

January 15, 2021

**TOURISM COALITION URGES PROVINCE NOT TO PURSUE DOMESTIC TRAVEL BAN
Industry Looking to Work with Government on Other Options**

VANCOUVER/VICTORIA: BC's beleaguered tourism and hospitality industry says a ban on inter-provincial, non-essential travel not only goes against Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, it would also further cripple a sector that is barely hanging on by a thread.

In response to Premier Horgan's statement yesterday that the province is seeking legal advice to look at implementing a travel ban, the Tourism Industry Association of BC commissioned a legal opinion that states a travel ban would be difficult to implement because the Supreme Court of Canada has held that Canadians' mobility rights are *among the most cherished rights of citizenship that are fundamental to nationhood*. These rights are so important they cannot be overridden by the notwithstanding clause. Government will be required to justify any infringement of those rights by showing they are carefully tailored to solve a real problem that other health measures that do not restrict Canadians' rights cannot achieve.

The opinion also suggests that it would be challenging for government to justify creating classes of Canadian citizens based on provincial residency, and that the government would have to explain how a provincial ban would be logical and justified when the federal government permits Canadians to travel for non-essential purposes and return to Canada through any province of their choice.

At the same time, the Coalition acknowledges the outstanding work by government and frontline health care workers to manage the pandemic, and stresses that it is not advocating to irresponsibly open the province to all travel at this time. However, industry leaders point out that since the start of the pandemic, the tourism and hospitality industry has supported provincial COVID-19 protocols and prioritized health and safety by developing and implementing extensive health and safety measures to protect guests, employees and residents. The coalition also says that the industry is keen to work with government on solutions to address rogue behaviour and further protect the public regardless of where people come from or reside.

Industry leaders have repeatedly emphasized that travel is not the culprit for the spread of COVID-19, but rather individual behaviour. Coalition members say they are not aware of or have seen any hard data to support further travel restrictions or an outright ban on non-essential travel within BC and to/from other provinces.

Coalition members are urging government to steer away from the notion of a travel ban in favour of working with the industry and communities to educate prospective visitors on their responsibilities vis-à-vis BC health and safety protocols, as well as expected individual behaviour.

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Vivek Sharma – Chair, Tourism Industry Association of British Columbia

"A travel ban would further heighten the unnecessary fears, misperceptions and growing resentment by BC residents toward visitors as a result of actions aimed at our industry. The spread of COVID-19 is not tied to where people live, but how people behave. There should be no reason why Canadians cannot



continue to travel to BC if they are tested, know and follow the rules, as well as practice health and safety protocols outlined by the PHO and implemented by all businesses.”

Ingrid Jarrett – President & CEO – BC Hotel Association

“We implore the province not to pursue an outright travel ban that would cause undue hardship on businesses, the workforce and our province’s stellar reputation as a welcome and safe place to visit. While now is not the time to encourage non-essential travel, banning visitors from other parts of Canada sends a strong and false message that visitors are to blame for rising transmission rates. Conversely, we need to work together with government to convey the message that people visiting BC for whatever purpose must commit to our strict health and safety protocols.”

Royce Chwin – President & CEO, Tourism Vancouver

“Tourism and hospitality businesses have gone above and beyond the call to develop and implement government approved health and safety measures for the protection of customers and visitors, no matter where they’re from. We’ve not only abided by these measures, but in many cases exceeded provincial guidelines yet we’re the sector impacted the most by orders or proposed bans like this. The effect on workers, businesses and communities has been and will continue to be devastating. We do not need another blow to our sector when we’re barely surviving as it is.”

Nancy Small – CEO, Tourism Richmond

“As more countries, provinces, states and cities around the world open or prepare to re-open to non-essential travel, BC must work toward implementing the necessary steps to safely re-start the visitor economy and the industry. Potential travel bans, or even discussions about them, sets these initiatives back and will mean a longer struggle for our beleaguered businesses and the workforce. We need to work productively with all levels of government in the coming months to focus on the future and solutions that will allow us to welcome visitors again.

Paul Nursey – President & CEO, Destination Greater Victoria

“Cornerstone tourism businesses in Greater Victoria are at the point of despair. With the seasonality and timing of when the pandemic hit, most are now into their 15th consecutive month of operating at a financial loss. This can’t go on much longer. What is urgently needed is for industry and government to collaborate on a plan to re-enter the business of tourism and re-enter key source markets at an appropriate time. Additional restrictions such as these and ones placed at the last minute on New Year’s Eve, are financially ruinous. We believe that health and tourism leaders can work in parallel to achieve more than one outcome...a healthy British Columbia and also a competitive re-emergence of the visitor economy.”

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