

RED Mountain Resort | Ryan Flett

The Future of Travel: Positioning B.C. to Accelerate Recovery and Growth

Final Report of the Tourism Task Force
December 9, 2020

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Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Tourism Task Force, I would like to thank the British Columbia government for its timely and considered response to the pandemic as well as the opportunity to give feedback and help shape the policy of support for the tourism industry in these unprecedented times.

Tourism, at its core, is a people business. We connect people with their loved ones through new experiences, adventures, culture and learning. There is worldwide demand for how we do this, and we are recognized as providing the highest calibre services and experiences. People want to come here, and they will return once this pandemic is over. We are a strong industry but right now, we need an emergency funding bridge to keep businesses open and the workforce employed until demand returns.

Safety has guided the work of the task force and the tourism industry, and we believe safety must remain paramount while meeting the needs of B.C.'s tourism industry. Despite being disproportionately impacted, tourism has been diligent with PHO recommendations and has done its part to protect the workforce, guests and communities through voluntary closures and not just best-practice but *leading-practice* protocols.

As a people business, we have been focused on how to best move forward – the workforce is essential to the success of the industry. The concern we hear is that businesses and the workforce are near to being forced to close or look for work elsewhere, and this negative impact on tourism is more dire since the Tourism Task Force was formed in September due to increasing restrictions on travel.

I would like to say in closing that the task force has been well served and ably supported by a team from the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport. It is always gratifying to work with such committed members of the public service.

The task force would like to thank the tourism industry for giving so generously of their time to share their thoughts and participate in engagement sessions. The difficult experiences they have endured over this past nine months, and their hope for the future of the tourism industry in British Columbia, form the basis for this document.

Personally, I would like to thank my fellow task force members for committing their time, expertise and insights into this important process. We have worked hard to deliver this report early to provide government with maximum time to respond, and we hope you do so quickly.

Sincerely,

Tamara Vrooman, O.B.C. (she/her/hers)

Chair, Tourism Task Force

President and Chief Executive Officer
Vancouver Airport Authority

Task Force Membership

NAME	ROLE	ORGANIZATION
Tamara Vrooman, Chair	President and CEO	Vancouver Airport Authority
Brenda Baptiste	Chair	Indigenous Tourism BC
Rod Harris	Associate Professor	Royal Roads University
Ingrid Jarrett	President and CEO	BC Hotel Association
Walt Judas	CEO	Tourism Industry Association of BC
Glenn Mandziuk	Vice-Chair	Minister's Tourism Engagement Council
	President and CEO	Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
Gavin McGarrigle	Western Regional Director	UNIFOR
Richard Porges	Interim President and CEO	Destination BC
Nancy Small	Chair	BC Destination Marketing Organization Association
	CEO	Tourism Richmond
Stephanie Smith	President	British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union
Amy Thacker	Chair	BC Regional Tourism Secretariat
	CEO	Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association
Salman Azam, (ex-officio)	Assistant Deputy Minister, Tourism Sector Strategy Division	Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport

Biographies are available [here](#).

Executive Summary

The Tourism Task Force (the task force) was appointed on Sept. 18, 2020 by the B.C. Government to make recommendations to support a strong recovery from COVID-19, enhance the industry's long-term competitiveness, and to review the province's *Strategic Framework for Tourism in British Columbia*. This report is the culmination of the task force's research, expert discussions, and stakeholder engagement on these topics.

There is global demand for B.C.'s tourism and when the pandemic is over, there will be again. The tourism industry makes a significant contribution to both B.C.'s economy - *over \$20.5 billion in revenues* - and the social fabric of its people - *over 160,000 people employed*. This is an industry worth investing in.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has left the tourism industry in a precarious position; many businesses are now facing closure as reserve funds and credit run out, and thousands of members of the workforce are unemployed. Funding is required NOW to ensure that there is a tourism industry for the workforce and visitors to return to. Our discussions with business owners and workers were productive, but many are feeling desperate. *A large number of tourism operators and jobholders have fallen through the cracks* of previous/current relief programs. People love the industry and want to build careers in tourism but are worried there won't be work for them when tourism recovers.

As a result, this report is primarily about emergency funding needed now for the unique needs of the tourism industry in B.C. and more specifically, its businesses and workforce. The task force supports the newly-announced federal funding initiatives, including the Highly Affected Sectors Credit Availability Program, but they will take time to gear up, and relief is necessary now.

There is more work to do for the industry once this emergency has been addressed, and we have included a brief description of what we believe this work should be. It is unlikely that demand will return before 2022 and it will take even longer for revenues and employment to return to pre-COVID levels. In the meantime, we can work together in a new level of partnership to plan to rebuild a more resilient, sustainable, inclusive and diverse industry.

We see tourism as a partner in rebuilding the province and economy. One challenge posed by the pandemic is the safe movement of people. The tourism industry prides itself on its ability to safely move people from place to place and provide safe lodging and experiences. *Since March we have put in place safety protocols second to none* to ensure we can continue this service. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to share this experience and knowledge with the Ministry of Health to help get British Columbians safely back on the move. Further, our industry employs many women, Indigenous peoples, and people of colour. We recognize the pandemic has exacerbated the inequities experienced by these groups. We believe that as the industry grows, its ability to create the conditions for success for equity-seeking groups will also improve.

The key objective of the task force has been to preserve as many businesses and keep as many people connected to their jobs as possible. The two are intrinsically linked; without businesses, there are no jobs,

and without experienced and skilled people to fill those jobs, there are no businesses. We believe the recommendations below are true to this objective.

