

## Meeting Backgrounder

**Prepared For:** Honourable Melanie Mark, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport

**Meeting Date:** November 30, 2020

CLIFF #: 41002

### **MEETING:**

Introductory meeting with Tamara Vrooman, President and CEO of Vancouver International Airport, and Chair of the Tourism Task Force (TTF).

### **ISSUE:**

Tamara Vrooman will update the minister on the TTF's progress and provide a verbal briefing of members' initial thinking as they prepare to submit their Final Report in early December. She may ask for the minister's feedback about the themes and ideas for recommendations identified to date.

### **KEY FACTS REGARDING THE ISSUE:**

- The TTF has met nine times since it was appointed on September 18, 2020. This includes a two-day in-person workshop in October held at YVR.
- The TTF's Terms of Reference were considered penultimate and confidential, until they are formally approved by the minister. (See Appendix A).
- During October, the TTF focused on gathering data and information to inform its deliberations, studying the approaches of other jurisdictions, taking an inventory of existing federal and provincial programs, identifying gaps in relief programs, and discussing priorities for recovery.
- In November, the TTF conducted targeted stakeholder engagement via 15 regional, sector-specific, and 'expert' roundtables.
- Feedback from these sessions confirmed three areas that reflect the greatest opportunities to support tourism recovery:
  1. Restoring confidence in travelers and consumers:
    - The TTF is exploring ways for industry and government to collaborate on pilots that could serve dual purposes of supporting the public health response while reopening tourism markets. These may include rapid testing, enhanced contact tracing, employee training, and public education campaigns.
  2. Supporting the labour force:
    - The TTF is looking at how best to support workers who have been temporarily or permanently laid off from their positions. These workers have in many cases lost access to health benefits and may need support in retraining for other industries.
  3. Supporting business liquidity:

- The TTF has spent considerable time discussing how best to support business liquidity, given that decisions will need to be made about prioritizing the available funding.
  - The TTF is considering recommendations to improve and expand the Small and Medium Size Business Recovery Grant so that more tourism businesses can qualify.
- The TTF is also unanimous in its belief that \$50M is not sufficient to support the industry until it can start to recover. As such, the Final Report will reflect additional requests for funding (at minimum an additional \$50M for business liquidity).

**ADVICE:**

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**Appendix A: Penultimate Terms of Reference**

# Terms of Reference - Penultimate

## TOURISM TASK FORCE (TTF) –

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

#### Context

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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% over the previous year and an increase of 53.3% since 2008. The sector generated \$1.7 billion in provincial consumer tax revenue in 2018 – 5.1% more than the year prior. Jobs increased 4.3% 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% 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% in year-over-year revenues, and 36% 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 Provincial Health 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 sector. To carry out this work, the Tourism Task Force (TTF) was formed.

# Purpose

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The TTF will engage tourism stakeholders and seek their views on:

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

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

1. Near-term measures to support recovery of tourism businesses and support rehiring 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 sector, and;
3. Informing and updating the Province's Strategic Framework for Tourism in B.C.

# Scope

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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 TTF 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 Provincial Health Orders to enhance sustainability of the sector.

# Engagement

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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 Industry;
- Representatives from Tourism Dependent Communities and Resort Communities;
- Key sector organizations;
- Local governments;
- First Nations;
- Labour; and
- Academia.



Ministry of  
Tourism, Arts  
and Culture

## Membership

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The TTF will be led by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture'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

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