

Accommodation Guidelines for Government Employees on Business Travel

July 11 2017

Key Messages:

1. **Overview**
2. **Accommodation guidelines for staff**
3. **Accommodation guidelines for Expense Authorities**

Overview:

The BC Government Business Travel Accommodation Listing can be found at the Procurement Services website at <http://csa.pss.gov.bc.ca/businesstravel/>. The Listing is sorted by city, then lowest single rate. Click on the property name to link to the pricing and details for that property.

The current accommodation policy is based on the accommodation industry providing quoted rates for government staff to stay at a property for business travel purposes. More detailed instructions for travellers and expense authorities are set out below.

Staff must use only those properties in the Accommodation Listing. This will help government obtain the best prices and discounts in the future.

In this guideline 'property' or 'properties' refer to hotel, motel, bed and breakfasts, and long-term stay properties such as condominiums and apartment hotels, and lodges and resort properties.

Accommodation guidelines for staff:

- ❖ Each property has quoted its own government discounted rate; there is no longer a prescribed accommodation rate set by government. Rates may vary by summer, winter and shoulder seasons and there may be supplementary costs for parking, internet access or other services.
- ❖ In making a property selection:
 - Select the most cost effective property that meets your business requirements, considering the room rate and any supplementary costs for internet access, parking or other services. Also consider proximity to business meeting location that impact employee travel time and related travel costs for transportation (i.e. taxi).
 - Ensure you are aware of the expectations of your Expense Authority regarding the price of accommodation you select.

- Ensure that the price you are charged is at or below the rate quoted in the Accommodation Listing for the room and any supplementary costs (there may be specials, or promotional prices that are below the rate quoted in the Listing).
 - Please note: In addition to bed and breakfast properties, some properties offer a full breakfast at no additional charge.
 - Employees may use private accommodation instead of commercial accommodation and claim the private accommodation allowance.
- ❖ Travelling employees are responsible for cancelling hotel reservations in time to avoid "no show" charges; government pays these charges where the employee has no control over the circumstance and is not at fault. The Expense Authority officer must decide if an employee should be held personally responsible for the charges.

If a property bills a rate higher than that listed, please contact the Procurement Services Branch at Accommodation@gov.bc.ca for follow-up with the property.

- ❖ You will be reimbursed for the full amount of the property's room rate and applicable taxes, plus other applicable costs (i.e., parking, internet access).
- ❖ When completing your iExpenses voucher, please ensure you use the justification field to show the name of the property you stayed at so that your Expense Authority and Office of the Comptroller General can verify the correct rate.
- ❖ If a property that you have stayed at previously is not listed, it is either because it did not respond to the invitation to provide a government discounted rate or the rate quoted was too high to be included in the Accommodation Listing.
- ❖ Only in exceptional or emergency circumstances should a property be used that is not in the Accommodation Listing (i.e., all the properties in the Accommodation Listing are full. Before using another property, you must obtain the pre-approval of your Expense Authority. The pre-approval must also be annotated in the justification field of iExpenses.

Accommodation guidelines for Expense Authorities:

- ❖ Each property has quoted its own government discounted rate; there is no longer a prescribed accommodation rate set by government. Rates may vary by summer, winter and shoulder seasons and there may be supplementary costs for parking, internet access or other services.
- ❖ As there is now a range of accommodation rates in each city, please provide instructions to your travelling staff regarding your expectations when they select a property from the Accommodation Listing. Travelling staff are requested to select the most cost effective property that meets their business requirements, considering the room rate and any supplementary costs for internet access, parking or other services.

Please note: Some properties, in addition to bed and breakfast properties, offer a full breakfast at no additional charge. Expense authorities should not approve reimbursement claims for breakfast unless the circumstances justify approving the expense unless the circumstances justify approving the expense.

- ❖ Employees are to be reimbursed for the full amount of the property's rate, and applicable taxes, plus other applicable costs; (i.e., parking, internet access).
- ❖ As Expense Authority, you have the authority to approve travel or not, including setting a maximum spend for the accommodation portion. In giving approval, please take into account the most cost effective travel options.
- ❖ Staff can stay at any property in the Accommodation Listing subject to any instructions or restraints that you as Expense Authority wish to impose for your budget unit. Please ensure that your travelling staff understand your expectations for selecting suitable accommodation, before they travel.

Please note: some properties including bed and breakfasts are more expensive than other properties but a full breakfast is provided making the cost of an overnight stay less expensive.

- ❖ Only in exceptional or emergency situations (i.e., all properties in the Accommodation Listing are full or staff are travelling in a remote location without a property on the Accommodation Listing) would you approve a property not in the Accommodation Listing or priced at a higher amount than properties listed. If there is a business need for you to provide pre-approval for alternate accommodation, please ensure it is noted in the justification field of the employee's iExpenses reimbursement request.
- ❖ If your ministry wishes to establish its own dollar cap within any particular market area, it has the authority to do so; however, the Office of the Comptroller General will review compliance against the rates listed only.
- ❖ If assistant deputy ministers, deputy ministers or ministers have a business need that requires accommodation in a property not in the Accommodation Listing they may exercise their discretion.