

Hon. John Horgan
Premier
Province of British Columbia
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E1
Via Email

April 6, 2021

Re: Looking Ahead to the Work That Comes Next

Dear Premier Horgan,

We understand that you and your Cabinet need to prioritize the health and safety of British Columbians as the pandemic continues, and we applaud you for these efforts despite the ongoing challenges for tourism and hospitality.

While the past year has been a struggle, mass vaccinations are bringing hope that some sort of new normal will emerge for our province, for our people, and for our sector. We have appreciated your willingness and that of Ministers Melanie Mark and Ravi Kahlon to engage, collaborate, and consult.

As a next step, we are seeking to work closely and collaboratively with your government, with Ministers Mark and Kahlon, and with other ministries including Health, on a specific tourism restart plan to ensure the next phase of pandemic management and re-opening proceeds as smoothly and productively as possible.

We represent a broad, province-wide coalition of employers and associations ready to collaborate with the provincial government on the re-opening of the sector. Together we can ensure that a thriving tourism industry benefits communities and businesses across British Columbia.

That said, there is a significant challenge ahead as we look to restore international and national travel to B.C., while ensuring communities are able to welcome visitors safely and confidently. Continued uncertainties around the pandemic have put much at risk for tourism businesses in 2021 and beyond.

The employers who make up the sector are currently making hiring, leasing, marketing, borrowing and other critical financial decisions that could make or break their businesses and therefore the sector. They are doing so absent of information and continued certainty.

Similarly, national and international tour companies are already indicating they need to see a broad restart plan for them to book tours to British Columbia in 2021 and 2022.

Without a plan, the sector will have difficulty planning, making informed decisions, and will be unsure how to adapt to future changes. While a plan is not a guarantee of future circumstances, it does form a critical base for decision making for when change occurs.

Businesses and communities want to work with your government on a plan that ensures continued survival and helps to deliver the most efficient possible recovery. We are ready to start work as soon as possible.

Our request: A Collaborative Plan to Re-launch Tourism in BC

As an *industry of industries*, tourism is a complex sector that has multiple connective pieces contributing positively to communities across our province. The recent good work of the province's Tourism Task Force acknowledged the following in their final report from December 2020:

For the purposes of the task force's work, successful recovery means:

- *Safe travel protocols restore confidence in tourism staff, travelers, and the communities that host visitors.*
- *Tourism can continue to support quality of life for B.C. residents –economically, socially, culturally and environmentally.*

To meet these objectives as quickly as possible, we are asking to work in partnership with your government on the following:

- Creation of a tailored plan for the tourism industry that includes a balanced, risk-based approach, and creates a roadmap for government and the sector.
- A restart plan for tourism that will lessen the uncertainty associated with sudden shifts in protocols and openings/closings. Businesses need to be able to plan and a clear plan will allow for that.
- Developing clear and specific milestones for the coming months, outlining the conditions that need to be present at each marker so communities and business operators have clear and transparent indicators to help with planning.
 - Items for discussion include:
 - Intra-provincial travel (non-essential) restrictions
 - Inter-provincial travel (non-essential) restrictions
 - International travel for vaccinated travelers
 - Return to office and travel for government and corporations
 - Pub/restaurant indoor dining reopening
 - Pub/restaurant party size requirements
 - Business Meetings – size requirements (50, 100, etc.) distancing protocols
 - Events & Festivals – indoor vs outdoor
 - Theatres & live music venues
 - In-person sporting events
 - Casinos
- Collaboration on evolving safety protocols along with lifting restrictions so they be implemented efficiently and in a way that enhances general confidence
- Joint creation of a communications plan to support a restart plan in order to restore traveler, community, and business confidence. Elements could include:
 - Ensuring and encouraging safe travel
 - As restrictions lift and change, residents will need the permission to enjoy travel again, and communities will need the peace of mind to enjoy welcoming travelers.
 - Resident sentiment will shift if government and health officials are optimistic about travel in BC.
 - When appropriate, active support for government and corporate travel as well as meetings and events will be critical.
 - Messaging should focus on inspiring positive messages about travel and encourage and model good behavior while avoiding *travel shaming*.
 - Collaboration to ensure all communications are aligned with safety protocols and real time communications to the public about current protocols and conditions.

All of us understand the urgent work your government is undertaking in managing health and safety risks and we join with you in that important work.

We also believe planning for a re-opening is also critical to the health and safety of British Columbians. We wish to work with you to relaunch the tourism sector and help it achieve its pre-pandemic vibrancy. Tourism is at the fabric and essence of so many communities in B.C.

Premier Horgan, we are ready to work on this specific plan with your government. Bold efforts and collaboration across the board are needed. Like you, we know that the fabric of our province is its people and its places.

We look forward to hearing from you so together we can create a bold and clear plan to re-launch tourism in British Columbia in a way the benefits people in every part of the province.

Best Regards



Walt Judas
CEO, Tourism Industry Association of B.C.
778-953-0620
wjudas@tiabc.ca



Ingrid Jarrett
President, CEO, BC Hotel Association
250-864-3793
Ingrid.jarrett@bcha.com

cc: Hon. Melanie Mark, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, and Sport
Hon. Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation