

BC Meetings & Events COVID-19 Safe Restart Guidelines UPDATE September 2, 2020

The Guidelines have been developed by the BC Meetings & Events Industry Working Group, started by a cross-section of industry leaders to provide a set of safe restart guidelines to businesses servicing the industry.

By having a set of standards that have been vetted by WorkSafe BC, the BC Centre for Disease Control and the Provincial Health Ministry, we can align operations of meetings & events in the province to meet the specific requirements mandated by the province and hold the industry accountable to risk mitigation plans during the COVID-19 pandemic and start getting businesses back to work.

By endorsing and adhering to these guidelines, we can demonstrate a united industry committed to working together within industry standards and prove competency to provincial government and health authorities that our industry can conduct meetings & events in a safe, controlled and effective manner. The end goal is to encourage the government and PHO to loosen restrictions on meetings & events with a phased approach.

These guidelines are focused on corporate meetings & events. They do not apply specifically to social events such as weddings/family gatherings, convention, exhibition or tradeshow events or public concerts, festivals or ticketed public events, although they are certainly transferrable.

We need to stress the importance of our industry having a collective voice which is stronger and louder than unilateral efforts that may deflect attention from the work already being done in support of our industry and getting our businesses back to work. We are encouraging people to get involved in any of the groups listed below and/or within their own industry associations to support existing initiatives and to be part of future developments. Avoid branching off and creating white noise. Expert advice recommends against multiple efforts that are misaligned as they confuse the message to government. Communicate with each other. The future of our industry lies largely in the hands of the BC provincial government, more specifically with the Provincial Health Officer (ie; border control, quarantine restrictions, mass gathering restrictions).

Developing the guidelines was the first phase initiative for the working group. This initiative was just one part of a number of initiatives that have laid the foundation for future advocacy on which to build. The working group continues to advocate on behalf of the industry and will be moving into Phase 2 of an advocacy strategy, developing a roadmap for recovery. We are actively involved in discussions with the BC government around the mass gatherings issue and on the stimulus package submitted on behalf of the tourism & hospitality industry by TIABC. As we develop our Phase 2 plan, we will be reaching out to industry for engagement.

Examples of advocacy that has been done and continues to support a restart of the industry are:

BC Meetings & Events Working Group;

June – Sept; BC Meetings & Events COVID-19 Safe Restart Guidelines. Advocacy group for BC Meetings & Events Industry formed to develop these guidelines to align industry under one effort focused on safe restart; prove cohesiveness and capability to restart safely; get the attention of government that we are an industry that is an economic driver and must be taken seriously in the recovery efforts of the overall Tourism and Hospitality Industry in BC and the overall BC economy. We have earned the attention

and support of WorkSafeBC, BCCDC, PHO and the Ministries of Labour, Tourism and Health in the development of these guidelines and have the ear of the Tourism, Labour and Health Ministries.

September-October; Focus on rallying the industry together to support and adopt the guidelines. Advocate on behalf of industry through discussions with BC government (meeting with the Tourism Ministry) to advocate for a restart with a phased approach to lifting restrictions on gatherings.

The Metro Vancouver Tourism & Hospitality Response & Recovery Task Force;

<https://www.metrovancouvertourismtaskforce.com/>; Set up by Tourism Vancouver but represents organizations province wide with 4 working groups including: 1. Impact Assessment 2. Government Relations 3. Issues Management & Communications 4. Sector Recovery Strategy. All of these working groups advocate for the Meetings & Events Industry under the Tourism & Hospitality Industry.

Advocacy initiatives to date have been extremely successful and include the following;

<https://www.metrovancouvertourismtaskforce.com/sector-advocacy/>

April 14 – Letter to BC Minister Beare (Tourism) expressing; 1. The need for liquidity for struggling businesses, specifically asking for interest free loans and rent relief; 2. Request to enhance and extend the federal wage subsidy program and 3. Invest in the recovery for tourism (which includes M&E) through the Canadian Emergency Business Account.

<https://www.metrovancouvertourismtaskforce.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/MVTHIRRTF-Letter-to-Minister-Beare-2020.04.14.pdf>

April 14 – Letter to Minister Joly (Federal Minister of Tourism) expressing similar requests to above including specific support for small businesses. <https://www.metrovancouvertourismtaskforce.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/MVTHIRRTF-Letter-to-Minister-Joly-2020.04.14.pdf>

May 7 – Letter to Ministers Beare (Tourism) & Mungall (Jobs, Economic Dev & Competitiveness) on behalf of Meetings, Conferences & Events in BC, 200+ companies across BC endorsed the letter. Requests were: 1. Allow sector to salvage 2020 4th quarter business by allowing a rolling evaluation and 2. Adjustment to restrictions on gatherings to support an effective restart and save the industry and jobs. <https://www.metrovancouvertourismtaskforce.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Events-Letter-MVTHIRRTF-TIABC-May-7-2020.pdf>

July – Submission of the Recovery Stimulus Package for the BC Tourism & Hospitality Sector. Request for \$680 Million, designed as a blanket request for the overall sector which includes meetings & events. <https://www.metrovancouvertourismtaskforce.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/TIABC-COVID-Recovery-5.pdf>

BC Hotel Association

Working with government to get meetings & events approval for restart within BC hotels.

<https://www.bcha.com/>

MMBC (Meetings Mean Business Canada) & TIAC (Tourism Industry Association of Canada)

Working closely together on national initiatives and are in regular communications with the Federal Government advocating for our voices to be heard and conveying the importance for our industry to restart soon. <https://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.ca/> <https://tiac-aitc.ca/>