Tourism is a microcosm of B.C.: it has big and small businesses, large revenues and small, a diverse population and a love of our province, but at its core tourism is a people business – we have the experience and the passion for moving people safely and delivering world-class experiences. With emergency funding now, we can continue to deliver the benefits of this excellence into the future.

Summary of Recommendations



ALLOCATE EMERGENCY FUNDING NOW FOR BUSINESSES & THE WORKFORCE

1. Immediately match the \$50 million with at least another \$50 million
2. Allocate \$5 million to Indigenous Tourism British Columbia (ITBC) for Indigenous tourism businesses
3. Allocate \$95 million to an Emergency Fund for Tourism



ACCELERATE GROWTH & ENHANCE SUSTAINABILITY

4. Develop a safety certificate program
5. Prioritize innovative approaches to lifting travel restrictions
6. Defer/relieve fixed costs



INFORM A RENEWED STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

7. Opportunities to support mid-term recovery and long-term resiliency for the tourism industry in a post-COVID-19 context

Tourism in B.C.

B.C.'s tourism industry is about people: the people who provide the experiences and the people who travel from all over the world to enjoy them. This was true before the pandemic, remains true now, and will continue to be our focus in the future.

Before COVID-19

Tourism is an integral part of B.C.'s character and economy. It is interwoven throughout the fabric of the province, supporting families and anchoring the culture of communities. There are over 19,000 tourism businesses in B.C.¹ and together in 2018:

- They contributed over \$20.5 billion in revenues to B.C.'s economy.²
- They contributed nearly \$1.7 billion in provincial taxes.
- They employed 161,500 people.³

These numbers have been growing year over year and were set to grow further in 2020. This is particularly true for the Indigenous tourism sector, with total revenue increasing by \$32 million over the past nine years.⁴ This is significant in Indigenous communities.

As the industry has grown, emphasis has been placed on developing destinations that entice repeat visitation and both seasonal and geographic dispersion. This highlights the interdependency of the industry and its sectors. The loss of a single business can have wide-ranging consequences for an entire region, detracting from its overall desirability as a destination of choice for visitors, as well as impacting the social and economic well-being of the people who live there.

The province's *Strategic Framework for Tourism in B.C.* captures all of this and lays out principles for sustainable and inclusive growth that still resonate despite the pandemic. While the task force applauds the groundwork laid by the framework, COVID-19 requires more be done to meet the immediate crisis and that the framework be updated to accommodate the shifting future reality of the industry.

Now

On March 17, 2020, B.C. declared a public health emergency in response to COVID-19. Hotels, restaurants, transportation, arts, sports, and culture activities were either immediately closed or severely curtailed. Despite some re-opening over the summer months, the tourism industry could see a reduction to 69 percent to \$6.7 billion in revenues in 2020.⁵ The following illustrates some examples of industry impacts:

¹ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/tourism-immigration/tourism-resources/value-of-tourism>

² <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020TAC0050-001806>

³ Including accommodation and food, transportation, retail, and other

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/tourism-immigration/tourism-resources/value-of-tourism>

⁴ <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1481138470313/1481138513336>

⁵ <https://www.destinationbc.ca/news/tourism-task-force-report-the-future-of-travel-positioning-bc-to-accelerate-recovery-and-growth/>

- In April 2020, direct tourism employment in B.C. dipped by about half compared to April 2019. Although employment improved in August 2020, declines from 2019 still existed,⁶ and without CEWS, declines in employment would have been much greater.
- Outside of Greater Vancouver and the Whistler region, from July 26 – September 1, only 25 percent of businesses were operating as usual.⁷
- In downtown Vancouver, hotel occupancy was at 22 percent in the early part of December 2020, a decrease of -77 percent over 2019.⁸
- During the week of November 2, 2020, there were 6,513 airline bookings made within B.C. This is a decrease of -81.4 percent from the same time period last year.⁹

In response, both the federal and provincial governments have stepped up their support.

COVID-19 Supports

The tourism industry is grateful for how quickly and effectively the federal and provincial governments responded with emergency relief programs as the pandemic took hold.¹⁰

However, despite this much appreciated support, there were gaps that tourism businesses fell through, and to compound this issue, each program was designed with the same criteria, meaning these businesses were excluded from every program.

The task force has identified that, at a minimum, sole proprietors, seasonal operators, businesses with more than 149 employees or less than two employees (where number of employees has dictated eligibility), and businesses with foreign ownership who nevertheless employ British Columbians and pay B.C. taxes, have been excluded. Further, a number of these programs, specifically those supporting business liquidity, have concluded, are nearing their end date, or are oversubscribed.

Increased flexibility for tourism businesses in relief programs and support is of twofold importance: to help those who have not yet qualified for support and to respond as the recovery landscape changes.

The Tourism Task Force

Background

On Sept. 18, 2020, the B.C. Government appointed the task force to make recommendations to support a strong recovery in the industry and enhance its long-term competitiveness. The task force is part of B.C.'s

⁶ https://www.destinationbc.ca/content/uploads/2020/11/DBC_COVID-Research-Roundup_Week-22_Nov-19.pdf

⁷ <https://www.tourismgolden.com/sites/default/files/COVID-19%2BTourism%2BImpact%2BReport%2B-%2B2020-07-27%2B-%2B2020-09-01.pdf>

⁸ BC Hotel Association, Pulse Check

⁹ https://www.destinationbc.ca/content/uploads/2020/12/DBC_COVID-Research-Roundup_Week-23_Nov-23.pdf

¹⁰ See Appendix A for a brief summary of programs.

