



BC's Union for Professionals

Honourable Lana Popham
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia V8V 1X4

via email: AGR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

January 26, 2021

To the Honourable Lana Popham,

Re: Request for Meeting with the Professional Employees Association

The Professional Employees Association (PEA) would like to congratulate you on your re-appointment as the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. We have read your mandate letter with great interest and we look forward to working collaboratively with you.

The PEA represents 1,280 scientific professionals working in the BC Public Service and includes engineers, foresters, psychologists, geoscientists, veterinarians, agrologists, and pharmacists. Nearly 800 of our members work in your Ministry. They advise the government and provide regulation guidance while also keeping the province connected, conducting critical research, and providing services in support of public health, the environment, the economy and public safety.

Our recently published report, *Spotlight on Integrity - An update on the state of science in British Columbia*, is based on recent data collected from scientific professionals in the province of BC. The data indicates that there are existing barriers to research capacity and evidence-informed decision-making in the BC public sector, which may impact the environment, safety, health, and economy of the province.

We would like to meet with you to discuss the survey findings and share the resulting report recommendations around how the province can implement changes to increase research capacity and hiring of scientific professionals. In addition, we ask that you consider creating new policies to improve scientific integrity and evidence-informed decision-making. Specifically, we recommend that your Ministry:

- Improve hiring practices and invest resources for personnel to fill outstanding vacancies and increase support and technical staff;
- Develop a framework for succession planning that includes measures for training of new employees and reduces hiring delays;
- Improve the competitiveness of hiring practices to attract qualified professionals, including by providing competitive wages;



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- Explore career laddering options to allow qualified scientific professionals to advance in their positions.

COVID-19 highlights the importance of strong government science and evidence informed decision-making. Without intervention to strengthen capacity and scientific integrity, we fear the province will fall short in fulfilling its mandate.

We look forward to a response to our request for a meeting with you. In the interim, please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott McCannell'. The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract, with overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Scott McCannell
Executive Director

CC:

Christine Bieber, Chair of the PEA's Government Licensed Professionals Chapter
Melissa Moroz, PEA Labour Relations Officer