

June 19, 2020

Premier John Horgan
Province of British Columbia

Hon Lisa Beare
Minister of Tourism, Arts & Culture

Dear Premier Horgan and Minister Beare:

Re: Moving the British Columbia Hockey League to Phase Three of the Restart Plan

The BC Chamber remains aligned with the approach your government has taken to restart the BC economy in a way that ensures the safety of our populace while also providing a clear path for the tens of thousands of businesses who have respected and followed the advice of Dr. Henry.

As we now enter the third phase of the restart plan, we would like to ask your government to reconsider the current breakdown of businesses that are included in both Phase Three and Phase Four.

In particular, some of our member communities are concerned about the use of the word 'professional' when it comes to sports. Within that designate, it is our understanding that amateur and developing sports programs are included along with the more widely known professional sporting teams (ie: The Canucks, the Lions, and the Whitecaps). It has been brought to our attention through some of our member communities that the British Columbia Hockey League (BCHL) is included along with the other professional teams/leagues.

We recognize that Dr. Henry is setting the stage to permit the professional teams (and by that permission the BCHL, too) to potentially begin some level of operations. But the BC Chamber would like to flag a vital consideration here as the province continues to iterate on the restart path: *Not all leagues will have the same chances of success (and survival) on our current reopen and recovery curve.* **Accordingly, we would like to urge the province to consider uncoupling amateur sporting leagues from professional leagues and consider moving the former to Phase Three.**

Using the Canucks as the "professional" counterexample, it is safe to say that they and the NHL itself will survive this disruption. They have the support of large corporations and television contracts that will provide the cash-flows necessary to stay afloat, even without a live audience. The BCHL, however, which currently operates in 17 communities around BC, does not have these same fiscal advantages and without some level of fan support, many of these local teams will be unlikely to survive. By including the BCHL in Phase Four we might cause unintentional (but significant) harm to the league and, with that, the goals and dreams of hundreds of young athletes. We should point out that the players in these BCHL communities are very active in the schools and with



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many local societies as volunteers. Losing a BCHL team will not only darken arenas, it will darken entire communities.

The BCHL is not a professional league nor should it be considered as such. In fact, when one looks at the businesses and organizations included in phase three, a cogent argument can be made to include this league and others like it (along with groups such as symphonies) in the same phase.

Some of our members have consulted with the ownership groups in the BCHL and are satisfied with the teams' suggested approach to a safe restart. They are taking the safety of their players, referees, support staff and fans seriously. Some of the new operating protocols include equipment upgrades, basic rule changes, and acceptance that full audience capacities within their arenas may not be part of the plan for 2020.

We hope you will consider this request, because we know in many communities around BC these team are not only phenomenal economic drivers, *but they add greatly to the vibrancy of their local communities.*

Sincerely,

Val Litwin
President & CEO
BC Chamber of Commerce

