



CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF ESQUIMALT

**LATE AGENDA ITEMS
COUNCIL**

Monday, June 14th, 2021 @ 7:00 pm
Esquimalt Council Chambers

(1) ADD as Item No. 10 (5): **COMMUNICATIONS** – For Consideration

- Letter from Ian Robertson, Chief Executive Officer, Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, dated June 11, 2021, Re: Threat of Permanent Bypass of Cruise Ships to Canada

Alicia Ferguson

Subject: RE: We Need Your Support for Cruise

From: Ian Robertson <IRobertson@gvha.ca>
Date: June 14, 2021 at 11:54:48 AM PDT
To: Barb Desjardins <barbara.desjardins@esquimalt.ca>
Subject: **We Need Your Support for Cruise**

Good Morning Mayor Desjardins (Barb),

I am seeking your and Council's support for a letter to be written to the Prime Minister advocating for the cruise order to be rescinded this fall which will send a signal to the cruise industry that they will be welcome back in 2022. With US legislation being drafted to make the Passenger Vessel Service Act waiver permanent, there is serious risk to Victoria's cruise industry. Cruise is critical to the region as revenue from cruise allows GVHA to sustain community amenities such as the Breakwater, Lower Causeway and Ship Point – amenities that residents from across the region frequent.

Below are some key messages. I've also attached a copy of a letter I sent to the Prime Minister last Friday.

- Cruise is a valuable part of Greater Victoria's visitor economy, contributing more than \$130 million annually and supporting more than 800 jobs
- Cruise passengers choose Alaska for their cruise and, while Victoria is positively received by cruise passengers, their intentions in choosing this market are based on a journey to Alaska, not British Columbia
- We need a signal by the Government of Canada that there will be no further extension of this order suspending cruise in Canada beyond February 28.
- This announcement for the 2022 cruise season should be made along with the announcement of the reopening plan for the Canada-USA land and marine borders

There is urgency to this letter as the PM is expecting to make an announcement re the border opening next Monday, June 21.

Thanks in advance for your support – feel free to reach out to me at 250-213-5223.

Regards

Ian

Ian Robertson
Chief Executive Officer

Greater Victoria Harbour Authority
100 – 1019 Wharf Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 2Y9, Canada
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CORONAVIRUS AND OUR SERVICES: GVHA remains open, however, we are adapting the way we work to maintain the health and safety of you and our team. This means visits to our office are by appointment only and in person appointments are made only in exceptional circumstances. Many of our office members are working remotely from home, and this may affect the response time to your e-mail. Please note that we are prioritizing our services based on our reduced staff levels and priorities. We encourage you to contact us via e-mail to discuss any specific questions or concerns you may have.

Barbara Desjardins, (She/Her)

Mayor, Township of Esquimalt

Lekwungen Territory

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June 11, 2021

Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A3
Canada

RE: THREAT OF PERMANENT BYPASS OF CRUISE SHIPS TO CANADA

Dear Prime Minister:

I hope this finds you well.

Right across the country, provincial and territorial governments have been releasing their phased plans to begin slowly reopening their economies in the wake of a reduction of cases of COVID-19 and a growing percentage of their populations that are vaccinated. I want to personally thank you and your government for all of your hard work in terms of procuring vaccines and working so closely with provinces and territories on their subsequent vaccine delivery to Canadians. There is certainly light at the end of the tunnel.

The Greater Victoria Harbour Authority also welcomed the recent signal by your government that it too will begin to roll out a phased approach to the reopening of our land border with the United States. As you have undoubtedly heard from many including the tourism sector, a tangible and concrete plan for re-opening the border is desperately required in order to provide some level of predictability and, most importantly, to signal to tourism operators and tourists when it will be safe to travel again.

It is in this respect that I write to you today regarding the Government of Canada's order on the prohibition of cruise vessels in all Canadian waters until February 28, 2022. The Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, while certainly disappointed when this announcement was made on March 13, 2021, completely understood it to be the right decision given its criticality to ensuring the health and well-being of Canadians. Safety of Canadians is our number one priority, as it is yours. Still, the fact remains that the postponement of the cruise season – which is one of the single largest economic drivers of Victoria and the surrounding Capital Regional District – resulted in the cancellation of approximately 284 ship calls to Victoria (Canada's busiest cruise port of call), and well over \$130 million in economic activity for our region.



