



Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia

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January 11, 2021

Honourable Melanie Mark
Minister of Tourism
Room 151, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4
Via email: TAC.Minister@gov.bc.ca

RE: Small and Medium-Sized Business Recovery Grant Eligibility

Dear Minister Mark:

We are grateful for the significant improvements that have been made to the *Small and Medium-Sized Business Recovery Grant* application process further to our letter of October 19th, 2020 to Minister Carole James. The crippling reality, however, is that despite the many changes, most outfitting businesses are still unable to qualify. To help an industry that employs approximately 2,500 people in rural BC and contributes \$191 million annually to the economy, the eligibility criteria still need further amendment.

The biggest barrier to qualification for the grant is the requirement that “*the business experienced revenue losses compared to the same period in 2019 of:*”

- *At least 70% at some point during March or April 2020 and*
- *At least 30% at some point during May 2020 to present.”*

The outfitting business model is seasonal and most operators in British Columbia have very specific windows within which to generate their annual revenue, typical of many tourism businesses.

We request that a more flexible method of demonstrating a significant COVID-related drop in revenue be allowed. The revenue of many tourism businesses is earned in waves, making a loss difficult to demonstrate in March and April 2020. We ask that SMEs be permitted to utilize their yearly financials to demonstrate their losses. This may require that they submit a declaration of loss upfront for payment that is then reconciled once their 2020 financials are filed with the CRA.

Once the eligibility criteria are amended to accept annual revenue, based on your scale the typical outfitter would be eligible for a grant of only \$25 thousand. (Our average outfitting business generates less than \$1 million and employs two to four employees.) This amount is inadequate to sustain a family that has lost 90 percent of its annual income because of ongoing international border closures.

Outfitting is based upon hosting an international clientele. Border closures continuing to roll forward in 30-day increments make it impossible for outfitting business to pivot to local or

national clients, thus it is imperative that border mobility is increased with the implementation of a safe traveller program for international guests. Such a program would include proof of vaccination and/or a rapid testing solution at the point of entry into Canada. Many countries already require proof of vaccination before allowing admittance for other viruses such as yellow fever. Effective rapid testing must continue to be championed to ensure that only COVID-free tourists are permitted entry into Canada.

We ask that the changes we have suggested to the eligibility criteria are swiftly implemented to enable access to support by those who desperately need it. This will ensure those who helped the BC economy in good times are supported by government now that times are bad.

Sincerely,



Sean Olmstead
President



Scott Ellis
Executive Director

CC: Neilane Mayhew – Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport
Salman Azam – Assistant Deputy Minister of Tourism
Ravi Kahlon – Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation
Bobbi Plecas -Deputy Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation
Selina Robinson – Minister of Finance
Rick Glumac – Premier’s Liaison for the State of Washington