

For Immediate Release

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TOURISM INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA LAUNCHES TOURISM WEEK WITH A PLAN OF THEIR OWN

Economic conditions for Alberta tourism operators under mandatory COVID-19 restrictions are still challenging, but the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta (TIAA) is launching a campaign to encourage a government relief plan.

The plan, which aligns with Tourism Week in Canada, is seeking the support of Alberta tourism operators and destination marketing organizations to request the creation of an Alberta tax credit or incentive program. Such benefits would be designed to encourage frequent, high-spending experiences within the province this summer, said Darren Reeder, Board Advisor for TIAA.

The advocacy and engagement campaign is focused on four thematic areas: business liquidity supports, a predictive path to lifting restrictions, stimulus for summer demand, and plans for reopening borders. It also appeals to Travel Alberta to deploy a robust marketing scheme aimed at saving the summer tourism season. This would be timed to launch as soon as health restrictions begin to ease from current levels.

The campaign also calls for the immediate expansion of the Small & Medium Enterprise Relaunch Grant (SMERG) and inclusion of a dedicated tourism and hospitality stream that provides program support, due to continuing business restrictions.

And it advocates that the federal government extend the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS) programs to the end of 2021, or until all remaining health restrictions, travel advisories and border closures have been lifted.

“The efforts of our entire industry have never mattered more than right now so, we ask you to join us and undertake purposeful discussions with your MLA and MP in the days ahead,” says TIAA.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Alberta tourism operators have shown resilience and determination in the face of the pandemic, and they have demonstrated the character that makes us all so proud of tourism in Canada, says TIAA. Following are some examples of those operators.

Get Outside Adventures in Canmore has shown that recommended COVID-19 precautions should be applied in outdoor settings, including the backcountry where their programs take place. Some of the new rules include moving all in-person pre-trip meetings to online platforms; limiting group sizes to improve group safety; maintaining a separation distance of two metres while trail hiking; requiring that masks be

worn within two metres of designated cooking areas, and more. Trip types, sizes, locations and frequencies have been adjusted to better enable trips to operate in the ruggedness of the backcountry.

The various jobs involved in running and maintaining a farm are an everyday part of life for farmers, but this lifestyle is foreign and fascinating to many urban-bound folk. Hence the popularity of the virtual tours now being offered by Chatsworth Farm of Vermillion AB. Owner Charlotte Wasylik successfully pivoted from in-person to virtual farm tours early in the pandemic and has since garnered a large and growing international audience. She now does private virtual tours for schools, mom-and-tot groups and families around the globe that are interested in farming.

Helicopter sighting tours by Rockies Heli Canada have not been sidelined by the pandemic, and the scenic flights to see glaciers, canyons and mountains have continued – even the Heli Wedding packages have been successfully adapted. Protocols adopted by the company include that masks must be worn at all times in the company facilities and in the helicopters; no more than six people can be in the facilities at any one time; all helicopters are cleaned and disinfected after each flight, and the facilities are cleaned and disinfected three times daily.

Pei Pei Chei Ow is an Indigenous catering company based in Edmonton that is inspired by Indigenous ways of cooking outdoors. Using a variety of both traditional and Western methods, Pei Pei Chei Ow caters to public and private events, plus hosts specialty dinners, educational events and food experiences that tell a story. To meet the COVID-19 challenges, the company has changed services to include homemade food package drop-offs, and virtual cooking classes with multiple camera angles to share the Indigenous cuisine experience.

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

Tourism operators in Alberta have worked incredibly hard to sustain high standards of safety and protection against COVID-19 to keep their workforce and visitors safe, says TIAA.

They have invested significant funds and training to do so, no matter the size of operation. For instance, stakeholders in Banff have continued to implement measures like programs for rapid COVID-19 testing and pop-up vaccination clinics.

“Support for our sector is direly needed, given that operators encountered such impacts during the holiday season, and are restricted again this spring,” said Reeder of TIAA, noting that the spring travel season typically drives 27% of a tourism organization’s annual revenue. “We need much greater awareness by Albertans, so they understand how they can help keep the tourism sector alive.”

About the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC)

Founded in 1930 to encourage the development of tourism in Canada, TIAC serves today as the national private-sector advocate for this \$105 billion sector. Based in Ottawa, TIAC takes action on behalf of Canadian tourism businesses and promotes positive measures that help the industry grow and prosper.

About the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta (TIAA)

TIAA is a not-for-profit, tourism association that advocates on behalf of all segments of Alberta's tourism economy for a competitive and sustainable business environment that generates substantial economic value for the province. TIAA's vision is that Alberta's tourism industry will be the driving force of sustainable, community economic development and the organization works collaboratively with the Government of Alberta and Travel Alberta to support an audacious target of growing the value of Alberta's tourism economy to \$20B by the year 2030.

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