While we continue to respect the February 28, 2022 date for the return of cruise to Canada, what has become abundantly clear to us over the last month – and even further as of yesterday – is the need for an immediate signal by the Government of Canada, directed toward the cruise industry, that there will be no further extension of this order beyond February 28. Simply put, a confirmation that cruise will indeed return to Canada in 2022.

The need for this communication from your government has only been emphasized in the last month with the passage of the Alaska Tourism Restoration Act by the United States Congress and its signing by President Biden. The bill allows for Alaska-bound cruise ships originating from the west coast of the United States to skip British Columbia ports, such as Victoria, during their itinerary. Prior to this bill, U.S. legislation under the Jones Act required foreign-registered cruise ships sailing between American ports to stop in Canada. In response, Holland America Cruise Line, as an example, announced it will restart cruises from Seattle in July, bypassing Canadian ports entirely.

Many leaders across the country have suggested that this change will only be temporary given that the newly created exemption only runs until Canada lifts its order on cruise. However, to be frank, many of these same individuals did not believe the United States would pass such a piece of legislation in the first place and as quickly as it did. And yesterday, sure enough, a member of the United States Senate introduced a bill to allow cruise ships to permanently bypass Canada.

This new threat could be absolutely devastating to Victoria, to British Columbia and indeed to any port in the country that relies on U.S. in-bound cruise. While Vancouver enjoys homeport status, meaning that they have cruises that begin and end their journey from their port, thereby always having the benefit of economic activity resulting from cruise, Victoria does not have this guarantee. Instead, we rely solely on port-of-call visits for itineraries departing from Seattle.

Given all of the above, I would urge you and your government to consider as part of your phased re-opening plan of the land border a related plan for the re-opening of the marine border. It would be our suggestion that this include the rescinding of the cruise order by the end of September or October 2021 in order to provide cruise lines with the assurance they require in order to plan for their 2022 seasons.

In many conversations with executives of all of the largest cruise operators, they have expressed their disappointment and concern for our 2022 season. They need a signal, and so does Victoria. The cruise industry is worth \$3 billion to the British Columbia economy alone and we cannot afford to play roulette with something that is such a vital economic lifeline for our province.

Thank you in advance for considering this request as the government continues to contemplate its re-opening plan. Should you, your office, or any of those copied on this letter have any questions, I will make myself available at any time.

Sincerely,



Ian Robertson

Chief Executive Officer

Greater Victoria Harbour Authority

Mobile: 250-213-5223

irobertson@gvha.ca | www.gvha.ca

cc: Hon. John Horgan – Premier of British Columbia
Hon. Omar Alghabra – Minister of Transport
Hon. Bill Blair – Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
Hon. Melanie Joly – Minister of Official Languages and Economic Development
Ms. Kirsten Hillman – Canada’s Ambassador to the United States of America
Dr. Theresa Tam – Chief Public Health Officer of Canada
Hon. Rob Fleming – Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, Government of B.C.
Hon. Melanie Mark – Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, Government of B.C.
Hon. Wayne Easter – Co-Chair, Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Group
Mr. Patrick Weiler – Chair, Government Pacific Caucus
Mr. Terry Beech – Member, Government Pacific Caucus
Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal – Member, Government Pacific Caucus
Hon. Hedy Fry – Member, Government Pacific Caucus
Mr. Ken Hardie – Member, Government Pacific Caucus
Mr. Ron McKinnon – Member, Government Pacific Caucus
Hon. Joyce Murray – Member, Government Pacific Caucus
Hon. Carla Qualtrough – Member, Government Pacific Caucus
Hon. Harjit Sajjan – Member, Government Pacific Caucus
Mr. Randeep Sarai – Member, Government Pacific Caucus
Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson – Member, Government Pacific Caucus
Youmy Han – BC Desk, Prime Minister’s Office
Beth Potter – President & CEO, Tourism Industry Association of Canada
Walt Judas – CEO, Tourism Industry Association of B.C.
Paul Nursey – President & CEO, Destination Greater Victoria
