**RE: Urgent Funding Needed for Canada’s Camp Operators as COVID-19 Shutters Youth Camps**

I am writing to you today as one of many camp operators from British Columbia that is facing the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and respectfully asking for your support for our industry.

This year, as a direct result of the COVID-19 virus we will have to shutter our camp as part of the province’s broader health and safety measures aimed at preventing the spread of the virus. Consequently, we will not be able to offer young British Columbians the important learning opportunities that summer camp provides, including adjusting to new social circles, learning to take risks, disengaging from screens, building appreciation for the natural world and practicing asking for help. We are working towards being able to re-open our doors when it is safe to do so, as we know these experiences will be critical for children and families in the post COVID-19 world.

In addition, we will not be able to offer summer jobs to young British Columbians – camps have traditionally provided many young people and students with their first job experience – which has in turn helped support students with the costs associated with their university, college or skills training programs.

Without the revenue generated from camping fees, our camp – like all other camps across British Columbia – will not have the necessary funds to cover the maintenance costs required to maintain our camp’s infrastructure and equipment. We need to find a way to access sufficient funds to ensure that our province’s camping infrastructure is properly maintained through the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure that the camps are available to young people for the camping experience, and as a place of youth employment, when we have resolved the COVID-19 crisis.

The BC Camps Association, representing the dozens of operators in British Columbia who share with all camp operators in Canada the pain being felt by the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 virus, has been in contact with the Hon. Michelle Mungall, Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness. Our original letter to the Minister, her response and our most recent letter requesting urgent funding support for BC Camps is attached for your information.

As my Member of the BC Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request that you lend your voice in support of our request to Minister Mungall to help save many camping operations across British Columbia for our young people.

To date, the current programs – wage subsidy, small business loans and other initiatives – provide little relief for our industry, understanding that until a vaccine is confirmed and widespread distribution takes place, which most experts put at a one or one-and-a-half year timeline, it is not expected that camps would be in a safe position to operate or earn revenue. The marginal profit nature of the camping industry does not allow the assumption of debt associated with loan programs now being provided by government.

As a camp owner trying to protect the camping infrastructure through the COVID-19 pandemic so that the camp site is in good repair and ready to operate when the pandemic passes, I am joining with other camp operators across the province to ask the BC Government to help us with the following measures to help us through this crisis:

1. Extension of the Hydro rate relief to Medium General Service Rate customers like ourselves to reduce operating costs for the next year.

2. A core grant of an average of $100,000 per operator (total cost $4 million) to assist members with operating costs and employee wage 25% top up so that core staff can maintain these facilities and operations can continue.

3. A special marketing fund for activities to kick in during late 2020 and early 2021 to assist operators in marketing to push for the return of campers and tourism adventure clients and open new markets, of $250,000.

4. Property tax relief for groups for one year, in full.

I believe that the proposed modest investments will enable my camp, and the BC Camps Association members to survive the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our industry, and maintain our ability to resume our camping operation when the COVID-19 pandemic is resolved.

Sincerely,