



Ref: 40679

September 18, 2020

Her Worship Mayor Lisa Helps  
City of Victoria  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6  
Email: [mayor@victoria.ca](mailto:mayor@victoria.ca)

Dear Mayor Helps:

Thank you for your letter of September 8, 2020, sent to the Honourable John Horgan, Premier, and to my colleagues, regarding the recent proposal from the Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC) for stimulus funding. As your matter falls under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, I am pleased to respond on behalf of Premier Horgan.

Our Government recognizes the deep impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has created for people whose livelihoods depend on the visitor economy. These are also incredibly trying times for communities where tourism provides a large portion of the region's employment, like the City of Victoria. As you know, over the summer the British Columbia (BC) Government consulted with people, business owners, non-profit organizations, local leaders and others, to understand their priorities for recovery and help us determine how best to prioritize provincial investments. We appreciate the openness with which everyone shared their advice, recommendations and suggestions, including through written proposals such as the one that was put forward by the TIABC. All of this feedback was taken into account in the development of our economic recovery plan, Stronger BC for Everyone, released on September 17, 2020. To read the full plan, please visit: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/>.

We have taken a cross-government approach to supporting communities, businesses and workers, while putting in place a strong foundation for long-term resilience in the sector.

The new Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program will invest \$100 M in projects that make life better for locals and improve the experience for visitors. The elements that support the tourism sector include:

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- \$20 M for tourism infrastructure projects supporting destination development. Local governments, not-for-profits and Indigenous Nations will be able to apply for project funding to help bring back visitors through investments in tourism infrastructure and amenities in communities;
- \$20 M to support economic recovery for rural communities; and
- \$20 M for investments in unique heritage infrastructure, including funding for First Nations to repair, renew or develop Indigenous cultural heritage infrastructure.

We are also investing nearly \$14 M to support targeted tourism development partnership initiatives in the six tourism regions across BC to help the industry recover from COVID-19. More details of this funding will be available soon.

In addition, Destination BC will invest an additional \$5 M to continue to market BC domestically and secure its spot in the international tourism market. It is critical that we continue to build and retain relationships with international tour operators, as we know international bookings are often made one year before the date of departure.

We know that liquidity was among the top concerns for hard-hit tourism businesses that saw reduced visitation over the summer. The Province will invest \$300 M for Small Business Recovery grants that many tourism-related businesses will be eligible for. This program will enable small businesses to access professional advice and grants to support recovery for companies heavily impacted by the pandemic and most likely to recover. The grant amounts will be scalable based on the size and annual pre COVID-19 revenues of the business, to a maximum of \$30,000. Hard-hit tourism operators will be eligible to receive a top up of up to \$10,000, for a maximum grant of \$40,000 based on overall eligibility criteria. The Provincial Government estimates that 15,000 small businesses will benefit from the program and help protect more than 200,000 jobs throughout BC.

Finally, a new Tourism Task Force will bring together leaders from business, labour, First Nations and not-for-profits to seek innovative ideas on how to best position the industry for the 2021 season. The Province is allocating \$50 M in the Economic Recovery Plan for new measures that result from the task force's work.

Other initiatives that will help the tourism sector rebound include investments in the safety of transportation networks like local paths and rail trails, and investments to improve BC Parks infrastructure. We have also set aside funding of \$21 M to provide additional relief to the arts and culture sector, and to help cultural organizations adapt their operations to the realities of the pandemic. Our economic recovery plan for the tourism sector can be found at: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/covid-19-economic-recovery-plan-boosts-bc-tourism-industry>.

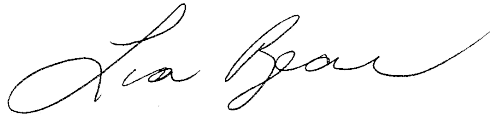
I also appreciate the City of Victoria and surrounding municipalities' leadership in advocating to the federal government for further supports for BC's tourism industry, particularly when it comes to concerns around the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund delivered by Western Economic Diversification in BC. Business owners and sector associations have also raised these issues with me directly. I can assure you that I have discussed this with Mélanie Joly, Federal Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, most recently at the September 9, 2020, meeting of the Canadian Council of Tourism Ministers.

I am confident that Minister Joly understands the ongoing challenges faced by tourism-dependent communities in BC, and the industry's importance to the overall well-being of people in our province.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with BC's local leaders, such as yourself, as we collectively support British Columbians on the path towards recovery in our province.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Beare". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial "L" and a long, sweeping underline.

Lisa Beare  
Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture

pc: Honourable John Horgan  
Premier

Honourable Carole James  
Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier

Honourable Rob Fleming  
Minister of Education