



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Ref: 41932

April 9, 2021

Teresa Wat, MLA
Official Opposition Critic; Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport
Richmond North Centre
300–8120 Granville Avenue
Richmond, BC V6Y 1P3
Email: Teresa.Wat.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Dear Teresa Wat:

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on the people and businesses in the tourism and cruise industry in British Columbia (B.C.). As you are aware, Transport Canada has announced the suspension of the cruise ship season across Canada until February 28, 2022. These are tough decisions made by the Federal Government in the interest of protecting our community's health and wellbeing.

That is why our Government is laser-focused on supporting businesses and working collaboratively with the tourism sector. We are continuing to implement the recommendations from the Tourism Task Force report. My colleague, the Honourable Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation, and I continue to meet with businesses and industry associations daily to address their needs and add additional supports.

In regard to the effort from Alaska to bypass Canadian ports in their cruise season, I am disappointed by your approach. Allow me to address the facts on the situation. Firstly, the proposed legislation is a temporary measure while B.C. ports have been closed by the Federal Government. As soon it is safe to welcome visitors again and our ports are reopened, the proposed measure will be nullified. Second, officials from the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. indicate that the possibility of this legislation passing is very unlikely. While I appreciate your interest in B.C.'s cruise industry, of course we want our ports to continue to be magnets for international travellers once the pandemic is over. I am concerned that you are creating fear in an already struggling industry that is not warranted nor factually based.

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I want to assure you that in response to the letter from the Alaskan Congressional delegation, Canadian federal leaders and Canadian Ambassadors have met with Biden Administration officials expressing concerns on behalf on Canada regarding the proposal. In addition, our Government's Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat has and will continue to engage on the issue, and has future meetings planned. Further, I will continue to raise this issue with my federal counterparts, in particular, in my upcoming bilateral with The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development.

Tourism is critical to B.C.'s economic recovery which is why we are relentless in our advocacy with the Federal Government to support the industry and all those who depend on it. I, and my government colleagues, will also continue to work with our partners in the tourism sector—including the cruise industry—to ensure we are ready to welcome cruise visitors again when it is safe to do so.

B.C. is a world class destination and will continue to be a favourite spot for cruises when the borders reopen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melanie Mark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melanie Mark
Hli Haykwhl Wii Xsgaak
Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport

pc: Honourable Ravi Kahlon
Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation