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Credit: Northern BC Tourism/Marcus Paladino

MODERNIZATION OF B.C. HERITAGE CONSERVATION ACT (HCA) SUBMISSION

Submitted by:

Tourism Industry Association of BC

Introduction

The Tourism Industry Association of British Columbia (TIABC) represents the breadth of B.C.'s visitor economy, including adventure and wilderness tourism, accommodations, resorts, transportation providers, attractions, and Indigenous tourism experiences. Tourism is a foundational economic sector in British Columbia, generating approximately \$23 billion in annual revenue, contributing nearly \$8.0 billion to provincial GDP, and supporting more than 113,000 direct jobs, or nearly 163,000 jobs when including indirect and induced employment, many of which are concentrated in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

Tourism should also be recognized as a form of essential economic infrastructure, requiring coordinated policy, investment, and permitting systems similar to other major sectors to enable sustainable growth and long-term competitiveness.

TIABC supports the modernization of the Heritage Conservation Act (HCA) to:

- ▶ Strengthen protection of cultural heritage;
- ▶ Advance meaningful partnership with Indigenous Nations; and
- ▶ Ensure a clear, coordinated, and predictable framework that supports sustainable economic activity.

For tourism operators to remain viable, three conditions are essential:

- ▶ Timely and coordinated approvals for permits and site improvements;
- ▶ The ability to rebuild quickly following climate-related events; and
- ▶ Transparent, respectful processes that uphold Indigenous rights and stewardship.



Context: Shift to Implementation

Recent provincial updates confirm that HCA modernization has entered a pre-legislative, implementation-focused phase, with emphasis on:

- ▶ Permitting efficiency
- ▶ Cross-agency coordination
- ▶ Major project alignment
- ▶ Private land clarity
- ▶ Post-disaster rebuilding

This creates a critical opportunity to ensure the Act delivers not only strong heritage protection, but also effective system performance.

As currently experienced by industry, uncertainty and duplication in the HCA process can delay projects, disrupt operating seasons, and increase costs—particularly for small and rural operators.



Credit: Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre/Blake Jorgensen

Why This Matters

Tourism operators frequently work in or adjacent to culturally significant areas and are committed to reconciliation and responsible stewardship.

However, current system challenges include:

- ▶ Seasonal timing constraints that can cancel entire operating windows
- ▶ Misaligned permitting across agencies
- ▶ Limited visibility into timelines and decision points
- ▶ Capacity constraints (archaeology, monitoring, records)
- ▶ Delays in post-disaster rebuilding

These issues translate directly into:

- ▶ Lost jobs
- ▶ Deferred investment
- ▶ Reduced economic activity in rural and Indigenous communities

A modernized HCA must deliver both protection and predictability.



Credit: Destination BC/Blake Jorgenson

Key Principles for Modernization

Input from TIABC members and regional roundtables reveals recurring challenges that can be addressed through modernization:

ONE COORDINATED PERMITTING SYSTEM

Establish a single, project-based permitting pathway that integrates:

- ▶ Heritage review
- ▶ Indigenous engagement
- ▶ Related regulatory processes

This reduces duplication and improves clarity for proponents, Nations, and government.

EARLY AND MEANINGFUL INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIP

Support early, collaborative engagement with Indigenous Nations that:

- ▶ Enables shared understanding
- ▶ Reduces project risk
- ▶ Supports Indigenous leadership in stewardship

Approaches should balance meaningful partnership with predictable and coordinated timelines.

TOURISM AS A STRATEGIC ECONOMIC SECTOR

Tourism delivers:

- ▶ Immediate and distributed economic benefits
- ▶ Employment across diverse geographies
- ▶ Long-term regional development

Regulatory certainty is essential to sustain investment and maintain competitiveness.

ACCESS TO LAND AND WATER-BASED EXPERIENCES

Tourism depends on access to Crown land, protected areas, and water-based environments. Modernization should:

- ▶ Maintain reasonable and predictable access
- ▶ Support low-impact, nature-based tourism
- ▶ Enable continued delivery of visitor experiences that underpin regional economies

IMPLEMENTATION AND SERVICE STANDARDS

Modernization must include:

- ▶ Clear service standards
- ▶ Defined timelines
- ▶ Transparent tracking of applications

This ensures improved system performance rather than added complexity.

DISASTER RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

Include mechanisms to support:

- ▶ Timely, like-for-like rebuilding
- ▶ Streamlined approvals post-disaster

Tourism businesses are critical to community recovery and economic resilience.