Economic Recovery Plan.¹¹ The task force brings together eleven leaders from the tourism industry who are dedicated to supporting the people and businesses that make up B.C.'s visitor economy.

Task Force Objectives

The task force was charged with making recommendations for the immediate allocation of \$50 million in recovery funding.¹² It has done this and has made recommendations to enhance the tourism industry's long-term competitiveness.

Members believe COVID-19 recovery efforts should align to the aspirations outlined in the province's *Strategic Framework for Tourism in B.C.*: supporting people and communities; sustainably growing the visitor economy, and respecting nature and the environment.¹³

The task force was asked to provide a final report to the Minister Responsible for Tourism outlining recommendations for the \$50 million for:

1. **Near-term measures to support the recovery of tourism businesses and support the re-hiring of employees within the 2021 season(s).**
2. **Specific advice on actions that could be taken to accelerate growth and enhance the sustainability of B.C.'s tourism industry.**
3. **Informing and updating the Province's *Strategic Framework for Tourism in B.C.***

The report makes recommendations in each of these three areas.

Research and Engagement

To make these recommendations, the task force first undertook a literature review, a jurisdictional scan, an environmental scan, and further research as required. This research suggested that stakeholder engagement should be organized around three main topics: maintaining confidence of visitors and the communities that receive them, supporting labour, and supporting business liquidity.

The task force convened 12 roundtable discussions, invited 12 experts to make presentations, and received 13 responses to their request for written submissions. In total, over 160 industry representatives across a wide variety of sectors and from every region of the province provided their insights and recommendations on how government might best support tourism in B.C.¹⁴

Stakeholders said that keeping their businesses open and their people safely employed and/or available when demand resumes were the priorities. \$50 million is not enough to do this effectively, especially in light of the number of tourism operators, including Indigenous operators, who have not yet received funding because of eligibility criteria and the variability of the types of businesses and make-up of the tourism industry workforce.

¹¹ <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/>

¹² See Appendix B for the task force's Terms of Reference.

¹³ See Appendix C for more information about the *Strategic Framework for Tourism in B.C.*

¹⁴ See Appendix D for more information about the research and engagement process.

Despite this dire situation, stakeholders agreed that a lot could be done to address the above issues if visitors and their host communities felt safe visiting, and further, that the pandemic provided the opportunity for the industry to come together in a new level of partnership and plan for the future.¹⁵

Recommendations

Allocate Emergency Funding Now for Businesses and the Workforce

Most tourism operators have not been eligible for funding up to now; this has also had a detrimental effect on the jobholders who rely on these businesses for income and benefits. This emergency funding will address this. The newly-announced federal programs will help, but funding is required now to bridge the gap until these programs begin. Funding is needed now so businesses can support their workforce and stay solvent.

1. Immediately Match the \$50 Million with At Least Another \$50 million

The task force would like to thank the B.C. Government for committing \$50 million to emergency relief for the tourism industry. To put this in perspective, tourism is a \$20.5 billion industry in B.C. and some of the larger operators and anchor attractions have been losing millions each quarter. Add to this the continued travel restrictions significantly reducing much needed holiday/winter season revenues, and the fact that tourism has been unable to pivot to other markets and bounce back like other industries, and there is a need for much more emergency relief. The situation in the industry has dramatically worsened since the task force was convened in the fall. To ensure these businesses survive and the workforce remains connected to their jobs, there is a need for a larger emergency relief envelope.

The task force recommends the original \$50 million be matched by at least another \$50 million.

This first installment of matched funding (\$50M) does not require net new funding. It could be re-directed from the existing allocation to the Small and Medium-Sized Business Recovery Grant.

In addition to the \$100 million, funding could be further leveraged from federal or other provincial sources to provide the much needed support to this vital, yet significantly impacted, industry.

2. Allocate \$5 Million to Indigenous Tourism British Columbia (ITBC) for Indigenous Tourism Businesses

Grant Purpose

Indigenous tourism is one of tourism's fastest growing sectors. In 2016, there were about 400 Indigenous tourism related businesses operating in B.C., generating \$705 million in direct gross domestic output and creating 7,400 direct full-time jobs. In fact, one in four visitors to B.C. actively seek authentic Indigenous experiences.¹⁶

¹⁵ See Appendix E for more detail about what the task force heard from stakeholders.

¹⁶ <https://www.destinationbc.ca/who-we-are/regional-community-industry-partners/indigenous-tourism/>

Grant Principles

In accordance with the spirit and law of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDRIP), and the B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, the task force agrees any solutions to the crisis in Indigenous tourism caused by the COVID-19 pandemic must be Indigenous led.

The task force recommends \$5 million be allocated directly to Indigenous Tourism British Columbia (ITBC) to administer additional grants to Indigenous tourism businesses.

Grant Criteria

Eligibility criteria to access this fund will be established by ITBC to best meet the needs of the workforce and businesses in this sector.

3. Allocate \$95 Million to an Emergency Fund for Tourism

Grant Purpose

This is urgent, emergency funding that must go out now to preserve the maximum number of tourism businesses and jobs, keep the workforce connected to the industry, and recognize the role of tourism operators as significant economic contributors in their regions. It will bridge the gap until federal programs launch and expand eligibility to tourism businesses excluded from previous federal and provincial emergency funds. It will also bridge to the next provincial budget, where it is anticipated additional funds will be made available to the tourism industry. The grant will:

- Protect the health and safety of the workforce (e.g., sick benefits extension).
- Support retention of the workforce (e.g., benefits premiums).
- Fund training where it will help to retain employees and further training when businesses are in a position to rehire.
- Address fixed costs such as utilities, property taxes, and operating and equipment insurance premiums.

The task force recommends \$95 million be allocated to an Emergency Fund for Tourism to bridge the gap until federal programs launch.

Grant Principles

- Delivery of funds must be accelerated to reflect the urgency of the need, especially considering the PHO's extension of travel restrictions until January 2021. To this end, it is recommended that government update the Small and Medium-sized Business Recovery Grant to include a stream specifically for tourism.
- The window must open for applications as soon as possible and remain open until funds run out or until March 31, 2021, whichever occurs first.
- Criteria must be flexible and allow for the unique and variable nature of the tourism industry and its sectors.
- Criteria must prioritize those that have been excluded to date.
- Applications will be considered as they are received.

- Distribute funds as applications come in i.e., do not wait until all applications are received to distribute funds.
- Limit the process to a short-form application, and allow for paper submissions to avoid excluding rural and remote operators.
- Employers need to indicate (check box) that they will bring back the workforce on an equitable basis given length of service, seniority, and benefits and will not reduce wages, vacation pay or other compensation if applying for a grant.
- Maintain a queue for any possible future funds so businesses need not re-apply if their submission is not prioritized for the first round of funding.
- Tourism and labour experts can be made available to support the adjudication process.

Grant Criteria

Businesses:

- May have any number of workers (including full and part time employees, contractors etc.).
- Length of business operation or changes in ownership are not a barrier to eligibility.
- May have ownership based outside of B.C., provided the business employs British Columbians and pays taxes in B.C.
- May be seasonal (i.e., businesses are not penalized for having revenues that fluctuate significantly month over month as a normal course of operations).
- May demonstrate average income for the best of their previous five years to account for those who impacted by floods, wildfires or other events outside their control in recent years.
- May be of any size.

Businesses are ineligible if:

- The business is for sale.
- They cannot demonstrate profitability or close to profitability in pre-COVID years.

Potential uses for the grant that fill gaps left in current programs/policy.

The emergency funding needs to remove previous barriers to accessing relief funds and allow businesses to use the funds to fill gaps left in current programs/policy such as:

Funding for Businesses to Support the Workforce

Paid Sick Leave: This means that businesses will a) pay sick leave, b) do so in a timely manner and c) do so repeatedly as the need arises. This allows people to stay home when sick without penalty or financial hardship (to the jobholder or the business). Current sick leave programs are inadequate to the unique needs of the tourism industry.

Paid Benefits: This means that businesses can fund premiums for benefits they would otherwise have to stop due to liquidity issues. This ensures continued benefits for people while their income is uncertain, variable, or non-existent and in turn keeps the workforce connected to its jobs.

Funding for Businesses to Support Solvency

In addition to funding addressing immediate cash flow pressures, there should not be restrictions how funds can be used. Specifically:

Paying Fixed Costs: These costs could include property taxes, utilities, tenure and other Crown fees such as park use permits and commercial water fees, etc.

Accelerate Growth and Enhance Sustainability

4. Develop a Safety Certificate Program

To maintain the confidence and safety of the workforce and to easily demonstrate adherence to safety protocols.

The task force recommends that a certificate program be built for individuals working in tourism on COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

Further, the task force recommends this be a short online course delivered by Go2HR (B.C.'s tourism human resource association). Non-online options for delivery will be explored. Lastly, this will not include inspection.

5. Prioritize Innovative Approaches to Lifting Travel Restrictions

The task force heard many times that the blanket 14-day quarantine deters travel even when it is safe to do so. Other jurisdictions have implemented a risk-based approach that is more conducive to travel, such as rapid-testing trials/protocols and healthy travel corridors within defined bubbles. These targeted approaches to travel restrictions and risk assessment could allow for the safe movement of people domestically and internationally and restore confidence and social license.

The task force recommends a more innovative approach to lifting travel restrictions, including a risk-based approach that allows for domestic and international travel when it is safe and a pilot program to establish healthy travel corridors within defined bubbles.

6. Defer/Relieve Fixed Costs

The task force heard repeatedly that for those who were eligible, the support programs that sprang up in reaction to COVID-19 did a very good job of helping with variable business costs. A gap exists in support for fixed business costs.

The task force recommends postponement until December 2022 or forgiveness for any fixed costs under the purview of the provincial government. It also recommends that the government advocate for deferment for fixed costs not under their control.

Fixed costs include, but are not limited to:

- Property taxes.
- Utility rates.
- Tenure and other Crown fees such as park use permits and commercial water fees.

Inform a Renewed Strategic Framework for Tourism in B.C.

7. Next Steps

The task force believes that the vision for a prosperous and sustainable tourism industry presented in the framework is still valuable and necessary for the positive growth of the industry. Diversity, inclusivity, reconciliation, partnership, and sustainability throughout the province should continue to be our guiding principles.

The pandemic makes these principles more important and the future more uncertain. The industry will likely take years to return to pre-COVID revenues and employment. At the same time, it must be ready to launch when the borders re-open as global competition for travelers will likely be fierce.

The framework must be updated to reflect the new operating environment that has resulted from COVID-19. Or, in other words, it must be tested with a COVID lens.

This is a strong industry and it is only a matter of time before demand returns, but there are challenges to address to aid in recovery and long-term growth. The task force believes the following should be areas of focus for the renewed *Strategic Framework for Tourism in B.C.*

Recovery

- Everyone must come together to champion the industry. Government must publicly state it is safe to travel as soon as it is safe to do so.
- Develop a travel incentive program to encourage travel within British Columbia.
- Launch a Welcome to B.C. program in Spring 2021 to encourage domestic and international visitation dependent on the re-opening of borders.
- Increase collaboration to improve grant application support to ensure tourism businesses can easily access what they need.
- Leverage provincial and federal programs for further funding, support and to amplify provincial funding.
- Improve partnership and collaboration to better gather data on the industry and more specifically on the impacts of COVID-19 on the workforce to inform future decision making and initiatives.

Resiliency

- Assess skills training deficits and identify opportunities to support training and professional development within all sectors of the industry to support the workforce.
- Identify opportunities for government to coordinate tourism related policy across ministries.
- Increase collaboration between government¹⁷ and the tourism industry to identify and address systemic challenges, such as labour shortages, and improved advocacy for, and understanding of, the unique nature of the industry and its sectors.

¹⁷ See Appendix F for a list of B.C. ministries with tourism-related responsibilities.

- Increase collaboration between government and the tourism industry to identify the changes necessary to be competitive in a global market (e.g. Review of the tourism eco-system, enhanced funding models, real-time consultation, and improved business intelligence).
- Identify new supports for events and sport tourism, which need a long runway for preparation and are experiencing increasing global competition, diminishing our global lead.
- Increase funding for tourism infrastructure.
- Support government's commitment to gig and precarious workers, specifically to investigate the feasibility of a government-backed collective benefit fund and access to a voluntary pooled-capital pension plan for workers who do not otherwise have coverage.¹⁸
- Support an improved and more extensive federal sick pay program specific to the tourism industry through increased funding.

Conclusion

To fulfill its Terms of Reference, the task force has provided this report, which outlines recommendations for:

1. Near-term measures to support recovery of tourism businesses and support rehiring of employees within the 2021 season(s) through **the request for further funding and the two grant programs identified above: \$5 million for the Indigenous Tourism BC Tourism Grant Program and \$95 million for the Emergency Fund for Tourism to support businesses and the workforce.**
2. Specific advice on actions that could be taken to accelerate growth and enhance the sustainability of B.C.'s tourism industry through **the remaining recommendations above.**
3. Informing and updating the Province's Strategic Framework for Tourism in B.C. by **confirming the principles and goals in the framework still resonate with the industry, but that further action needs to be taken to address the results of the COVID-19 pandemic both now and in the future.**

What Does Success Look Like?

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.
- Businesses will continue to create jobs, particularly for individuals often underemployed or underrepresented such as immigrants, women, youth and IBPOC¹⁹ communities. Particularly in Indigenous communities, businesses will continue to provide employment opportunities for Indigenous youth, knowledge keepers, and artisans.
- A long-standing, skilled workforce is available to provide exceptional experiences to visitors.
- Labour shortages are planned for and mitigated as the industry is fully restored in future years.
- To maintain or enhance its global position as a travel destination and potentially explore new markets, B.C. builds on its competitive advantage and unique selling propositions. A strong

¹⁸ <https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/LBR-Walker-mandate.pdf>

¹⁹ Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour

recovery will depend on the preservation of businesses that support B.C.'s gateways and encourage dispersion to the rest of the province.

Tourism as Part of the Solution

The Tourism Task Force would like to thank the B.C. Government for the funding and the opportunity to take part in building a stronger future not just for the tourism industry, but the province. We have a strong, internationally sought-after tourism product that will be in demand again once the borders re-open. We believe that with the right supports in place to keep the industry alive now, we can help to get British Columbians safely back on the move, working at family-supporting jobs, and advocating for equity-seeking groups. We look forward to continuing the discussion.

Appendix A – Support Programs at a Glance

TOPIC AREA	SUMMARY
Support for Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various relief and recovery funds, focused on small/medium operators, Indigenous-owned, women-owned, and regional businesses. • Short term immediate COVID-19 response loans as well as longer term loans, low interest loans. • Tax deferral and relief programs (e.g., income tax, GST, property tax). • Bill relief programs (e.g., WorkSafe BC, BC Hydro). • Change to regulations and policies for liquor licensees. • Bridge financing to large employers, whose needs are not met through conventional financing.
Support for the Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs to support the tourism workforce such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). ○ Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB). ○ Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB). ○ Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB). • Online tool to speed up temporary layoff application process. • Mortgage and rent relief programs. • Eligible wages period extension for the Wage Earner Protection Program. • Additional relief programs for Persons with Disabilities and/or Seniors. • Investment in training and education such as Indigenous skills training, improved access to student loans and the Hospitality Professional Program Project-Based Labour Market Training (PBLMT) project.
Maintaining Confidence (includes efforts aimed at supporting businesses recovery over the long term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports for businesses to improve digital marketing and e-commerce. • Community destination management organization funding programs to enable them to continue to operate. • Financial supports for regions and municipalities that are dependent on tourism to build, adapt and diversify their tourism infrastructure. • Provincial investments such as increasing high-speed internet in rural communities, investment in B.C. parks and investment in transportation infrastructure, improving the ability to travel throughout the province.

Appendix B –Task Force Terms of Reference

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply challenged and altered British Columbia’s visitor economy. Concerns over transmission of the virus required an immediate focus on protecting public health. There was no time for owners to pivot business models or seek new replacement markets and the result was drastic reductions in revenue for 19,000 tourism businesses in B.C. As economies across the world restart, demand for travel and consumer behaviour has shifted dramatically.

Pre-COVID-19, British Columbia’s tourism industry was well-positioned to have its strongest year yet, and business owners and communities were ready to welcome the world. In 2018, tourism generated \$20.5 billion in annual revenue, an increase of 4.9 percent over the previous year and an increase of 53.3 percent since 2008. The tourism industry generated \$1.7 billion in provincial consumer tax revenue in 2018 – 5.1 percent more than the year prior. Jobs increased 4.3 percent in 2018 over the previous year, with 161,500 people working in tourism in 2018. Tourism was increasingly recognized for its role in helping to build communities – supporting cultural development and recreational opportunities for residents – while advancing environmental protection goals.

Today, the impacts of COVID-19 mean the tourism industry is facing an economic crisis. As of July 25, 2020, industry surveys showed that only 24 percent of tourism businesses were operating with business as usual. About half of tourism businesses in B.C. have seen a decrease of at least 50 percent in year-over-year revenues, and 36 percent were unable to pay their bills in June.

Attention now needs to be turned to the accelerating recovery in the short-term (the 2021 tourism season(s)), as well as to providing recommendations that are fiscally feasible and in line with PHO orders to envision a sustainable future.

Engagement with key groups and individuals is essential to inform government policy direction and recommendations to rebuild and set in place conditions for growth in the tourism industry. To carry out this work, the task force was formed.

Purpose

The task force will engage tourism stakeholders and seek their views on:

- Near-term measures to support a successful recovery for the 2021 tourism season(s).
- Recommendations to encourage rehiring of existing employees when work resumes.
- Envisioning a sustainable tourism future.

A final report will be provided to the Minister responsible for Tourism outlining recommendations for:

- Near-term measures to support recovery of tourism businesses and support rehiring of employees within the 2021 season(s).

- Specific advice on actions that could be taken to accelerate growth and enhance the sustainability of B.C.'s tourism industry.
- Informing and updating the Province's Strategic Framework for Tourism in B.C.

Scope

Consultation on issues specific to COVID-19 impacts on tourism in B.C. and what actions the provincial government could take to help B.C.'s tourism businesses (and other directly impacted sectors related to the tourism economic collapse) near-term recovery.

The task force will leverage existing input from the tourism sector on major policy issues, potential barriers to growth and opportunities to strengthen the sector's recovery near-term as well as provide fiscally feasible recommendations in line with PHO orders to enhance sustainability of the industry.

Engagement

Targeted roundtable engagement sessions (may be virtual) with key business and Indigenous leaders across all regions in British Columbia, including:

- Representative tourism business organizations and operators.
- Representative arts and culture business organizations and operators.
- Representative conventions, meeting and events business organizations and operators.
- Representatives from sport tourism sector.
- Representatives from tourism dependent communities and resort communities.
- Key sector organizations.
- Local governments.
- First Nations.
- Labour.
- Academia.

Membership




The task force will be led by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport's Assistant Deputy Minister for Tourism Sector Strategy and supported by a Chair, to be appointed by the Minister Responsible for Tourism. Secretariat support will be provided by a contractor(s).

Timeline

Launch of the task force September 18, 2020, with the task force summarizing findings and presenting its final report by December 31, 2020.

Appendix C – Tourism B.C. Strategic Framework at a Glance

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AT A GLANCE

<p>SUPPORTING PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES</p>  <p>Supporting people and communities to improve the quality of life and increase support and celebration of Indigenous cultures through tourism.</p>	<p>A STRONG AND DIVERSE TOURISM WORKFORCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion tourism as an industry with diverse, good paying jobs. • Help people get the skills they need. • Address the challenges associated with a seasonal tourism workforce, including affordable housing. <p>SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help communities grow and manage tourism through destination development. • Ensure the tourism sector is prepared to respond to, and recover from disasters. • Continue to invest in arts, culture, heritage, sport, and multicultural events and festivals. 	<p>RECONCILIATION THROUGH TOURISM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve and promote the living culture and rich heritage of Indigenous peoples through tourism. • Help Indigenous communities and tourism businesses get the skills they need to continue to develop tourism experiences. <p>MAKE TOURISM MORE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote B.C. as an inclusive and welcoming destination for everyone. • Build capacity to support more inclusive and accessible tourism products, services and experiences.
<p>SUSTAINABLY GROWING THE VISITOR ECONOMY</p>  <p>Sustainably growing the visitor economy through innovative marketing and destination, and community development.</p>	<p>BUILD A BETTER AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DESTINATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support sustainable tourism growth through destination development including new product development and enhanced tourism infrastructure and amenities. • Expand province-wide connectivity and Wi-Fi access. • Improve transportation access to support sustainable tourism growth. • Champion tourism as an investment opportunity. 	<p>DRIVE DEMAND TO ENSURE B.C. REMAINS A TOP TRAVEL DESTINATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue innovative marketing to compete in key markets. • Encourage more year-round tourism and regional travel. • Create a seamless visitor experience for travellers.
<p>RESPECTING NATURE & THE ENVIRONMENT</p>  <p>Respecting nature and the environment by strategically guiding and managing tourism growth while preserving B.C.'s natural spaces.</p>	<p>SUSTAINING SUPER, NATURAL BRITISH COLUMBIA®</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable the tourism sector to develop and adopt common sustainability policies and practices. • Reduce tourism emissions and waste. • Foster responsible visitor travel that creates better places for people to live in, and better places to visit. 	<p>SUPPORT TOURISM VIABILITY IN B.C.'S NATURAL SPACES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the growth of the adventure tourism and agri-tourism sectors. • Ensure the long-term sustainability of B.C.'s outdoor recreation experiences including BC Parks and provincial recreation sites and trails. <p>VISION:</p> <p>Our vision is to build a strong, sustainable tourism sector that benefits all British Columbians. Our new strategic framework is built on a foundation of sustainability which calls for consideration of the benefits of the sector along with its economic, sociocultural and environmental impact.</p>

Full report: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/tourism-immigration/tourism-resources/bcs-tourism-framework>

Appendix D – Approach and Engagement Process

Task force approach

2020

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Government appointed Tourism Task Force to make recommendations about how to support strong recovery and enhance competitiveness	The Task Force met regularly to gather data, research and information and set priorities	Stakeholder engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 roundtable sessions • Over 160 participants • 13 written submissions • 12 expert presentations from specific sub-sectors 	Final report submitted to government

The task force has met 11 times since its inception, including a two-day in-person workshop held at YVR October 29 and 30, 2020. Given the limitations on engagement through the election period, the task force focused these initial meetings on work planning, research and information gathering, and priority setting. To support deliberations, the task force requested and reviewed several pieces of research: an environmental scan, competitive jurisdiction review, summary of requests from industry to date, and an inventory of federal and provincial government supports currently in place.

Engagement

The task force ensured it heard from a broad cross-section of stakeholders and provided an opportunity for anyone in the tourism industry impacted by COVID-19 to have a voice in their deliberations.

From November 9 to 23, 2020, the Task Force engaged with stakeholders to validate their initial thinking for recommendations and hear other ideas. The engagement had three components: roundtable discussions, expert presentations, and written submissions

Roundtable Discussions

The task force held six regional roundtables and six topic-specific roundtables attended by a total of 143 tourism industry stakeholders.²⁰ The topic-specific roundtables were focused on transportation, aviation, anchor attractions, labour and human resources, large hotels, and Indigenous tourism.

Expert Presentations

In addition, the Task Force identified experts to give presentations specific to their respective sectors. These included representatives from adventure tourism, wilderness tourism, ski, cruise, sports tourism, arts and culture, food and beverage, campgrounds and lodging, meetings, conventions and events, online bookings, app development, as well as two industry-led task forces, the Greater Victoria Tourism Rescue and Recovery Task Force and the Metro Vancouver Tourism and Hospitality Industry Response and Recovery Task Force.

Written Submissions

To enable those not invited to a roundtable to provide their input, the task force invited written submissions.

	ORGANIZATION	NAME	ROLE
1	Unifor Local 1928	Chris Peters	President / BA
2	Nimmo Bay Resort Ltd.	Craig Murray	Co-Owner
3	UNITE HERE Local 40	Michelle Travis	Research Director
4	Dot Matrix Management	Mike Olson	Managing Director
5	Queen Charlotte Lodge	Paul Clough	President
6	EXAR Studios	Ben Switzer	Co-Founder
7	West Coast Fishing Club	Names not provided	
8	Science World	Tracy Redies	President and CEO
9	UNIFOR	Gavin McGarrigle	Western Regional Director
10	Worth Association	Joanna Jagger	President and Founder
11	The Anchor Attractions of BC	Nicholas Cartmell	CEO British Columbia Sports Hall of Fame
		Nancy Stibbard	Owner/CEO Capilano Suspension Bridge
		Vincent Kwan	Executive Director Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden
		Michael Cameron	General Manager Grouse Mountain
		Raylene Marchand	Executive Director H.R. MacMillan Space Centre
		Mauro Vescera	CEO Museum of Vancouver
		Lasse Gustavsson	President and CEO OceanWise/Vancouver Aquarium
		Tracy Redies	President and CEO Science World
		Anthony Shelton	Museum Director University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology
		Anthony Kiendl	CEO and Director Vancouver Art Gallery
		Pamela Thurston	General Manager Vancouver Lookout
Dr. Joost Schokkenbroek	Executive Director Vancouver Maritime Museum		
12	Restaurants Canada	Mark von Schellwitz	Vice President, Western Canada
13	Retail Action Network	Pam Charron	Coordinator

Appendix E - What We Heard from Stakeholders

Maintaining the confidence of travelers and host communities

Underpinning the successful recovery of businesses and the labour force is the need to restore confidence in both the travelling public and residents of the communities who host them, building social licence to ensure communities support resuming tourism. During stakeholder engagement, the task force heard:

- The predominant priority amongst all groups is the availability of rapid testing at key entry points and within proximity of smaller communities if travelers are moving around the province.
- Stakeholders are concerned about social licence; though operators may have strong protocols in place, host communities are increasingly reticent about opening their doors to visitors.
- There is a significant need to build awareness of the social, community and economic value of the tourism industry in B.C. so communities are more understanding of impacts to tourism operators and the priority of re-opening to travelers.
- To dispel fear and bolster consumer confidence, it is critical to communicate the work the industry has undertaken to support the PHO with extensive safety protocols that worked extremely well over the past 10 months.
- This includes the need to reopen to international travelers as the 6.2 million international visitors²¹ cannot be replaced by domestic tourism. While a lower percentage of all overnight visitors, international travelers are responsible for half of the overnight expenditures.²²
- The tourism industry seeks to work collaboratively with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) to better understand the considerations that would lead to shut down and improve communication of tourism industry requirements. By working in partnership, tourism can support both protecting people and communities and mitigating some of the economic impacts to workers, business owners and communities.

