

Bidders' Project  
312 Main Street  
Vancouver BC, V6A 2T2

Hon. Shane Simpson  
2365 E Hastings Street  
Vancouver BC, V5L 1V6



Dear Minister Simpson,

In these unprecedented times, we are grateful to have such strong leadership in all levels of government. Thank you for being part of the team that is helping us through the COVID-19 crisis.

Over the past 2 weeks, Bidders' Project, a Tides Canada initiative, has gone from a thriving and growing charitable social enterprise, bringing in over \$23,000 a month in fee-for-service revenue, giving out an average of 46 income opportunities to bidders per week, and employing 25 bidders as staff, to ultimately halting all of our programming, immediately putting bidders out of work.

Of our 125 active members, only the 25 staff members are eligible for the income supports announced by the Federal government over the past week. The other 100 members are volunteers, part of the informal economy, and receive an honorarium in recognition of their participation in our programs.

We have done our best to help mitigate the loss of shifts and have resolved to offer a \$20 stipend (up from \$5) at our weekly meeting, now taking place outside to abide by physical distancing practices. We are fronting this increased stipend out-of-pocket as we grapple with the massive impacts this loss in revenue has on our programming.

These continued meetings are essential to providing income to the bidders, but we worry that they are putting our members and our staff further at risk as this virus continues to spread.

100% of our members are on some sort of government benefit, whether it be basic welfare, disability assistance, or PPMB assistance. The vast majority of our membership resides in the Downtown Eastside, which as you know is a high-risk neighbourhood for an outbreak of COVID-19.

Bidders are a vulnerable population, with a range of features that lock in marginalization, poverty, housing insecurity, and political invisibility. Most are dealing with, or have previously dealt with, addictions, mental health issues, physical disabilities, abuse, and/or homelessness. These keep in place barriers to full social and economic inclusion.

Thus, these workers are not top of mind in the design of economic stimulus, and can't always advocate for their needs.

However, we are asking you to consider what impact your Ministry can make on all workers that rely on informal means of income to supplement public assistance rates that do not cover rudimentary essentials like food, housing, and transportation. This includes binners, street vendors, and sex workers, among others whose work is now not only limited, but irrefutably more dangerous than ever.

We urge you to consider a temporary increase in welfare, PWD, and PPMB assistance for the next 3 months as our community's most vulnerable come to terms with a lack of work alongside the rest of the country. This will not only provide them with income security during this uncertain time, but will allow them more freedom to physically distance from others, should they have the means to. Increasing rates paid through existing benefits would also provide parity with other Canadians, while not increasing demand on new Federal assistance programs.

Thank you again, Minister Simpson for the tireless work you and your government are doing to support all British Columbians during this stressful time.

Regards,



Landon Hoyt

Director, Binners' Project

[landon.hoyt@binnersproject.org](mailto:landon.hoyt@binnersproject.org)

604-219-3196