

January 11, 2021

The Honourable Bernadette Jordan
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

Via Email

RE: Regional Economic Development Summit

Dear Minister Jordan,

We are writing to request the federal government participate in an urgent regional economic development summit for the communities in northern Vancouver Island.

The economic impact of your December 17th decision to phase out existing salmon farming licenses in the Discovery Islands has caused deep concern and uncertainty for many residents of the North Island.

Workers in the aquaculture industry are understandably afraid for their economic future and how they will provide for their families. Small business owners are concerned about the impact of the loss of jobs will have on their staff and businesses. Fish farm operators have stated that the decision will result in the direct loss of 1,500 jobs and impacting many more jobs in northern Vancouver Island.

We acknowledge the nation-to-nation decision and understand that for the protection of wild salmon we must continue to work together to do everything we can to protect and rebuild critical wild salmon stocks.

However, North Island communities have been particularly hard hit this past year and it is difficult to imagine how workers, families and communities will get through without urgent federal assistance to mitigate the impact of this decision.

We need a coordinated approach to this pressing economic challenge. Local governments and Indigenous communities in our region will work together towards a new future, but we cannot do it without the federal government.

Hosting an economic summit for the North Island to discuss and formulate the required steps for urgent assistance and ongoing development will be vital for an economic transition plan for this region: a transition that your government has stated is committed to supporting.

As both federal and provincial elected representatives, we are committed to work in partnership to fully support the communities we represent. This is an excellent opportunity for

your government to work with us, local governments and Indigenous communities to support the economic development of northern Vancouver Island.

We ask you to extend this urgent invitation to Minister Maryam Monsef and Minister Jonathan Wilkinson as well.

We look forward to your favourable reply.

Sincerely,



Rachel Blaney, MP for North Island—Powell River



Michele Babchuk, MLA for North Island

CC:

The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages

The Honourable Maryam Monsef, Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change

The Honourable Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation for British Columbia