



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Honourable John Horgan, MLA
Premier of British Columbia
West Annex, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C.
V8V 2L8

April 7, 2021

Dear Premier Horgan,

We are writing today to ask again for you and your government to take immediate action to improve the transparency and reporting of COVID-19 data in British Columbia.

Over the past year, British Columbians have made countless sacrifices in the fight against COVID-19. From physical distancing, to changing normal routines, adhering to provincial health orders and, for many, putting their safety at risk working in frontline jobs, we have seen extraordinary effort from the people in this province to keep those around them safe, and it has not been easy.

After more than a year, we are seeing growing fatigue and frustration from British Columbians. People are scared for their families, anxious about their jobs and worried about the future. They are looking to government to provide them not only with confident and competent leadership, but also honesty and transparency around why certain decisions are made, and steps taken, while other measures are not pursued. In January we wrote a letter to the Minister of Health expressing our deep concern over the lack of transparency in data reporting, but since then, we have seen little improvement.

People need to know the data that is being used to make decisions so they can understand the steps they need to take in their own lives. In the absence of clear, accurate, and transparent data from government, fear grows and people turn elsewhere for information.

This is becoming increasingly serious as cases rise and variants of concern take hold in our province. A recent April 6, 2021, article in the Vancouver Sun reported that experts believe variant strains of the virus now make up more than 40 per cent of COVID-19 cases in B.C. — double what has been reported by your government. Such discrepancies between information being disclosed by government and those from independent experts only



serve to cause greater fear, confusion and mistrust.

In order to provide British Columbians with greater confidence and reassurance, especially while variants of concern are on the rise, we are calling on you and your government to immediately provide full transparency and timely release of data relating to COVID-19.

This should include:

- Detailed daily reporting of all active cases, including variant strains detected in schools that includes a breakdown of staff and students affected;
- The most recent data available on PCR screening for variant cases — including by age, location, and date of screening; and
- Provincial capacity for genome sequencing and any delays associated with this step.

Additionally, we need to see better reporting and collection of:

- Exposure settings data — location types and the rate that transmission is occurring;
- Detailed hospitalization demographic data;
- Detailed vaccination progress data based on geography, age group, and socioeconomic categories;
- Daily updates on the number of rapid tests delivered and administered in each health authority, by setting; and
- Race-based data, other socioeconomic data and cases among people with disabilities.

This data should not only be available to British Columbians in a regular timely manner, but it should also be distributed from a single, consolidated source to improve clarity and consistency across government agencies.

British Columbians want to be involved in the fight against COVID-19 and they want to do the right thing, but it is frustrating for many when they cannot see the reasoning behind decisions that so greatly impact their lives. The lack of transparency and honesty from your government is leaving people more confused than ever and is contributing to the rising levels of complacency that we are seeing across the province.

We urge your government to act immediately and improve transparency and reporting around COVID-19 data in our province, for the sake of all British Columbians.



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Sincerely,

Shirley Bond
Interim Leader of the Official Opposition
MLA, Prince George-Valemount

Renee Merrifield
Official Opposition Critic for Health
MLA, Kelowna Mission