Recommended Actions

Building on TIABC's November submission, the following implementation-focused actions are prioritized:

PRIORITY SYSTEM REFORMS

1. SINGLE PROJECT-BASED PERMIT

- ▶ One integrated permit with amendment pathways
- ▶ Reuse of consultation records to avoid duplication

2. SERVICE STANDARDS & DASHBOARD

- ▶ 10-day completeness check
- ▶ 30/60/90-day decision tiers
- ▶ Public performance reporting

3. COORDINATED PERMITTING ACROSS SYSTEMS

- ▶ Align HCA with Crown tenure, environmental, and local approvals
- ▶ Avoid parallel, unsequenced processes

4. RESOURCE INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION & ARCHAEOLOGY CAPACITY

- ▶ Dedicated funding for Indigenous governance and review
- ▶ Expanded archaeology and monitoring capacity

5. DISASTER RECOVERY FAST-TRACK

- ▶ 21-day target timeline for like-for-like rebuilds
- ▶ Pre-approved mitigation templates



ENABLING TOOLS & CLARITY MEASURES (SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS)

6. RISK-BASED, LOW-IMPACT PATHWAYS

- ▶ Simplified processes for low-risk activities (e.g., trail maintenance, signage)
- ▶ Province-wide “traffic-light” mapping approach

7. PRIVATE PROPERTY CLARITY

- ▶ Plain-language guidance on when HCA applies
- ▶ Clear definitions of “like-for-like”

8. OPERATOR SUPPORT TOOLS

- ▶ Checklists, templates, and “know-before-you-dig” resources
- ▶ Seasonal and disaster-specific guidance

9. TRANSPARENT DATA AND REGISTRY

- ▶ Accessible registry with predictive mapping
- ▶ Clear protocols for protecting confidential Indigenous data

10. INTANGIBLE HERITAGE CLARITY

- ▶ Defined scope and workflow
- ▶ Practical and transparent application

11. OVERLAPPING NATIONS COORDINATION

- ▶ Clear, time-bound coordination protocols
- ▶ Avoid placing proponents in mediator roles



Credit: Destination BC/Viranlly Liemena

Best Practice Models:

SCALABLE APPROACHES FOR HCA MODERNIZATION

The modernization of the Heritage Conservation Act presents an opportunity to build from existing, proven models in British Columbia that successfully align cultural heritage protection, Indigenous leadership, and economic activity.

The partnership between the Town of Osoyoos and the Osoyoos Indian Band (OIB) demonstrates how early, structured collaboration at the local level can deliver both cultural and economic outcomes. Through initiatives such as the Osoyoos Official Community Plan, Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre, and Nk'Mip Cellars, Indigenous knowledge, cultural interpretation, and stewardship have been embedded directly into community planning and tourism development. This approach has resulted in stronger relationships, clearer expectations, and more efficient project delivery.

Key elements of this model include:

- ▶ Early, relationship-based engagement prior to project design and procurement
- ▶ Clear and accessible planning tools, including mapped cultural areas and engagement protocols
- ▶ Predictable sequencing between municipal, provincial, and Indigenous processes
- ▶ Indigenous-led interpretation and stewardship integrated into tourism and land use

At a broader scale, the co-governance framework in Haida Gwaii between the Haida Nation and the Province of British Columbia demonstrates how shared decision-making structures can provide clarity, consistency, and long-term stability. Through established governance bodies and collaborative land and marine use planning, this model defines roles, aligns decision pathways, and enables ongoing coordination between governments.

For tourism operators and other proponents, this results in:

- ▶ Greater certainty regarding expectations and process
- ▶ Reduced duplication and conflicting timelines
- ▶ Increased confidence to invest in projects aligned with cultural and environmental values

Together, these examples illustrate that both local partnership models and broader co-governance frameworks can deliver the clarity, coordination, and shared outcomes that HCA modernization is seeking to achieve.

Application to HCA Modernization

TIABC recommends that the Province embed these principles into the modernized HCA through:

- ▶ Development of regional co-design templates that establish clear engagement pathways with Indigenous Nations
- ▶ Implementation of coordinated and sequenced permitting frameworks that align heritage review with other regulatory processes
- ▶ Creation of standardized guidance and planning tools to reduce ambiguity and improve transparency
- ▶ Sustained investment in Indigenous capacity and participation to support consistent and timely engagement

Embedding these approaches will help ensure that HCA modernization delivers a system that is not only protective of heritage, but also clear, coordinated, and predictable, supporting both Indigenous stewardship and sustainable economic development across British Columbia.



Conclusion

Tourism operators and Indigenous governments share a common goal to protect cultural heritage while sustaining community livelihoods.

HCA modernization can achieve this by delivering:

- ▶ Respectful, Indigenous-led stewardship
- ▶ Clear and coordinated processes
- ▶ Predictable timelines and outcomes

TIABC supports continued engagement as the Province advances this work and is committed to contributing to implementation-focused solutions.

Ensuring a clear, coordinated, and predictable framework will be critical to achieving shared objectives of:

- ▶ Reconciliation
- ▶ Heritage protection
- ▶ Economic resilience across British Columbia

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