2019/03/27

Honourable John Horgan
Premier of British Columbia
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

RE: Post-Secondary Education on the West Shore

Dear Premier Horgan:

As leaders of local municipalities, the Sooke School District, and First Nations on the West Shore, we are writing to invite you to take the next step on behalf of the Province toward a bold expansion of post-secondary education opportunities for the young people of our area.

As you know, West Shore communities are growing quickly. Yet without a local post-secondary campus suited to their needs, high school graduates do not have the opportunities that others in neighbouring communities do to continue their education at home. Sadly, given the choice of daunting commutes or paying the high cost of living away from home, too many promising students are postponing their education, or worse, cutting it short.

We are grateful that the Province supported an initial study, coordinated by Royal Roads University. The results of that study are now in, and it clearly establishes the need among parents and students, as well as local businesses, for a new post-secondary campus on the West Shore, serving new undergraduate students.

The need is further reflected in the tremendous interest shared amongst the partner institutions in bringing such a campus to our community. We have an historic opportunity to harness the energy with an innovative partnership approach that will serve as an exciting new model for other communities across the province.

Your government has taken enormous steps to bring post-secondary education within the reach of every BC student, most recently by eliminating interest on the provincial portion of student loans. Like you, we know that post-secondary education is critical to the future of our next generation—as well as the economic prosperity and civic well-being of our businesses and communities. We know as well that equitable access to education for First Nations students is a key to reconciliation.
We are delighted that you and Minister Melanie Mark have seen the potential inherent in this proposal. Now we hope that you will join us and take the next step toward ensuring that West Shore students can make the most of the promise that post-secondary education holds.

Sincerely,

Stewart Young
Mayor, City of Langford

Maja Tait
Mayor, District of Sooke

John Ranns
Mayor, District of Metchosin

Chief Ron Sam
Lkwungen First Nation (Songhees)

Chief Jeff Jones
Pacheedaht First Nation (Port Renfrew)

Matt Harry
Malahat First Nation

Rob Martin
Mayor, City of Colwood

Ken Williams
Mayor, District of Highlands

Mike Hicks
Director, Juan de Fuca Electoral Area

Chief Russ Chipps
Scia'new First Nation (Beecher Bay)

Chief Gord Planes
T’Sou-ke First Nation (Sooke)

Ravi Parmar
Chair, Sooke School District #62

Cc: Hon. Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training
Hon. Mitzi Dean, MLA for Esquimalt-Metchosin