



March 15, 2021

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President
Chief Don Thom, Vice-President
Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer

Reference: 297524

Union of BC Indian Chiefs
312 Main Street, Suite 401
Vancouver BC V6A 2T2

Dear Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Chief Don Thom and Kukpi7 Judy Wilson:

Re: Public Transportation

Premier John Horgan shared with me your letter of November 26, 2020, supporting improved public transit and intercity bus services in B.C. I appreciated the opportunity to review your comments and apologize for the delay in my response.

Our government recognizes the importance of safe, affordable and accessible transportation options, particularly in rural and remote areas. That is why, following Greyhound's announcement in May 2018 that they intended to end services in Northern B.C. at the end of that month, the ministry quickly established BC Bus North. BC Bus North began providing services almost immediately after Greyhound's departure, ensuring a basic level of service to communities that would have otherwise been left without any intercity bus connections. Four buses are currently providing service on four different routes, reaching as far as Prince Rupert and Valemount, and covering most of Greyhound's abandoned routes in the North.

When Greyhound announced in July 2018 that it would fully withdraw passenger and freight inter-city services from Western Canada, the ministry worked with the Passenger Transportation Board (PTB) to implement a fast-tracked application process to help private operators take over routes with minimal disruption. By the time Greyhound left B.C. at the end of October 2018, over 83 per cent of its routes had been covered by private operators. The PTB continues to receive applications from private operators for new intercity bus routes, which will expand the network.

I know this is a difficult time, both financially and operationally, for motor coach operators. I also recognize the importance of these transportation services to remote communities and residents.

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On March 9, 2021, the provincial government announced one-time relief funding of up to \$10.7 million for intercity bus operators. This funding will help these vital services stay open and prepare for the strong recovery we expect once B.C.'s COVID-19 vaccination efforts let us all travel more freely. You can read more about this funding and other measures we are taking to protect access to essential transportation in our [news release](#).

Since the start of the pandemic, our government has taken steps to minimize the impacts of COVID-19 on the motor coach industry and has worked with the federal government to provide other relief for affected businesses. Some of these measures include licensing renewal deferrals, temporary insurance suspensions, the provincial Small and Medium Sized Business Recovery Grant Program and the Canadian Emergency Business Account and Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. The pandemic has presented B.C. with many challenges over the past year, but by working together we are going to build back stronger than ever.

The ministry, through BC Transit, proudly supports transit service in 130 communities in B.C., some with as few as 5,000 residents, making B.C. a leader in the country in the delivery of transit service. BC Transit works with 58 local governments and operates more than 15 regional transit services throughout the province, connecting rural communities to larger regional centres, such as the service between Penticton and Kelowna. BC Transit also provides the regional service along Highway 16 that you mention, which connects several remote First Nation communities to Terrace, Smithers and Burns Lake. The insights gained through the operation of the Highway 16 service will be useful as the ministry and BC Transit continue to work to identify new opportunities to introduce regional transit services in the province.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the ministry's Executive Director, Transit Branch, Andrea Mercer. She can be reached at 778 974-4992 or at Andrea.Mercer@gov.bc.ca and would be pleased to help you.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,



Rob Fleming
Minister

Copy to: Premier John Horgan

Andrea Mercer, Executive Director
Transit Branch