

April 2, 2020

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Honourable Sandy Silver - [premier@gov.yk.ca](mailto:premier@gov.yk.ca)

## **Re: Construction and resource development activity during SARS-CoV-2 outbreak**

Dear Honourable Prime Minister Trudeau and Premiers,

We are writing to urge you, your federal and provincial health ministers, and your chief medical officers to **suspend or shut down the work sites of major development projects** in rural and northern Canada, including those under both provincial and federal jurisdiction. In particular, the work camps, temporary housing or hotels and other project-related functions that cause congregations of workers or travel into a region should be curtailed. Putting the lives of some Canadians unnecessarily at risk today for the sake of infrastructure and economic benefit tomorrow is at best unwise and at worst unethical.

Canadian and provincial health authorities have been doing an admirable job during the outbreak and spread of Covid-19. Canadians have made huge changes to their lives to support the goal of containing it to manageable levels. **We believe it is fair that the more remote parts of Canada are shown the same respect and care for their communities and fragile health systems.** Last week, Fort St. John – a community committed to resource-extraction projects – urged a halt to the Site C hydro dam project to protect regional health services.

**Closing these sites is especially important when we consider that numerous affected communities are Indigenous and especially vulnerable** regarding access to clean water and health services. The concentration of resource work camps that house large numbers of transient workers has already been demonstrated to increase negative social, physical and mental health outcomes in these communities. Continuing these projects and the concentration of workers they bring does not align with the directives other Canadians are striving to follow. We simply should not be transporting large number

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of workers – and housing them in close containment – near and alongside northern and Indigenous communities who do not have the medical resources to manage the risk of an outbreak.

Maintaining existing infrastructure so that it operates safely for people, environment and economy is one thing. Fully operational pipelines should clearly not be left unattended. But these are low-risk scenarios from a health perspective, in that they do not demand high worker concentrations. The same might be said for ensuring that construction already underway does not fall into dangerous disrepair.

However, **construction or site preparation for projects that are not operational should not proceed if it puts human life at additional risk** through direct transmission or by overwhelming rural and northern health systems.

Thank you for your ongoing work on behalf of all Canadians during this pandemic. We hope this change can be added to the measures supported by Canada and the provinces and territories.

Sincerely,



Stephen Cornish  
CEO



Jay Ritchlin  
Director-General, Western Canada

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