

Honourable John Horgan  
Premier, Province of British Columbia  
PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E1

January 21, 2021



Honourable Melanie Mark  
Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport  
PO Box 9082 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

**Re: Meeting with TIABC**

Dear Premier Horgan and Minister Mark,

On behalf of the Tourism Industry Association of British Columbia, thank you for meeting with us earlier this week to discuss the state of the visitor economy, as well as to outline specific needs and opportunities to allow the sector to not only survive but thrive again.

We commend your government for the work that you're doing to keep residents and visitors safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. BC is widely acknowledged as a leader in managing the crisis thanks to your efforts and those of the PHO.

As you are aware, British Columbia's \$21.5 billion tourism and hospitality industry was the first and continues to be the hardest hit business sector since the COVID-19 pandemic enveloped our province in March of last year. As a vital sector that relies on the movement of people, including visitors from other provinces, territories and countries, the unfortunate but necessary restrictions on non-essential international and domestic travel for most of 2020 (and now into 2021) has led to significant hardship for thousands of small, medium and large business owners, as well as tens of thousands of valued and skilled workers, many of whom remain unemployed. Sadly, this is especially acute for women and vulnerable segments of our society.

As referenced in our meeting, we remain increasingly concerned about the ability of thousands of businesses to survive what is projected to be another extremely challenging year without specific and immediate government intervention and support.

While both the federal and provincial governments have introduced several measures to address business and workforce challenges (for which industry is grateful), there are further measures needed immediately to help the visitor economy through another year of anticipated hardship. Specifically, we believe there are three critical components for consideration to ensure BC's tourism and hospitality industry survives until such time as international travel resumes and people are able to return to work.

**#1 – Consultation, Communication, Mitigation**

TIABC requests a formal process be implemented between sector associations (representing tourism and hospitality businesses) government and the PHO to review current and impending orders with the goal to inform industry, consider alternate options, and mitigate the ramifications of these directives.



By way of context, each time the Province announces further restrictions or directives that affect hotels, restaurants, airlines and myriad other tourism and hospitality businesses, public confidence in travel plunges resulting in a flood of cancellations that wreak havoc with staffing, operations and revenues. Especially during these challenging times, tourism and hospitality business owners need some semblance of certainty, or at the very least enough notice to adjust their operations to lessen the impact of any new order.

## **#2 – Safe & Competitive Re-start, Re-opening Plan**

As more countries, provinces, states and cities around the world open or prepare to re-open to non-essential international travel, the Province must identify criteria and work with the tourism and hospitality industry, as well as the federal government, to develop a re-opening plan that includes key components such as ubiquitous rapid testing, an accelerated vaccination program (e.g. for all service workers), border mobility, a workforce strategy, and marketing investments that consider timelines and objectives for each tenet. Sector associations, coalitions and tourism business leaders are committed to work directly with government, as well as agencies such as Destination BC and the PHO on the core elements of a re-opening plan to ensure we are prepared to welcome visitors again when the time is right.

## **#3 – Closing Financial Relief Gaps**

Further government assistance in the form of working capital grants and/or government-secured loans is necessary to allow businesses to remain solvent until such time as domestic, and more importantly, international non-essential travel resumes. While some existing government programs have been welcome and helpful, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, there are multiple iconic and larger businesses including attractions, hotels, resorts, transportation providers, and others that have yet to qualify for assistance or are unable to access relief measures resulting in billions of dollars in revenue losses collectively. Under normal circumstances, these anchor businesses not only directly employ thousands of skilled and valued employees, they also support a robust tourism eco-system in virtually every community in the province.

Finally, as previously referenced, we believe it is critically important for government to allocate significant resources to accelerate the rate of vaccinations for British Columbians, as well as utilization of rapid testing/screening for both residents and visitors. These steps are vital to tourism and hospitality recovery efforts over the next few months and to avoid further erosion of the visitor economy.

Recognizing the fluidity of the crisis and evolving government priorities to address various pandemic-related issues, we nonetheless look forward to working closely with you to move these initiatives forward in short order.

In closing, it is important to note that since the start of the pandemic, virtually every operating tourism and hospitality business has gone above and beyond the call with COVID-19 health and safety protocols to ensure that guests, workers and communities are safe and protected.

Premier Horgan and Minister Mark, as per government's commitment last Fall, our industry is counting on further government support to recover, rebuild and contribute for the benefit of the entire province.

Thank you very much for your leadership during this most trying time. We look forward to meeting with you again very soon.



Sincerely,

Walt Judas  
CEO, TIABC

Vivek Sharma  
Chair, TIABC

Cc: Lori Wanamaker, Cabinet Secretary & Head of the Public Service  
Geoff Meggs, Chief of Staff, Office of the Premier  
Jill Kot, Deputy Minister, Office of the Premier  
Neilane Mayhew, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport  
Salman Azam, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport