



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, February 1st, 2021

Island Intercity Bus Service will not Resume

VICTORIA, BC – Tofino Bus, which also operates the Vancouver Island Connector, will not be resuming service on February 12th as previously scheduled. The service will remain suspended with no restart date scheduled as the risk of a permanent closure is imminent. “At this point, we are unsure when and if we will be able to resume service given the current environment,” says John Wilson, President and CEO of The Wilson’s Group of Companies which acquired Tofino bus in 2018. Tofino Bus is Vancouver Island’s only intercity bus service. In 2019 they provided 82,500 trips to twenty-nine communities and twenty-one First Nations and First Nations organizations on Vancouver Island. Due to COVID 19 work and travel restrictions, revenue on these routes has been down 95% since March 2020. While the Tofino Bus intercity bus service provides the same essential service as public transit, as a privately owned company without any government subsidies, it depends on ticket sales to cover all costs.

Wilson’s asked for a one-year emergency COVID recovery contract from the Ministry of Transportation to cover operating costs for Tofino Bus and allow it to resume this essential service but has not been successful to date.

John Wilson says he is sorry to have to say to the many people who rely on Tofino Bus that it will not resume service. “We were scheduled to resume service on February 12th,” says Wilson, “however, with our current passenger counts we are unable to cover the costs for these runs and simply cannot afford to continue to operate these routes. This is an extremely difficult decision to make as we are very concerned about the safety of the people who rely on our service. Sadly, we have no other options”.

Judith Sayers, President of the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council says that she is “greatly concerned about the loss of this essential service that many of [their] community members rely on” noting that it would pose a real public health and safety risk, particularly for indigenous women and girls in these communities. “We have witnessed this on the Highway of Tears, and we know that there is still a number of Nuuchahnulth women who are still missing,” says Sayers. “We must ensure they have safe transportation to get to their essential destinations, so we have no more murdered and missing sisters”.

Wilson is in contact with Sayers and other First Nations, local and provincial government elected officials across the island to let them know about the crisis this service is facing. Wilson's has had no luck so far receiving support from the Provincial Government for this essential service despite repeated attempts to resolve this growing crisis.

“There is a similar subsidy model in place to ensure public safety along the Highway of Tears in Northern BC.” says Wilson. “We know how important our services are to island First Nations and other communities and we also know the devastating effects the loss of a service like ours can have.”

While he continues to try to work with the Province to restore the service, Wilson is asking members of the communities which Tofino Bus serves to contact their MLA and let them know the loss of this essential service matters. “It is our community members, our customers, who are most affected by this loss in service that need to be heard by government.”

Backgrounder Attached:

List of First Nations and Communities served by Tofino Bus and Vancouver Island Connector



VI Connector and Tofino Bus
Serviced Communities

Victoria	Qualicum Bay
Saanich	Fanny Bay
View Royal	Buckley Bay
Langford	Union Bay
Mill Bay Langford	Royston
Cobble Hill	Courtenay
Cowichan Bay	Merville
Duncan	Black Creek
Chemainus	Oyster River
Ladysmith	Campbell River
Nanaimo – South	Coombs
Nanaimo - Central	Whiskey Creek
Nanaimo - North	Port Alberni
Parksville	Ucluelet
Qualicum Beach	Tofino



**First Nations and Provincial Ministries Served Through Contract with
Tofino Bus**

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- 1 Ahousaht Band Council
 - 2 Alberni Clayoquot
 - 3 Ditidaht First Nations
 - 4 Ehattesaht/Chinehkint
 - 5 First Nations Health Authority
 - 6 Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations
 - 7 Hesquiaht First Nation
 - 8 House of Himwitsa
 - 9 Huu-ay-aht First Nations
 - 10 ITHA - Inter Tribal Health Authority
 - 11 Kayuk't'/Chektles7et'h' Nation
 - 12 Kwakiutl Band Council - Health
 - 13 Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nations
 - 14 Kyuquot First Nation
 - 15 Ministry of Justice
 - 16 Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General - Victoria
 - 17 Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General-Nanaimo
 - 18 Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
 - 19 Nuchatlaht Tribe
 - 20 Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council
 - 21 Nuu-Chah-nulth Tribal Council; Usma Nuu-chah-nulth Family & Child Services
 - 22 Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations
 - 23 Tsewulhtun Health Centre
 - 24 Ucluelet First Nation
 - 25 Wei Wai Kum First Nations