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November 9, 2020

Mr. John Carpay
President
Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms
253-7620 Elbow Dr SW
Calgary AB T2V 1K2

Dear Mr. Carpay:

Thank you for your letter of September 8, 2020, regarding the impacts of the decision to cancel surgeries, diagnostic testing, and other medical procedures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am responding on behalf of the Minister of Health (the Ministry) and Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer. I apologize for the delay in communication.

Protecting the health and safety of British Columbians is the top priority of the Ministry. BC has begun the process of re-opening, re-starting, and easing the restrictions introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. As you know, several actions, such as postponing surgeries, were taken to allow for our health-care system to increase its capacity to respond to the potential surge of COVID-19 patients requiring acute care. Postponing scheduled surgeries was one of many sacrifices British Columbians made in order to help flatten the outbreak curve here in BC.

As you know, on March 16, 2020, we made the difficult decision to postpone non-urgent scheduled surgeries to ensure capacity in our hospitals to address COVID-19 patient needs. For those who have had their surgery postponed, the work to implement *the Surgical Renewal Plan* has begun and patient outreach began on May 7, 2020. This first step is critical as we recognize some patients may prefer to wait for surgery until the pandemic is behind us.

The scaling back of surgeries across the province was accomplished rapidly, over just a few days and work to restore these surgeries is ongoing. Continuing to maintain our current surgical capacity is paramount and this work vulnerable to external forces, however, we are committed to seeing it through. We acknowledge the real consequences of waiting for lifechanging scheduled surgeries and we ask for your continued patience regarding this matter.

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From readying our hospitals, making sure we can handle both surgical renewal and the needs of COVID-19 patients, to building the teams of health professionals these surgeries require, and making sure it all comes together in the safest way possible for patients and providers; it is as complicated as it is unprecedented. If you would like to learn more about our commitment to surgical renewal in BC, I welcome you to visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/conducting-health-research/surgical-renewal-plan.pdf>.

All publicly available data regarding COVID-19 is available through the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) website, which can be found here: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/data>. While this data might not answer all your questions, that is all the information that can be released at this time.

For more information and latest updates on COVID-19, I invite you to visit the BCCDC website: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>. Additionally, a dedicated phone service is available to provide non-health related information about COVID-19 by calling 1 888-COVID19 (1 888-268-4319). A service representative is available seven days a week, from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., and information is available in more than 110 languages. For more information about BC's response to COVID-19, I welcome you to visit our webpage at: www.gov.bc.ca/covid19.

HealthLinkBC is the best resource for all those in BC who have health related questions about COVID-19. Health experts are available help you with your non-emergency health concerns about COVID-19 and can direct you in accessing care. Please see HealthLinkBC's website at: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus-disease-covid-19> or call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for the deaf and hard of hearing) if you have questions. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages.

There is no question that what we do today directly influences the well-being of our communities tomorrow, so let us continue to do our part to protect ourselves and each other – each day and every day.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond, and hope you find this information helpful.

Sincerely,



Thomas Guerrero
Executive Director