



ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTING
ENGINEERING COMPANIES
BRITISH COLUMBIA

July 20, 2020

Honourable John Horgan

Premier, British Columbia

Honourable Carole James

Minister of Finance, Deputy Premier

Via Email: recoveryideas@gov.bc.ca, Premier@gov.bc.ca, FIN.minister@gov.bc.ca

Re: COVID-19 Recovery – Building BC’s Recovery, Together

Dear Premier and Minister –

The Association of Consulting Engineering Companies British Columbia (ACEC-BC) represent 80 consulting engineering firms who collectively employ more than 9,500 British Columbians in communities across the province. Our members work in all sectors, regions, and in job sites ranging from remote wilderness to high technology laboratory facilities and all manners of construction. Since 1976, ACEC-BC has been the voice of consulting engineering companies in BC.

As providers of essential services, our members’ work directly contributes to the preservation of life, health, public safety, and basic societal function. During the COVID-19 state of emergency, member firms worked together with their colleagues in construction, natural resources, and infrastructure management to prioritize the safety, health, and welfare of the public. Our members continue to work to ensure the health and wellness of their team members at home, in the office, on construction sites, in the field, and to ensure our industry remains resilient through the crisis and as our economy recovers.

We greatly appreciate your government’s efforts to support British Columbians during this unprecedented crisis and further, to engage with us as we plan for recovery. With respect, our member firms support deployment of resources based on five principles:

- 1. Providing all residents with access to basic needs**
- 2. Developing community resilience strategies**
- 3. Creating active transportation connections and promoting healthy lifestyles**
- 4. Educating our future skilled workers**
- 5. Making choices that align with other sources of investment**

Our recommended approach is that the government consider modest investment that is meaningful, lasting, and will benefit the resilience of the people and infrastructure of British Columbia. Further, all recommendations offer the opportunity to access funds through other public funding sources thereby increasing the impact of the province’s investment.

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Providing all residents with access to basic needs:

Consulting engineering firms work with municipalities, regional districts, and First Nations across the province to design, construct, and maintain services that support the health and welfare of residents. While most of us enjoy ready access to clean drinking water, many residents of British Columbia – and especially residents in remote and indigenous communities – continue to live under boil water (BWA) and do not use (DNU) advisories.

Innovations in small scale water treatment like the RES'EAU-WaterNET project in the Tl'azt'en Nation give us the opportunity to implement solutions that support the basic needs of residents in every community. ***We strongly encourage the government to consider investment in water treatment for those communities who continue to experience the hardships of lack of access to safe drinking water.***

Developing community resilience strategies

There is much to be said about the personal resilience of residents across the province in the face of an unprecedented crisis. While we celebrate our collective efforts to manage COVID-19, we must not overlook the fact that our province annually deals with devastating loss resulting from natural hazards, climate change, and all other manners of social and economic risk.

ACEC-BC members welcomed the opportunity to respond to the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General's public engagement on Emergency Program Act Modernization in January. ***We urge the Minister to proceed with Act changes that support a proactive risk management approach informed by the four risk reduction pillars: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.***

As we consider sustainable economic growth, we believe there is value in expanding our risk planning perspective beyond emergency management to incorporate the principles of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). A DRR approach will reinforce provincial resilience across the four environments: social, built, economic, and natural. Baseline resilience assessments and vulnerability and exposure assessments would compliment the emergency management practices modernization already in progress. The outcome – community resilience strategies – are a valuable and enduring legacy that will benefit communities across the province for generations, while aiding communities in the difficult task of allocating scarce economic resources. ***We recommend the government consider the modest investment needed to support development of community resilience plans across the province.***

Creating active transportation connections and promoting healthy lifestyles

ACEC-BC members have been directly engaged in development and implementation of the government's Active Transportation Design Guide as well as design and construction of BC's active transportation network. We welcome the recently announced investment in active transportation projects across BC and continued engagement between the government and community plans that integrate active modes of travel.

Continued investment in active transport corridors for commuting support goals to reduce vehicle road traffic by increasing efficiency and user confidence as they move between home, work, school, and



services. Investment in hiking and mountain biking trails support community, healthy lifestyle choices, and a relationship with the natural environment. Additionally, managed and maintained recreational trail networks help minimize impact on the natural environment including erosion, interaction with sensitive ecosystems, and minimize hazards like rockfall and flooding.

We encourage continued and sustained investment in active transportation infrastructure including mapping and management programs that are integral to the development and management of recreational trails.

Educating our future skilled workers

A significant outcome of the COVID-19 emergency is the rapid proliferation of virtual learning tools and the opportunities that come with embracing technology. We welcome this development which offers life-changing, equitable access to education for all residents of British Columbia. ***To ensure residents across the province benefit from innovation in education, investment in widescale broadband access must be considered.***

While we consider the implications of virtual learning, it is important to remember the need to sustain our investment in the creation of post-secondary spaces for students pursuing education in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Our industry employs a large share of the graduates of these programs annually. As we look ahead, we continue to see high demand for a pipeline of talented STEM graduates from British Columbia's advanced education providers. ***We encourage the government to invest in the future by increasing the number of student spaces in STEM programs across the province.***

Making choices that align with other sources of investment

While we consider this significant investment in building BC's recovery, we encourage the government to consider making strategic choices that align with other available sources of public infrastructure investment. We see good alignment between the policy considerations of the BC government and the Government of Canada and other funding agencies, especially with respect to equity, reconciliation, climate change, and rural and remote community development. ***Insofar as possible, developing a plan that provides the potential to access other sources of public funding is prudent and better supports residents of BC.***

In addition to large project funding through Infrastructure Canada and the Canada Infrastructure Bank, funding is broadly available for smaller projects and municipalities through various regional trusts and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Much of the available sources of small project funding are aimed at local agencies to support project development and management, which has been challenging during the pandemic as local government revenues from taxes and fees are deferred or lost.



We are here to help:

As a trusted partner to government, we make these recommendations based on our Association values – community, equity, and innovation – and our commitment to principles of reconciliation and environmental stewardship. We believe these investments will support safe and healthy communities and will have broad, positive, and lasting economic impact across British Columbia.

On behalf of the members of the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies British Columbia (ACEC-BC), I wish to reinforce our commitment to working with government as we navigate significant societal change impacting people across British Columbia.

We welcome this opportunity to provide thoughtful advice and perspective to government and encourage your government to seek our assistance in Building BC's Recovery, Together.

Kind regards,

Selena Wilson, P.Eng
Chair, ACEC-BC

Caroline Andrewes, P.Eng, CPA, CMA
President & CEO

CC:

ACEC-BC Members,
Minister of Advanced Education, Skills & Training,
Minister of Citizens' Services,
Minister of Education,
Minister of Environment & Climate Change Strategies
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development,
Minister of Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation
Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness,
Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing,
Minister of Public Safety & Solicitor General & Emergency BC,
Minister of Transportation & Infrastructure,
Leader of the Official Opposition