



December 22, 2020

Honourable Bill Blair
Minister of Public Safety
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Via email: bill.blair@parl.gc.ca

RE: A Plan for Border Mobility

Dear Minister Blair,

The closure of the United States/Canada border has been devastating for the outfitting industry, as the majority of our clients come from international destinations. A preliminary survey conducted in March 2020 estimated an economic impact of \$1.482B in gross economic activity, \$833M to gross domestic product (GDP), and 21,716 jobs. Total lost federal government revenues are estimated at \$99.6M. Contrast this with the 2018 study from Southwick and Associates which indicated that the outfitting industry normally contributes \$2.7 billion to Canada's gross domestic product and supports over 37,000 jobs nationwide.

Furthermore, a compounding problem is the border closures continuing to roll forward in 30-day increments. As a result, small and medium-sized enterprises do not know whether the borders will be open or closed, whether they should be investing resources to prepare, and whether they will be able to honour their existing contracts.

The outfitting industry has a loyal clientele that could be a valuable component of Canada's economic recovery. However, without further supports and clarity, the CFOA fears that many of our family-run outfitting businesses will not survive.

Safe Traveller Program

Tourism operators are struggling with the uncertainty of 2021, but buoyed by the possibilities created by vaccines and rapid testing. Around the world, examples are emerging of what future travel may look like. Qantas Air will require future fliers to be vaccinated, and jurisdictions like Hawaii and Alaska are already requiring negative COVID-19 tests prior to departure.

Canada's tourism industry needs the Government of Canada to proactively develop a Safe Traveller Program to allow low risk international travellers to visit Canada in 2021. Even with the

current federal support programs in place, many tourism operators will not survive without border mobility in 2021. Utilizing the increasing availability of vaccines and rapid testing, a Safe Traveller Program will allow for safe cross-border travel while providing assurance to Canadians that guests will not create a surge in new cases.

Jurisdictions around the world have successfully tracked travellers' vaccination records for many years. A Canadian Safe Traveller Program could be administered through the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) "Travel Pass" or through a broadened ArriveCAN app. The app would track travel plans, vaccinations, rapid testing results, and the list of vaccines accepted by Health Canada. A person "certified" as a safe traveller would create consistency across all provinces and territories.

The Government of Canada's partnership with the Province of Alberta on the International Traveller Pilot Program has been successful to date, with a 1.4% positive rate on the initial swab, and a 0.7% positive rate on the second swab. The Government of Canada could expand on this program and designate central hubs across Canada for tourist entry. For example, Halifax may be a central hub for the Atlantic provinces, and Toronto could be the hub for Ontario. Working collaboratively with the provinces, the program could administer rapid testing at these entry ports.

Alternative Self-Isolation Plan

Given the rural and remote nature of our industry, outfitters are well-positioned to offer a safe and naturally-isolated tourism experience. An Alternative Self Isolation Plan is another option to allow low-risk clients to partake in the activities they came to Canada for while simultaneously self-isolating.

Earlier this year, the Yukon Outfitters Association (YOA) worked collaboratively with their Chief Medical Officer to implement an Alternative Self-Isolation Plan to enable Canadians from other provinces and territories to enter the Yukon. Participating outfitters were required to demonstrate compliance with the approval from the Yukon's Minister of Community Services, John Streicker. The plan was very successful with 214 clients hosted in 2020 with an additional 88 non-Yukon staff and crew, with zero cases of COVID-19. This plan could be expanded to all territories and provinces.

Northern Business Relief Fund (NBRF)

The NBRF is the only program that truly recognizes the degree of impact our industry is facing. Canada's north has indeed been hard-hit by the pandemic. Since the vast majority of outfitting clients cannot get into the country, the nationwide situation for Canada's outfitting industry mirrors what has been experienced in the north. We request that the Northern Business Relief Fund be expanded to other areas of Canada where certain sectors have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

In conclusion, tourism businesses need clear and supportive direction from the Government of Canada to recover from this pandemic. We trust you will find the validity in our suggestions, and take action to enable outfitters – and all tourism businesses – to operate in a manner that is safe and responsible for all Canadians and visitors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dominic", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Dominic Dugré
President

Cc: Minister Bill Morneau – Minister of Finance
Minister Patty Hajdu – Minister of Health
Minister Mélanie Joly – Minister of Tourism, Economic Development and Official Languages
Gudie Hutchings – Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development