

Port Transportation Association



Parliament Hill Office
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

April 29, 2020

Dear Hon. Garneau,

The trucking community, especially the Drayage trucking community is the backbone of the Canadian economy, and now more than ever, we see the importance of keeping the flow of goods moving.

While we have heard your thanks, and are appreciative of the acknowledgment of the hard work we do, the Port Transportation Association (PTA) and our members feel like the Vancouver Port Authority (VFPA) and the Ministry of Transportation have neglected to address a key issue in ensuring the long term health and longevity of BC drayage companies who maintain vital roles within our supply chain.

With the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic shutdowns that followed, and will continue in some form until a vaccine has been created, most non-essential goods have been put on hold or have been scaled back in both production and shipment. This has significantly reduced container volume. British Columbia TLS companies have already seen revenue decrease steadily as container traffic has been in decline due to events beyond our control over the last two years, including most recently the Indigenous blockades. It is with these challenges in mind, that the PTA feels that with the decrease in import and export volumes, the revenue flow to support TLS licenses payments is at a clear imbalance.

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P.O. Box 1791 Parksville, BC V9P 2H6
778-228-0544
Ptavancouver@gmail.com
<https://ptavancouver.com/>

For transparency and industry purposes, the PTA intends to distribute all content and post all meaningful dialogue on our website, to be viewed by both industry and the public.

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As the Ministry of Transportation is aware, the PTA has previously been in communication with VFPA with the request that at this time all TLS license fee payments should be paused.

Unfortunately, the VFPA remains firm on the payment, although has moved the TLS payments to monthly installments rather than quarterly. The PTA is not trying to diminish or downplay the economic effects the VFPA will be facing in the coming months, as we are understanding of the challenges every company is faced in this unprecedented situation. However, the VFPA is backed by the Government of Canada and the Government of Canada has promised to assist its hard-working Canadians and Canadian companies.

We note that Governments (both on the Federal and Provincial level) are attempting to roll out support for small business, although that support does not address the substantial fees that are collected by the VFPA from our members to be able operate within the VFPA land.

We must point out that although the VFPA operates at arms length from the Federal Government, the VFPA is still accountable to citizens and businesses of British Columbia. We don't feel that the VFPA has even remotely considered the ramifications of their decision in refusing to reduce or suspend fees for small business not only due to COVID-19, but the generally low container volumes that British Columbia has experience over the last two years.

We feel that a general review should take place in terms of the fees that are being charged in relation to what revenue can be generated by TLS companies of all sizes and composition.

We have attempted to address these issues directly with the VFPA, although it seems as though that they are refusing to engage in discussions that relate to any financial relief for TLS carriers. We would have at least expected some form of communication from the VFPA that would have potentially bolstered their position that granting relief based on low container volumes and the effects of COVID-19 does not warrant a temporary reduction in fees.

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The PTA is requesting that the government step in to assist TLS members with the reduction of fees in order to ensure that risk to the supply chain is limited. By being proactive we can ensure financial stability within the chain which will promote the rebuilding of our economy as we begin to move into our new normal.

The Government of Canada is in a position and the ability to suspend all TLS license fees until such time as the economy is on its way to be back in full swing. We feel that this request is in line with other sectors who have already received relief due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as broadcasters and fisheries.

We believe that the data collected by VFPA in relation to container traffic flow would be a good indicator as to the health of our economic recovery in our region and could be monitored to determine when best to reinstate the TLS fees.

The B.C. drayage sector proudly supplies our communities with the goods and supplies needed during these unprecedented times, and we at the PTA are making this urgent request so we can ensure the support of those employed and attempt to remain on stable ground while we continue to operate in these unique financially challenging times. We would appreciate your support on this issue.

We thank you for your consideration and ask for a reply within the next ten business days.

Sincerely,

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CC:

Ministry of Transportation
Filomena Tassi
Mary Ng
Carla Qualtrough
Harjit Sajjan
Terry Beech
Randeep Sarai
Ken Hardie
Jagmeet Singh
Ron McKinnon
Dr. Hedy Fry
Patrick Weiler
Sukh Dhaliwal
Jonathan Wilkinson