

We operate a small guide outfitting business located in northwest BC near Smithers and Burns Lake, Copper River Outfitters. We have been in business for the past 15 years. Our business takes guided hunting and fishing customers mostly from the US. We employ around 12-14 staff and contractors seasonally. Due to the government closures of the border we have had zero revenue and had to cancel around 450,000 in trips in 2020 and another 450,000 in 21 if the border does not open. We have tried to pivot to Canadian customers but the market does not exist in our area. Because of that we have had zero operating revenue. On top of that yearly fees and maintenance of our many remote camps have made us lose a lot more. So far we have had company savings but it won't last much longer. We feel that no industry has suffered the losses that guide outfitting has. Not many businesses have lost 100% of their revenue.

To date we have got no assistance. I chose not to apply for loans as that would just further our debt load and stress level. We did apply recently for a small tourism business grant that we should get and will help with maintenance this year if we get it.

So far future bookings have been strong for US clients. We are booked solid for several years. Most clients are vaccinated and ready to come at a moment's notice. We just need the Canadian government to implement a safe travellers program for vaccinated and tested travellers. We have prepared our camps for covid protocols and safe distancing. We will continue improvements for covid if we get grant funds. Our remote wilderness settings make social distancing easy. Our staff is desperately ready to get back to work and are prepared for any covid code of conduct protocols.

Our business and clients contribute significant funds to small rural local economies. Hotels, restaurants, taxidermists, butcher shops, fuel stations, souvenir shops, sporting goods, hardware stores are just a few small businesses our clients support. One of our largest expenses is government fees for licenses, tags, royalties, leases, rents, permits etc. Most of our clients drive up and take their meat home but some flying customers can not take it all the meat due to airline restrictions. This meat gets donated to local first nations or families in need.

This border restriction has been extremely devastating to our family. Having no income at all for a year is tough. Mentally what has been the biggest struggle, is no communication or path to reopening from our government. Similar businesses and friends in the US and around the world have been operating throughout the pandemic. With no issues. This has also been tough for us to see the differences in our country. As well locally many businesses have seen record years or lost nothing. It makes you wonder if we need to pivot to survive?? The government's strategy of not letting us know the plan for the border and only planning 30 days out has been really tough. Clients call everyday asking for updates but we have no good information to give them? Most do not understand the restrictions as their countries do not have similar restrictions.

As vaccinations in the US have far outpaced Canada and the cases south of the border continue to fall we are hopeful our border will open soon and we will survive.

Jim Lancaster

