



**BC Mink Producers Association
(B.C.M.P.A.)
3840 Teslin Drive
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President: Joseph Williams**

The Honourable Lana Popham
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
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Dr. Bonnie Henry
Provincial Health Officer
Bonnie.Henry@gov.bc.ca

November 29, 2021

Dear Minister Popham and Dr. Henry:

We were quite frankly shocked and disappointed to see your recent announcement on phasing out mink farming in British Columbia. To shut down our industry, when so many other agricultural industries have recently been devastated is questionable.

Since the initial detection of Sars-CoV-2 on a British Columbia mink farm, producers have worked closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, as well as Public Health officials to implement even more intensive biosecurity measures to contain the farm outbreaks, prevent additional outbreaks, protect their animals, safeguard the health of their families, employees, and the public.

When outbreaks of other zoonotic diseases such as Swine flu (H1N1) and Avian Flu occurred, government did not propose (or even consider) the banning of these industries. Rather, government authorities worked with the farmers and supported them in efforts to mitigate risk.

The US Centre for Disease Control & Prevention, the US Drug Administration, the US National Veterinary Services Laboratory, and the European Centre for Disease Control & Prevention along with other agencies and veterinarians provide assurances that with the implementation of proper biosecurity protocols, including the use of PPEs, the risk that farmed mink pose to spread of Sars-CoV-2 is very low. The World Organization for Animal Health does not propose mass culling of mink herds, let alone an end to mink farming. Rather it advises a range of preventative measures including human testing; infection

prevention and control for workers; animal testing and prevention of spread from animals; and the development of preparedness and response strategies. These are precisely the precautions that BC mink producers have implemented.

In addition, there is a COVID-19 vaccine available for mink that is currently being used in the United States and other jurisdictions in Canada. Nova Scotia is even helping fund their mink vaccination program along with the federal government based on advice from veterinarian and medical experts.

British Columbia mink producers currently have some vaccine available and are about to begin vaccinating. More vaccine is in the process of being obtained. Producers are committed to vaccinating the breeder herd as well as increasing the distance between animals (social distancing) to further mitigate risk.

If these measures are implemented will British Columbia mink producers be allowed to breed vaccinated mink?

We would like the opportunity to meet with you immediately to discuss this extreme and unnecessary action. Below are a number of questions that we would like addressed:

1. Where is the science and data used to make this decision? We ask that both the science and data be disclosed.
2. Who were the experts consulted? What is their background?
3. Who is writing the Order to ban the industry?
4. When can BC producers expect to see the Order and details contained therein?
5. To date, no one within industry has been consulted on, or has seen a copy of the Derek Sturko report. Why was industry not consulted? Please provide a copy of the report.
6. If the mink are a health risk, why then are animals allowed to be kept for 18 months?

Additionally, we are seeking all of the studies, opinions and memos upon which you have based your decision. Please provide these items and anything else that guided this decision in advance of our meeting. It is essential that we are able to discuss the science because we remain deeply concerned that your decision is based on inaccurate information.

We would like to request the opportunity to meet with you to discuss your justification for making such a drastic decision that runs counter to other jurisdictions in North America. As the harvest window is closing British Columbia mink producers need an immediate reply as decisions need to be made. We will make ourselves available to meet within the next week either virtually or in-person. I can be contacted at (josephwilliams_09@hotmail.com) to arrange a date and time. We look forward to hearing from your offices.

Sincerely,



Joseph Williams
President

cc:

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