



March 18, 2020

The Honourable Melanie Mark
Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training
PO Box 9080 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Mark,

I am writing to update you on the University of Victoria's strong support to address the current Bamfield road conditions. As you know, the tragic bus in September resulted in the deaths of two of our undergraduate students, Emma Machado and John Geerdes, and significant injuries to many of the other students on the bus. Since the accident, the UVic community, with our colleagues at BMSC, have been working together to support one another through extremely difficult times.

We are deeply appreciative of the advocacy for the critically required road improvements of the Bamfield community through the Bamfield Road Reconciliation Working Group (recommended by Premier Horgan last November). In particular the leadership of local First Nations, including Chief Councillor Robert Dennis from the Huu-ay-aht First Nations, as well as local municipal government (Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District) and the BMSC.

The University of Victoria is a long-standing member of the Western Canadian Universities Marine Sciences Society that owns and operates the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre (BMSC). BMSC provides award winning education and research in the remarkable community of Bamfield. For more than 40 years, UVic faculty and students have travelled to the community of Bamfield and participated in research, undergraduate and graduate-level credit courses, workshops and field trips. In addition, K-12 partners from across the province have been visiting the school for decades and see the programs here as vital to the delivery of their curriculum.

The University of Victoria would like to add its strong support for these vital improvements recommended by the Working Group. As Chief Robert Dennis Sr. and others have shared with us, it is within the spirit of reconciliation that everyone has come together to help address the risks, promote safety and community cohesion, support academic and research excellence and honour relationships, and ensure the economic viability of the communities. The recommendations put forward have addressed all issues, including jurisdiction, and there is a plan ready to implement. All that is required from the Government of BC is the funding to act now.

As you know, the University of Victoria and all post secondary partners remain dedicated to doing what we can to respond to the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation's Commission Report and we congratulate your government for its foresight and leadership on



Bill 41 – Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. It is with this commitment in mind that I urge you to support this project, which will be a vital investment in reconciliation. I would be very happy to meet with you about this to provide you with a full briefing.

We appreciate there are pressing matters that require the Government of BC's care and consideration and we are counting on you as Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training to champion this important work on behalf of our students, staff, educators and in support of the local First Nations and other community members in and around Bamfield.

With respect, –


Jamie Cassels, QC
President and Vice-Chancellor

c: Minister Rob Fleming, Minister for Education
Minister Claire Trevena, Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure

