate and key point of contact within government.
- Support the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's food security mandate by engaging with organizations across BC to support the development of vital partnerships and programs necessary to improve household food security.
- Advocate to the federal government for adoption and implementation of regulatory changes and funding programs announced in 2021 to enable non-profit organizations to better serve their communities.
- Share with the Ministry of Finance feedback and input heard from the co-operative sector on targeted improvements to support sector modernization
- Work with the Attorney General and minister responsible for Housing to help clarify obligations for non-profit organizations under the Lobbyist Transparency Act.

Our work as a government must continually evolve to meet the changing needs of people in this province. Issues not contemplated in this letter will come forward for government action and I ask you to bring such matters forward for consideration by the Planning and Priorities Committee of cabinet, with the expectation that any proposed initiatives will be subject to the usual cabinet and Treasury Board oversight. Your ministry's priorities must reflect our government's overall strategic plan as determined by cabinet.

All cabinet members are expected to review, understand and act according to the *Members' Conflict of Interest Act* and conduct themselves with the highest level of integrity. As a minister of the Crown, your conduct will reflect not only on you, but on cabinet and our government.

You are responsible for providing strong, professional, and ethical leadership within cabinet and your ministry. You will establish a collaborative working relationship with your deputy minister and the public servants under their direction who provide the professional, non-partisan advice that is fundamental to delivering on our government's priorities. You must ensure your minister's office meets the highest standards for integrity and provides a respectful and rewarding environment for all staff.

My commitment to all British Columbians is to do my level best to make sure people's lives are better, safer, and more affordable. I believe the challenges we face can and will be overcome by working together. By way of this letter, I am expressing my faith that people can expect the same commitment from you.

Sincerely,



John Horgan
Premier