



December 7, 2022

Honourable Andrew Mercier
Minister of State for Workforce Development
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Mercier:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as Minister of State for Workforce Development. I trust in your leadership at this critical time to deliver results for the people of British Columbia.

British Columbians continue to recover from and respond to the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate related natural disasters, while global inflation is driving up costs for more households and the world's economic outlook is concerning. Now more than ever, we need to focus on building a secure, low emission, sustainable economy, and a province where everyone can find a good home – whether you live in a rural area, in a city, or in an Indigenous community. We will continue working toward true and meaningful reconciliation by supporting opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to be full partners in the inclusive and sustainable province we are building together.

Our government is committed to delivering on the mandate British Columbians gave us in 2020. Together we can make life better for people in B.C., improve the services we all rely on, and ensure a sustainable province for future generations.

As we renew our work, my priority as Premier is to deliver results that people can see and feel in four key areas:

- **Attainable and affordable housing:** In the wake of soaring prices and record migration to B.C., we will take on the important work of building new homes that are actually attainable for the middle class, while continuing our work to address the housing crisis for those in distress on our streets.

.../2

- **Safer communities:** To address concerns about public safety, both for the people struggling with mental health and addiction on our streets, as well as the feeling that downtown centres are not as safe as they were before the pandemic, we will work with our partners at all levels of government, the justice and health care systems, the non-profit sector, and community leaders to find solutions for this complex challenge facing our province, and work overtime to seize the assets of high-level criminals.
- **Improved health care:** Amid unprecedented pressures we will continue to work to strengthen our public health care system, from family doctors to new hospitals, so care is there for each of us when we need it.
- **A sustainable, clean, secure, and fair economy:** We will continue our work investing in British Columbians, fighting racism and promoting equity, and building a clean economy that addresses our obligations to combat climate change by driving down emissions, while creating good, family supporting jobs.

Building a strong, secure, and sustainable economy that works for everyone means ensuring all British Columbians can put the skills they have worked hard to learn and master to work for their communities, families, and our province.

Too often, artificial barriers to working in their fields limit new immigrants from contributing right away to help build our province to the full extent of their abilities. Responding to this challenge will make people feel welcome in their new home province, build our economy, and attract more skilled workers from around the world. We will not succeed by leaving people behind or wasting their potential and ensuring new arrivals to British Columbia can put their training and abilities to work as quickly as possible is essential.

Ensuring that international students have a positive experience in British Columbia is important. Whether they choose to stay here and build a new life or return home to put the skills they learned here to work in their home community, the experiences of international students will inform their view of and relationship with British Columbia and Canada for their entire lives. Fair treatment and rapid response to issues and challenges are key to ensuring positive experiences and will help us build our international reputation and continue development of economic, cultural, and personal links with countries around the world.

Since 2020, our government has made considerable progress on important initiatives including:

- Prioritizing health and childcare workers via the Provincial Nominee Program.

- Introducing the new Associate Physician classification that will help more foreign trained doctors who do not meet the criteria for a full Canadian license to start working in the healthcare system faster.
- Providing new supports to make it easier and faster for internationally trained nurses to start work in B.C.

As we face labour shortages, we must make sure B.C. is a welcoming place for people who want to come here and contribute their talents, skills, and dedication to our communities. It has been a persistent challenge for newcomers to be able to contribute all of which they are capable. To take action on an important aspect of this critical issue, you will be the first Minister of State for Workforce Development and I expect you to prioritize making progress on the following:

- Work with the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to pass legislation related to the Office of the Superintendent for Professional Governance that will govern the recognition of foreign credential standards to quickly remove barriers and ensure that new international arrivals can find employment sooner in their field of training.
- Evaluate approaches taken in other jurisdictions and propose additional measures to advance a successful foreign credential recognition program.
- With support from the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, lead the expansion of clear, faster career paths for skilled immigrants.
- Work with the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to strengthen resources for the evaluation of skilled immigrants' credentials, including the Credential Assessment Improvement Fund.
- Engage with non-profit organizations, new arrivals, and community leaders to identify issues and barriers preventing internationally trained workers from working in their fields to the full extent of their abilities, and work with the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to develop programs, initiatives, and legislation to address those issues.
- Support the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills to ensure our government is able to respond quickly if private institutions promote or offer sub-standard education to international students, and develop protections for international students that support their fair treatment across the sector.
- Support the Minister of Municipal Affairs to improve the range of services and supports for new international arrivals.

Our work together must continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of people in this province. Issues not contemplated by 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 and include measurable outcomes for British Columbians. Your ministry's priorities must reflect our government's overall strategic plan as determined by Cabinet.

British Columbians expect their elected representatives to work together to advance the public good. 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 both with title holders and through public and stakeholder engagement plans that incorporate diverse perspectives early in the policy development process. Federal partnerships and resources will be particularly important and, on behalf of our government, you will engage with the federal government on advancing priorities to improve the lives of British Columbians.

As a Cabinet, we will uphold the highest standards of ethics, collaboration, and good conduct in service of the public, and as a Minister of the Crown, you are expected to review, understand, and act according to the *Members' Conflict of Interest Act*. 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. Your Minister's Office must meet the highest standards for integrity and provide a respectful, rewarding environment for all staff.

The rural and urban challenges that we face are urgent and complex. In response, we must be forward-thinking, strategic, and ready to work across disciplines and old divisions in new ways. Labour shortages are a major issue globally, and British Columbia is no exception, including in the public service. Maintaining the BC Public Service as an employer of excellence will be key to retaining and recruiting the diverse professionals we rely on to deliver essential services, advice, and analysis.

At the core of this work is listening and responding to the priorities of people in B.C. Together, we can deliver results in very real ways – ways that people can see, feel, and touch, and that change their lives for the better. Thank you for doing this important work with me.

Sincerely,



David Eby, KC
Premier