

July 23, 2020

Honourable Harry Bains
Minister of Labour
Government of British Columbia
Room 342
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Delivered by email: harry.bains@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Bains,

Re: Bill 23, Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2020 – Business Community Response

The Vancouver Regional Construction Association (VRCA) is the largest regional construction association in British Columbia with a rich history spanning more than 90 years. It serves more than 700 general and trade contractors, manufacturers, suppliers and professional service providers such as architects, engineers, lawyers, accountants and insurance providers who operate as both union and open-shop employers in the industrial, commercial, institutional and high-rise residential construction industry.

VRCA is a member of the Council of Construction Associations and the Employers' Forum. We have read and endorse the Employers' Forum submission of July 20, 2020, that expresses significant and serious concerns with Bill 23, *Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2020*.

Our country and province have come a long way since the pandemic was declared some 4 months ago. And still there is a long way to go to rebuild our national and provincial economies.

When the pandemic hit, the governments of Canada and British Columbia rightly focused on three priorities: protecting people's health; providing financial supports for families and businesses; and ensuring essential services remained available. With B.C. now in Phase 3 of its Restart Plan, and while controlling the spread of the virus and supporting affected individuals and businesses remain high priority, all governments must focus on infrastructure stimulus spending and developing sound public policies needed to rebuild the economy.

Reaching pre-COVID economic activity will not be easy. After consecutive months of severe employment losses, B.C.'s unemployment is starting to show early signs of recovery. While the unemployment rate dipped to 13% in June, it remains far from the near-record lows of below 5% at the start of 2020.

B.C.'s construction industry has played, and will continue to play, a pivotal role throughout the pandemic. Fortunate to be deemed an essential service provider, with enhanced safety protocols in

place, our industry has remained open and helped to keep thousands of men and women employed and our economy focused on recovery. But that does not mean it has been immune to layoffs as well as project delays and increased costs due to COVID-19.

In that context, VRCA has been advocating for sound public policies that support our construction businesses and all others rather than create undue burden that jeopardizes their very existence.

Minister, Bill 23 will add significant costs to B.C. employers who fund WorkSafeBC and will introduce changes that will put at risk the financial stability of the workers' compensation system. It is ill-timed, ill-considered, and ignores broad-based and repeated requests from the business community to government to "do no harm" as we focus on COVID-19 recovery and getting British Columbians back to work safely.

At a time when B.C.'s economic recovery is just beginning, it is imperative that the provincial government rejects measures that could increase costs, add to the regulatory burden or create further uncertainty for B.C. employers. We therefore join with the broader business community and urge you to set aside Bill 23.

If you would like to discuss the above further, please contact me directly at fiona@vrca.ca or at 604.293.6585.

Regards,



Fiona Famulak
President

cc. Honourable John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia
Honourable Carole James, Minister of Finance
Honourable Michelle Mungall, Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness
Mr. Andrew Wilkinson, Leader of the Opposition
Mr. Adam Olsen, Interim Leader, Green Party of BC
Doug Alley, Employers' Forum
Dave Baspaly, Council of Construction Associations