

April 15, 2020

Right Honourable Justin P. J. Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0G2

Submitted Via Email: pm@pm.gc.ca

Honourable John Horgan
Premier of British Columbia
West Annex Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia V8V 1X4

Submitted Via Email: premier@gov.bc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Horgan:

Re: COVID-19 Recovery – Infrastructure Stimulus Spending

As leaders of the major construction and engineering associations in British Columbia, we want to express our appreciation for efforts the Governments of Canada and British Columbia have taken to date to respond to the unprecedented challenges facing individuals and businesses in our province as they cope with the health and economic fall-out from the COVID-19 epidemic.

BC's construction industry has benefited from recent initiatives enacted by both levels of government which are helping firms and individuals survive during this unprecedented crisis. The efforts of both governments to provide temporary financial support to keep as many individuals and businesses solvent as possible is critically important. At the same time, essential service designations provided for the construction sector -- subject to stringent Provincial Health Officer guidelines -- has provided the opportunity for contractors to remain open and thousands of men and women in construction to work safely.

As we all look ahead to the prospect of economic recovery, we encourage your governments to lay the foundation now for stimulus spending based on joint national, provincial, and local infrastructure priorities in British Columbia.

To begin this process, we encourage your officials – in concert with municipalities where applicable – to identify “shovel-ready” infrastructure projects which can be tendered as soon as possible. We also encourage you to have senior officials within both governments work together to identify those projects for stimulus funding which require additional work; that is, those projects which require additional permitting, regulatory approvals, and Indigenous consultation and/or accommodation.

Our organizations – representing the entire British Columbia construction industry – stand ready, willing, and able to work with both the federal and BC governments to advance infrastructure projects that are currently “shovel ready” and to contribute to the identification and readiness of other prospective projects. Many – though not all – of these joint federal-BC infrastructure priorities are within areas where British Columbia serves a lynchpin role in facilitating two-way trade with Asia (e.g. Pacific Coast Ports, interprovincially connected road infrastructure, and the Vancouver International Airport hub).

As both governments assess priorities, we also suggest project planning efforts address the following key considerations:

- Focus initially on getting as many smaller projects in the \$5 million to \$50 million range as possible identified and out to tender. Projects of this size and scope are important for construction contractors in every community in British Columbia. Leading candidates include: local roads, bridges and highway improvements; municipal infrastructure; new schools and additions to post-secondary institutions; healthcare; and, Indigenous Nation infrastructure (among others);
- Identify projects that may be idled during the current COVID-19 crisis for reasons of cashflow or other operational considerations. For example, we understand a number of projects at Vancouver International Airport (YVR) have ceased due to dramatic declines in airport authority revenues. In this and similar circumstances, we encourage both the federal and provincial governments to provide financial “backstopping” on a temporary basis to allow construction to restart immediately and for new projects in the tender pipeline to proceed without delay; and,
- Prioritize larger infrastructure projects which address national, provincial and local infrastructure ‘gaps’ and ‘deficits’, create significant family-supporting employment, and enable long-term productivity improvements in the national and provincial interest. Leading examples include Pacific Gateway, rapid transit and highway infrastructure.

BC’s construction sector leaders are working closely together to address the many recent challenges presented by COVID-19. This includes a concerted focus on keeping our sector as safe and resilient as possible during the current crisis, keeping in contact through daily meetings to synchronize efforts and share best practices and, now, helping to shape the ‘road to recovery’.

We would be pleased to discuss these matters further with you or your officials.

Thank you again for both of your governments’ ongoing efforts to lead Canadians through the current unprecedented crisis. Working together we will overcome the fallout from COVID-19, and build a stronger, more resilient, and productive Canadian and British Columbia economy.

Sincerely,



Chris Gardner
President



Fiona Famulak
President



Chris Atchison
President



Kelly Scott
President



Ken McCormack
President & CEO



Paul de Jong
President



Anne McMullin
President & CEO



Caroline Andrewes
President & CEO



Dave Baspaly
President & CEO



Deborah Cahill
President



Dale Miller
President



Russell Davidson
President



Bryan Wallner
CEO



Scott Wild
CEO



Rory Kulmala
CEO



Scott Bone
CEO

CC:

Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government of Canada

Honourable Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance, Government of Canada

Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Government of Canada

Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Government of Canada

Honourable Marc Garneau, Minister of Transport, Government of Canada

Honourable Carole James, Minister of Finance, Government of British Columbia

Honourable Claire Trevena, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, Government of British Columbia

Honourable Michelle Mungall, Minister of Jobs, Economic Development, and Competitiveness, Government of British Columbia