

Tourism Funding Announcement Misses the Mark

Halifax, N.S. (October 16, 2020) – The Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS) is extremely disappointed with the announcement by the Provincial government of a Tourism Sector Financing Assistance program for large operators which was developed without consultation with TIANS. While we appreciate the need to access capital, the limitations on this program for many other large, mid-size and smaller operators who do not meet the threshold is extremely unfair.

TIANS has communicated that the challenges facing tourism are critical and require immediate attention. We have strongly advocated that a wholistic and informed approach be taken by government to support an industry that employs over 40,000 people, that touches every community throughout the Province and which, in 2019, generated \$2.6 Billion in revenues.

“Since the pandemic began, TIANS has been meeting with the Minister and asking for a number of supports including a strategic approach that would best position the sector for recovery. We have been waiting months for a response and the announcement today does very little to address the immediate concerns for a broad number of operators across the Province,” says Judy Saunders, TIANS Chair. “It appears that the government has decided to pick “winners”, and why Dalhousie University Faculty and staff were selected to decide what will work best for the Tourism Industry in Nova Scotia is baffling”.

“Property Tax Assessments are a major financial burden that will result in upcoming business closures. Having provincial coordination with municipalities to mitigate this burden would have been a practical and positive solution; the need for a provincial travel incentive program that TIANS advocated for early in the summer would have resulted in increased tax revenues for government at very little cost. A confidence campaign and policy adjustments to support business growth, are a few other requests that TIANS put forth. The industry is facing catastrophic losses and developing a loan guarantee program for specific businesses (resort, tour, scenic & sightseeing transportation operators) that generate over \$10 Million annually is a disservice to the over 90% of the sector that does not qualify,” says Saunders. “If loan guarantees as a measure of reducing financing costs is a policy option, then apply this equitably across the industry, not just to a very limited number of businesses that will meet the criteria”.

“Tourism is at the center of the pandemic and will be at the center of the recovery. We understand government cannot fix all things; that is why every decision matters and policy adjustments to mitigate the hardest costs would have been much more effective,” says TIANS President, Darlene Grant Fiander. “This decision by government to advance an agenda that does not serve the broader sector is simply poor public policy and not the vote of confidence or leadership the sector was looking for”.

Tourism Nova Scotia forecasts that tourism revenues will fall 65% to \$900 Million in 2020 (down from \$2.6 Billion in 2019). With sharp declines in revenues, and high fixed costs, many operators are experiencing extreme financial hardship. Despite this, operators have taken extraordinary measures to ensure public health and safety, and to meet the needs of our customers and visitors with confidence.

While the global pandemic continues to challenge governments around the world to come up with recovery programs for the hardest hit sectors, TIANS believes working directly with the sector on business needs will result in the most effective public expenditures.

TIANS is committed to representing the best interests of the Industry; enhancing and supporting the development of a competitive business environment; advocating on issues critical to the Industry's success; and most importantly, leading Nova Scotia's most promising economic sector.

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