Supporting workers

Tourism, at its core, is an industry made up of the dedicated people who work in it. Their safety and jobs must be protected. During stakeholder engagement, the task force heard:

- Support for labour must reflect the differing impacts in regions and in sectors.
- We received feedback from both rural and urban regions that Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) created a potential disincentive for some workers to return to work when balanced with the perceived health risk. At the same, it was also widely noted that CERB was an essential support for survival of workers who lost their livelihoods when businesses shut down or reduced their hours.
- The labour market is extremely diverse and supports need to ensure a broad range of workers remain connected to employers and the tourism industry, including highly skilled or specialized workers, foreign workers, and low-skilled workers.
- The nature of the tourism industry, specifically part-time or seasonal aspects, need to be considered. There is a need for flexibility in benefit and employment programs (e.g., Employment Insurance Program, Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS)) so workers can work when there is

²¹ <https://www.destinationbc.ca/content/uploads/2020/02/International-Visitor-Arrivals-December-2019.pdf>

²² https://www.destinationbc.ca/content/uploads/2019/10/2017-Value-of-Tourism_FINAL.pdf

work and remain supported when hours are not available. This is particularly important as the industry employs a significant number of women, youth, immigrants, people of colour, and Indigenous peoples.

- There is a need to address how sick days are managed and paid for. Workers and businesses may not have plans in place to address income loss when workers exhibit symptoms and need to stay home to comply with PHO guidelines and protect other workers, customers and the community.
- There are significant concerns about ensuring the workforce is available when businesses start to ramp up again. Long term support will be required to competitively position the industry as a preferred employment/career choice.
- Training continues to be a focus for our industry, though more support is required. There are short-term opportunities to provide future training in areas such as digital marketing and safety protocols. However, there are longer term important specialized training opportunities (e.g., guides in adventure tourism) that are akin to trades training. Lack of supported training in these areas reflect an incorrect perception that the industry is made up of low-skilled workers.
- Workers are struggling to stay on EI and still adequately support themselves and their families, particularly those who work seasonally or part time. Adding to the complexity of this scenario is the fact many employers cannot to pay the required severance. There is an opportunity for government to immediately explore solutions to addressing this issue that are fair to both workers and employers.

Supporting businesses

Businesses have faced significant solvency shortfalls which will be exacerbated heading into the winter months. While some businesses have accessed relief from other programs, many have fallen through the cracks as the nature of tourism operators (e.g., seasonality, size of business, sole proprietorships) have made them ineligible. During stakeholder engagement, the task force heard:

- Stakeholders consistently noted the \$50 million fund was disproportionately small when compared to the challenges tourism businesses had experienced accessing other programs and the comparative size of its \$20.5 billion contribution to the B.C. economy.²³
- Most stakeholders indicated the current relief envelope needs to go directly into the hands of operators to support business liquidity and allow them to retain workers. While areas such as training and marketing are important, far too many businesses are in jeopardy of not surviving what is anticipated to be a 12-24-month recovery until tourism can be self-supporting.
- There was consensus that consideration should be given to those businesses that have not yet qualified for/received support. Given many new federal and provincial programs have been based on criteria from previous relief programs, tourism operators have repeatedly fallen through the cracks. Future supports, including grant programs, must be designed for tourism businesses.
- Common comments that fund allocation needs to recognize the differing needs of rural communities and businesses, particularly because rural businesses have limited ability to pivot and have smaller local markets from which to draw clients, however urban operators are more dependent in international travelers.

²³ https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/tourism-and-immigration/tourism-industry-resources/statistics-figures/2017_value_of_tourism_snapshot_final.pdf

- Criteria for funding needs to acknowledge that different regions and different sectors have different needs that should be considered in funding allocation, such as seasonality and the fixed costs associated with a larger operation.
- Any grant programs for Indigenous operators should be Indigenous led. Access to funds is the number one issue to address. Without it, operators will walk away and B.C. will lose Indigenous tourism, which is a critical element of B.C.'s international brand and one of the fastest growing sectors in tourism in Canada.
- There are significant issues where tourism operators are not maintaining eligibility for insurance claims when complying with PHO guidelines. There is an immediate need to work with partners to explore potential solutions to this challenge.
- The important role of large operators should be acknowledged (e.g., anchor attractions, transportation operators) in the tourism ecosystem given the volume of smaller operators and other businesses who rely on them. Impacts to these businesses are significant given their high fixed costs, assets, infrastructure, and minimum staffing requirements even when the business is not generating revenue.

Appendix F – Ministries with Tourism-Related Responsibilities

Tourism touches on many provincial ministries, including:

- The Ministry of Finance through its responsibility for taxation policy such as the Municipal and Regional District Tax (hotel tax).
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy through a shared stewardship of the lands, lakes and oceans of B.C. and responsibility for such areas as tenure, heritage, parks, water policy, access for the tourism industry to operate.
- The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training, the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation, and the Ministry of Labour through a shared desire to support the workforce and create family-supporting jobs.
- The Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction through a shared commitment to poverty reduction and meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.
- The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure due to the interconnected nature of tourism and the safe movement of people through our transportation infrastructure.
- The Ministry of Health through a focus on the safety of British Columbians.