

## **BC Restaurants Get Direct Line to Provincial Government**

*Lana Popham appointed as designated Provincial cabinet liaison for the hospitality sector.*

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For Immediate Release

VANCOUVER — Today, the BC Restaurants & Foodservices Association (BCRFA) and Restaurants Canada announced that Minister Lana Popham had been named as the designated point of contact for the restaurant and hospitality sector within the Provincial Government.

“We’re incredibly excited to work with Minister Popham,” said BCRFA President & CEO Ian Tostenson. “The Province has always been willing to listen to our concerns and work with restaurants to implement sensible changes – with today’s announcement, we’re looking forward to doing even more.”

The announcement comes on the heels of the highly successful ‘Save BC Restaurants’ campaign, a joint project from the BCRFA and Restaurants Canada aimed at highlighting the challenges currently being faced by restaurants across the province. Among the policy asks of the campaign was the call for a designated single point of contact within government for the hospitality sector.

“Restaurants are such an important part of the fabric of our communities and our local economies, and we know the last few years have been tough on the industry,” said Lana Popham, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport. “I am excited to be the point person into government for the BC Restaurants & Foodservices Association and Restaurants Canada to make it easier for the industry to access the support it needs.”

In having to engage with numerous ministries and government agencies, restaurants and other stakeholders in the hospitality sector have faced significant challenges in addressing legislative and regulatory concerns.

“It can be very difficult to arrive at real, meaningful change when we’re having to speak with four different ministries just to get one policy changed,” said Mark von Schellwitz, Restaurants Canada Vice President for Western Canada. “While there is still a lot of work ahead of us, we appreciate the government signaling a desire to work collaboratively with the restaurant sector and we’re looking forward to turning that energy into long-lasting change.”

This appointment builds on additional supports provided by government such as the Securing Small Business Rebate program, the cap on food delivery fees, providing more time to make temporary patios permanent, and wholesale liquor pricing saving food service businesses \$244.9 million to date. In addition, government doubled the exemption threshold for the Employer Health Tax from \$500,000 to \$1M and prorated the tax for businesses with between \$1 million - \$1.5 million in payroll so now 90% of businesses will be exempt from the EHT. “We hope to build on these policy successes by working directly with Minister Popham on our Save BC Restaurants Menu of Issue policy priorities” said BCRFA President Ian Tostenson.

The last few years have been extremely difficult for BC restaurateurs with restaurant closures and bankruptcies hitting an all-time high. Pressures surrounding operating costs, skyrocketing commercial rents, and supply price increases have made it more difficult for foodservice vendors to survive through no fault of their own.

“Restaurants are struggling — when a restaurant closes, ultimately it’s the community, customers, and workers that pay the price,” said Kirn Bawa, General Manager for KINU, an Indian fusion restaurant in Victoria.

“Governments at all levels have a role to play in making life easier for restaurants and the people who rely on them – this announcement is a positive step in the right direction.”

Lana Popham currently serves as BC’s Minister for Tourism, Arts, Culture, and Sport. There will be no official change in her ministerial title as a result of the announcement.

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