

Meetings & Events Coalition of Nova Scotia

June 18, 2020

Hon. Stephen McNeil, Premier
Province of Nova Scotia
One Government Place
Halifax, NS
Sent Via: premier@novascotia.ca

Dear Premier McNeil:

Nova Scotia's Meetings and Events Sector – A Path to Recovery

The Meetings & Events Coalition is a newly formed ad hoc group whose primary members are independent, small business owners who are event planners, tradeshow producers, talent agents, concert and entertainment producers, conference organizers and meeting planners.

We have come together to ask the Province of Nova Scotia to work with us to create programs that truly reflect the needs of a sector that is at risk of being eliminated. The meetings & events industry generates 34% of tourism in Canada. We need support too.

Meetings, conferences, and events are important to Nova Scotia's economy. At the start of 2020, Discover Halifax had helped attract 102 events to the region. This would have brought 53,000 delegates, 77,000 room nights, and a direct economic benefit of over \$62 million. Additionally, we estimate meetings, conferences, and events in other parts of the province to bring a total industry value of well over \$100 million. Beyond the economic benefits, these conferences would have brought innovators, leaders, and investors to see what Nova Scotia can offer as a great place to live, work, invest, and visit.

Over 83% of our industry predicts more than an 80% decrease in revenue for 2020. Even more alarming, 40% are concerned that revenue in 2021 will be decreased by 50-80% and another 20% feel business will decrease more than 80%

With a recovery timeline that could be as far as two years away, many in our sector cannot and will not survive the wait.

Among those directly affected by the losses in the events and meetings sector are photographers, videographers, audio visual providers, speakers, entertainers, printers, graphic

and web designers, décor companies, limousine and transportation companies, caterers, restaurants, bars, shops, tour operators, and countless more hospitality and tourism professionals and businesses. Hotels, devoted conference/event facilities such as the Halifax Convention Centre, the Scotiabank Centre, Cunard Centre, museums, historic sites and many more, will feel the impact of this first wave of COVID 19, for a much longer period than almost every other sector.

While we appreciate that there have been a number of provincial and federal government programs that have provided a short-term stopgap for businesses affected by the COVID 19 restrictions, including ours, these band aid measures do not reflect the needs of the tourism, meetings and events sector.

Our business has been obliterated by circumstances that are out of our control:

- Stay at home order
- Closed borders between Canada and other countries
- Closed borders between provinces within Canada
- Limited size of gathering currently capped at 10
- Anticipated fear of people to gather, even when gathering sizes are increased
- Anticipated fear of travel, flying, using public transportation of any type
- Fear of restriction “Rollbacks” could further decrease confidence in planning any type of gathering

There are a number of ways the province can help:

- Include the meetings & events industry as a part of a broader tourism funding recovery plan.
- Provide access to **more** working capital for a **longer** period of time. Modify the RRRF program:
 - 1) Extend the term and interest free period to December 2023.
 - 2) Increase the loan limits beyond \$ 40,000, still allowing for 25% forgivable.
- Review the talents, skills and resources that may be needed by the provincial government departments and agencies and present opportunities through the Nova Scotia Tender Site that may be applicable for tourism, meetings and events professionals. [Nova Scotia Buy First]
- Provide education grants (vouchers) for tourism, meetings and events sector professionals who may have to consider changing careers.

In addition, we want to be a part of the recovery and re-opening of our industry and find ways to get back to sustainable meeting and events with COVID-19:

- Work with our industry on re-opening plans that can include creative solutions such as 'hub and spoke' events that could include groups of 50++ ppl in multiple settings.
- Champion the concept of mobile testing at events to help keep the curve flat and position our industry as a part of the recovery solution for COVID-19.

We want to work with the government of Nova Scotia and our tourism meetings and events industry partners in Nova Scotia not only to ensure we survive this period of uncertainty, but also to come out of it as a thriving sector. We are optimistic about the future, and we are hopeful and confident that you recognize not only the economic impact of our sector, but also the importance of the role that organizers and producers of meetings and events play in staging events that grow the economy of Nova Scotia.

We look forward to hearing from you or your designate at your earliest opportunity. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Purcell

On behalf of:

The Meetings & Events Coalition of Nova Scotia

- cc. Hon. Geoff MacLellan, Minister of Business and Minister Responsible for Tourism Nova Scotia
Darlene Grant-Fiander, President –Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia
Ross Jefferson, CEO–Discover Halifax
Carrie Cussons, President & CEO – Events East Group
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