

May 21, 2021

Harwinder Sandhu

MLA for Vernon-Monashee

Harwinder.Sandhu.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Re: Interior Provincial Exhibition

MLA Sandhu

The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce is writing to you in support of the Interior Provincial Exhibition and the need for it to be included in the B.C. Major Anchor Attraction Program.

The IPE, or the Armstrong fair as it is affectionately known, has been a North Okanagan tradition for more than 120 years. It is a celebration of community and agriculture, and annually attracts more than 150,000 people. For many merchants, equipment suppliers, accommodators and home-based entrepreneurs, the IPE is a major source of revenue while many non-profits depend on the funds they raise at the fair through food concessions, raffles and other activities. The annual economic impact of the IPE is about \$8.8 million.

Not surprisingly, though, the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the IPE being cancelled in 2020 and 2021, and that has had a significant impact on the bottom line for the not-for-profit organization, particularly as there are fixed costs beyond the five days that the fair operates each August.

Under the eligibility requirements of the Major Anchor Attraction Program, the Interior Provincial Exhibition meets the threshold of being in a rural area and receiving more than 15,000 visitors per year. We would also suggest that the IPE meets the requirement to operate year-round as it has permanent staff and planning for the fair occurs on a year-round basis.

However, even if the requirement to operate year-round is not met, your government must acknowledge that the circumstances for major events in the Interior are far different than those in the highly urbanized Lower Mainland. Primarily, organizations such as the Pacific National Exhibition have the ability to lease their facilities out to events beyond their annual fair, whereas those external rental revenue opportunities in the North Okanagan are reduced. The IPE also depends on volunteers to make the fair a success but there is also a requirement for staff to initiate planning and operations.

On behalf of our membership, the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce is requesting that your government consider the unique circumstances of the Interior Provincial Exhibition and the substantial contributions it provides to the North Okanagan and B.C. through tourism, economic

development, agriculture and community advocacy. We would encourage you to meet directly with representatives of the Interior Provincial Exhibition.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Krystin Kempton', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Krystin Kempton, President
Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

CC. Interior Provincial Exhibition