

# BARB LAWRIE CONSULTING

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**August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

Premier John Horgan and  
Minister of Environment & Climate Change Strategy George Heyman  
PO Box 9041 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC  
V8W 9E1

Dear Premier John Horgan and  
Minister of Environment & Climate Change Strategy George Heyman

I am writing to support the concept of the Government requiring PSOs to measure and report on the carbon emission burden associated with employee commuting, and to make best efforts to reduce that burden. I have recently retired and now have a management consultant practice, primarily focusing on the health sector. For the last five years I was the Vice President of Professional Practice and Chief Clinical Information Officer at Vancouver Coastal Health. Prior to that position I was an Executive Director within Employee Engagement, the Human Resources department of VCH. I am also an Adjunct Professor at the University of British Columbia in the School of Nursing.

I have reviewed the research on Commute Trip Reduction conducted by Bruce Batchelor and his colleagues, and the draft report prepared by the Environmental Law Centre at University of Victoria. My professional experience agrees with the research findings that:

- shorter commutes can contribute to higher productivity, fewer mistakes/accidents, increased retention, higher morale, easier recruiting, better mental & physical health including reduced stress, reduced personal cost for commuting and improved work/life balance
- unnecessarily long commutes contribute to significant public health and climate harm, and methods exist to reduce this harm
- reducing and greening commutes should reduce a health authority's costs associated with recruiting, retention, absenteeism, parking spaces and parking facilities, and other costs

I have concluded that what is being proposed makes infinite sense and will have positive outcomes for employers, employees, society and the environment. During my tenure with VCH, VCH has undertaken a number projects (such as adding bike showers storage facilities, reduced rates on BC Transit, and portability of employment within the collective agreements) that have improved commuting choices for some staff. However, for the full-on effort that is necessary in the climate change crisis, I believe that all organizations need to be **required** to act.

Because of the complex structure of health authority authorities introducing the kind of change that is required to both have the environmental impact required and increase quality of work life for British Columbia citizens, the change must first happen at the Policy level. Normally changes to Policy papers is a multi-year process, yet there is urgency to act for the climate, health and fiscal reasons cited above. Therefore, a Regulation by Government for PSOs is necessary and appropriate.

Given the pandemic, prompt Government action is advised. Health workers have been under increased workloads and mental stress, and their heightened workloads may be in effect for another year or more. Initiating efforts to allow people to improve their commutes would be a kind, respectful (overdue) action to take for these and other valued front-line workers. The pandemic has also shown us how successful working from home or remotely can be for both staff and for patients accessing virtual visits etc. We have an opportunity in front of us to carry on the work already started as a result of COVID.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by Barb Lawrie*  
Barb Lawrie RN, BSCN, MSN