

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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November 26 2020

Honorable John Horgan
Premier, British Columbia
PO BOX 9041 STN
Prov Govt Victoria, BC V8W 9E1
Via email only:
premier@gov.bc.ca

RE: Let's Ride! Make Public Transit BC Wide.

Dear Premier Horgan,

We, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), support the *Let's Ride! Make Public Transit BC Wide* campaign for a B.C.-wide public transit network. This campaign intersects with many significant issues for us, including safety, accessibility, and affordability.

British Columbia has long experienced transit scarcity, especially in rural and northern communities, which disproportionately impacts Indigenous peoples. Many areas of the province are without any regional transit system, and rely heavily on private transportation services such as taxis and private charters.

Safe, reliable, and accessible public transit to and from First Nations communities in B.C. is essential because transportation is necessary to many indispensable components of daily life. As Article 21 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* enshrines, Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security. Accessible public transportation is a key component of this, as it is needed for everyone to have access in and out of isolated communities for family obligations, medical appointments, education, training, and obtaining necessary supplies, including groceries.

Traditionally, transit services to First Nation communities have been, at best, infrequent and expensive. Communities with insufficient transportation services experience greater risks and limitations to meeting their needs. The Highway of Tears is one of several examples where insufficient transportation disproportionately exposed Indigenous women and girls to sexual harassment, assault, and murder. We note that the Highway of Tears bus was finally introduced in 2018; while it was a step in the right direction, much more work needs to be done to address transit scarcity. Access to transportation is necessary for people to meet their needs, and it is imperative that the BC government take the required steps to ensure this becomes a reality.

We need a unified, provincially-owned and operated public transportation system across BC, bridging communities and making transportation accessible for all. Therefore, we call on the Province to take the necessary steps to build this much-needed network of public transportation.

We look forward to your response.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President



Chief Don Tom
Vice-President



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson
Secretary-Treasurer