



GURU ARJUN DEV SIKH SOCIETY OF POWELL RIVER

P.O. BOX 213 POWELL RIVER, B.C. V8A 4Z6



Honorable Jennifer Whiteside
Minister of Labour
Government of British Columbia
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

May 6, 2025

Dear Minister Whiteside

Subject: Concerns Regarding Clean-Shaven Policies and Their Impact on Sikh Workers

On behalf of the Guru Arjun Dev Sikh Society Of Powell River, we wish to express our serious concern regarding clean-shaven requirements imposed by WorkSafeBC regulations and BC Ferries policies. These mandates are having a disproportionate and discriminatory impact on Sikh workers in British Columbia by forcing them to choose between their livelihoods and their religious obligations.

In the Sikh faith, maintaining unshorn hair (Kesh) is a sacred and essential practice. It symbolizes spiritual discipline and living in accordance with divine will. Requiring individuals to be clean-shaven for the use of tight-fitting respirators directly contradicts this fundamental belief and unjustly excludes Sikhs from specific jobs and career advancement opportunities.

While we recognize and support the necessity of workplace safety and proper respiratory protection, we strongly believe that inclusive alternatives can and should be adopted. Equipment such as the **Cam Lock Fast Cowl SCBA**—currently used in other regions—provides effective protection without requiring workers to shave their facial hair. The availability of such alternatives makes it clear that exclusionary practices are unnecessary and can be replaced with more equitable solutions.

Continuing to enforce these policies not only violates the human rights of Sikh employees but also contradicts the values of diversity, inclusion, and fairness that British Columbia publicly champions. When safer, more inclusive options are available, employers and regulators have a responsibility to implement them without delay.

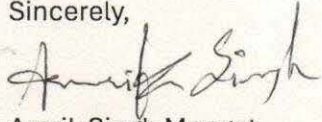
We respectfully request a review and revision of the current policies by WorkSafeBC and BC Ferries, with meaningful input from the affected communities. We would welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss practical ways to resolve this issue while maintaining high safety standards.

This matter is of growing concern within the Sikh community, and we are committed to working constructively with all stakeholders, including elected officials, to ensure a just and respectful

outcome. We are confident that by working together, we can find a balanced solution that protects both safety and religious freedoms.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response and to a meaningful dialogue moving forward.

Sincerely,



Amrik Singh Mangat

President Guru Arjun Dev Sikh Society Of Powell River

Cc: Baltej Singh Dhillon, Chair Worksafe BC Board