

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**Metro Vancouver Tourism and Hospitality
Industry Response and Recovery Task
Force**

Tourism, Hospitality, and Accommodation Collective Say Critical Support Still Needed to Re-Open Backbone of the BC Economy

During Tourism Week, industry is calling for a working capital grant to get businesses operating again

VANCOUVER, BC (May 28, 2020): Additional government support is paramount for one of the province's hardest hit sectors to successfully get back to work under BC's Restart Plan say leaders of the largest associations representing tourism, hospitality, and accommodation. While the path forward is welcomed, working capital is vital for businesses to remain solvent until a full path to recovery can be met.

The \$20.4 billion tourism and hospitality sector was effectively shut down when borders closed and both residents and visitors were told to stay home as COVID-19 unfolded in British Columbia. Since mid-March, thousands of hotels, restaurants, pubs, bars, attractions, and other sectors of the visitor economy have been closed, and many are not expected to re-open unless further government aid is realized.

ABLE BC, BC Hotel Association, Restaurants Canada, TIABC, and the Metro Vancouver Tourism and Hospitality Response and Recovery Task Force are calling on various levels of government to augment existing measures by:

- **Providing a working capital grant** to allow tourism, hospitality, and accommodation businesses to re-open their doors and/or prevent permanent closures.
- **Providing a temporary moratorium on evictions for commercial tenants**, akin to the residential measures introduced by the Province.
- **Adjusting the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program** to ensure that it is more broadly applicable to help businesses that do not meet the CECRA criteria, but who have experienced serious impacts to their sales.
- **Suspending property tax increases and penalties for late payments**, as well as any local fees including business licenses.
- **Extending the temporary layoff timelines to align with the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy**

- **Extending BC Hydro relief to large and commercial businesses** by allowing hotels who are commercial BC Hydro clients the same relief measures as other small and medium size businesses.

QUOTES:

“BC’s hospitality industry was hit first, hit hardest, and will be among the last to recover from this crisis,” said Jeff Guignard, Executive Director of BC’s Alliance of Beverage Licensees (ABLE BC). “We’re BC’s third-largest private sector employer, and the very survival of our businesses and the jobs they create now depend on urgent leadership and bold action from our government partners.”

“The accommodation sector supports tourism infrastructure and business in every community across British Columbia, contributing over \$3.5 billion dollars in revenue annually,” explained Ingrid Jarrett, CEO and President of the British Columbia Hotel Association (BCHA). “With over 400 hotels closed, and more than 62,000 employees laid off in the province, many businesses – some of which rely completely on the summer season – are on the brink of insolvency. Starting from square one to reopen the doors, or redefine service and health and safety excellence is going to take investment, training, inventory and onboarding costs. With our industry crippling, it is time for the government to step up and announce a relief measure that will allow this sector to survive.”

“70% of Restaurants Canada members indicate that they are either very or extremely worried that their businesses won’t have enough liquidity to pay vendors, rent and reopening costs over the next three months,” said Mark von Schellwitz, Vice President, Western Canada for Restaurants Canada. “The government needs to come to the table with a package of solutions to help these small and medium sized hospitality businesses stay afloat as they ramp up their operations under new physical distancing requirements.”

“Measures such as the wage subsidy program, various loan and rent relief packages have all been helpful to a degree, but stop short of helping operators with the biggest challenge around liquidity,” said Walt Judas, CEO of the Tourism Industry Association of British Columbia (TIABC). “Businesses have ongoing expenses but without visitors for the foreseeable future and no revenues, few have any cash reserves to meet their current expenses, let alone have enough to begin operating again.”

“The scope and scale of measures taken to limit face to face interactions and restrict both international and domestic travel, while appropriate for public health, have had a profound and debilitating effect on the viability of the tourism and hospitality industry, particularly in the short- and medium-term,” said Ted Lee, Acting CEO of Tourism Vancouver and Chair of the Metro Vancouver Tourism and Hospitality Industry Response and Recovery Task Force. “While government attention is starting to turn to longer-term recovery planning, without further immediate assistance, there will be no longer term for much of our industry, as many small businesses will not likely survive.”

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About the Alliance of Beverage Licensees

BC’s Alliance of Beverage Licensees is the leading voice of British Columbia’s private liquor industry. Their membership includes private liquor stores, pubs, bars, nightclubs, hotel liquor licensees, and various agents, industry suppliers, and benefit providers. On behalf of their over 1,000 members, ABLE BC advocates for a thriving and sustainable private liquor industry. For more information, visit www.ablebc.ca.

About the BC Hotel Association

The British Columbia Hotel Association is a non-profit organization that works on behalf of hoteliers at federal, provincial, and community levels, and champions issues such as taxation, tourism, marketing, corporate relations, labour, and consumer services. The BCHA has over 600 hotel members and 120

associate members, representing an industry made up of over 80,000 rooms and more than 60,000 employees. For more information, visit www.bcha.com.

About Restaurants Canada

Restaurants Canada is a national, not-for-profit association advancing the potential of Canada's diverse and dynamic foodservice industry through member programs, research, advocacy, resources and events. Before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, British Columbia's \$15 billion foodservice sector employs nearly 193,000 people, and serves 3.4 million customers every day. Due to COVID-19, the industry has now lost about 121,500 jobs and is on track to lose at least \$3 billion in sales over the second quarter of 2020.

About Tourism Industry Association of BC

The Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC) advocates for the interests of British Columbia's \$20.4 billion visitor economy. As a not-for-profit tourism industry association, TIABC works collaboratively with its members – private sector tourism businesses, industry associations and destination marketing organizations – to ensure the best working environment for a competitive tourism industry.

About Metro Vancouver Tourism and Hospitality Industry Response and Recovery Task Force

The **Task Force** represents some of the largest industry-related employers and venues in BC. Metro Vancouver's tourism and hospitality members have integral relationships with critical national and international entry, exit and transit points, such as Vancouver International Airport and the Port of Vancouver. The province's premier stadiums, sports teams, convention centres, hotels, restaurants and bars also lie within our borders, and together underpin the very fabric and culture of dozens of communities across the region.

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