



February 17, 2021

Hon. Rob Fleming
Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
Room 124, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C.

Dear Minister Fleming,

Re: Needed relief for Wilson's Tofino Bus and Vancouver Island Connector

As the COVID-19 pandemic drags on, it is absolutely essential that government provides the appropriate relief to maintain vital services that are struggling due to the far-reaching impacts of the virus. A critical example of services needing support is Wilson's Tofino Bus and Vancouver Island Connector, which have operated throughout Vancouver Island for years, connecting communities that have no other transportation options.

Since March of last year, the motor coach industry in B.C. has seen a 95 per cent drop in gross revenues, and due to this decrease, many companies are having to make tough decisions about whether they will be able to operate in the future. Wilson's Transportation is one such company, recently announcing that without government support, it will be forced to permanently suspend its Tofino Bus and Vancouver Island Connector services.

The permanent suspension of these routes would have devastating implications for the communities that depend on these buses. Wilson's services are the only intercity bus routes on Vancouver Island, connecting 29 communities and 21 First Nations, from Victoria to Campbell River and out to Tofino and Ucluelet. In 2019, 82,500 riders used Wilson's intercity busing services for everything from tourism to daily commuting, trips to medical appointments and to buy groceries. For many people living on low incomes or in remote areas, these bus routes are some of the only ways to safely travel outside of their communities. Further demonstrating the importance of these intercity routes, a public petition calling on you to save this service has already amassed nearly 10,000 signatures.

You indicated last week that you are planning on putting together a support package for this transportation service, however after more than a week, we still have not seen any action on this matter. We have already passed February 12, the day that Wilson's had hoped to resume service, with no sign as to when they can expect relief. I urge you to provide support to this essential service as soon as possible and meet their request for one year of temporary financial relief to cover their operating costs.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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We've seen in the past, in the case of Greyhound Bus, the kind of gap that is left when private transportation companies operating in remote communities are forced to suspend their services. It's time for immediate government action to ensure that this service will be able to operate on Vancouver Island for years to come.

Sincerely,

Michael Lee
MLA, Vancouver-Langara
Official Opposition Critic for Transportation, Infrastructure and TransLink

CC: J. Wilson, Wilson's Transportation Ltd.
Shirley Bond, Leader of the Official Opposition, MLA, Prince George-Valemount