

# BC MEETINGS & EVENTS INDUSTRY WORKING GROUP

December 16, 2020

**Re: UPDATE #3: BC Meetings & Events Industry - COVID-19 Safe Restart Proposal to PHO**

Dear BC Meetings & Events Industry Partners,

As this tumultuous year of 2020 comes to an end, we would like to update you on the work being done by the BC Meetings & Events Industry Working Group on behalf our sector.

After developing and circulating the [BC Meetings & Events COVID-19 Safe Restart Guidelines](#) in September as the framework for safe operations in our industry, the working group has been focused throughout Q4 on developing a restart proposal for business meetings & events that will be submitted in the new year to the Provincial Health Officer under [Section 43 of the Provincial Health Act](#), specific to the 50-person limit for gatherings. We have consulted with a wide variety of industry leaders throughout our province, with tourism associations and with the provincial government. The proposal is currently under review by the Province's Safer Operations Working Group (SOWG).

The plan is designed to support and ensure capability with the Province's COVID-19 mitigation objectives and is intended for two purposes:

- A. To re-activate the meetings & events industry.
- B. To allow venues and professional organizers to conduct safe, in-person meetings & events that will re-engage our workforce and stimulate creativity, innovation and community building.

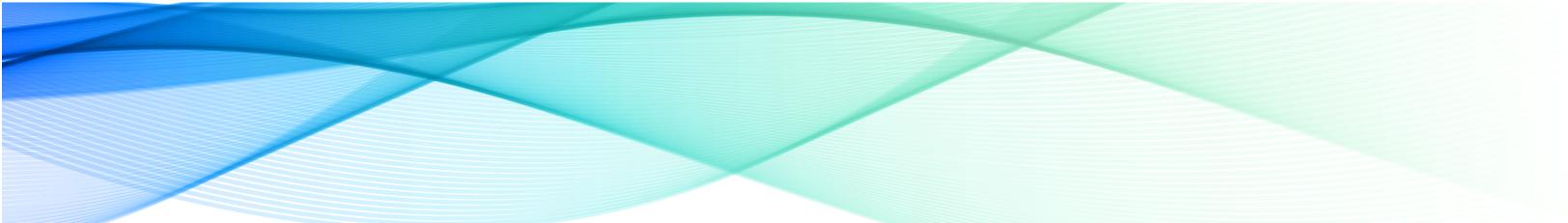
The BC Meetings & Events Restart Plan proposes that the business meetings & events industry is resumed in a four-stage, graduated process. Each stage increases the number of attendees permitted within a range, the types of meetings & events that can be held, and the activities that participants can engage in. Strategic, incremental growth on a monthly or bi-monthly basis (within and between stages) is proposed based on continuous monitoring of meetings & events, along with rolling 30-day assessments by the Provincial Health Officer.

**Stage One** was essentially in effect from April until December, when meetings & events with up to 50 people were permitted. As of December, meetings have been prohibited outside of the workplace. With positive review of this proposed plan, our hope is that we can return to Stage One in early 2021, or as early as deemed appropriate by public health authorities.

**Stage Two** would allow for meetings & events with 100 people and potentially graduating to 250 people.

**Stage Three** would allow for meetings & events with 250 people, potentially graduating to 500 people. This assumes that contact tracing apps are widely available, and the possibility of rapid testing. Events over 250 people would be restricted to purpose-built venues such as hotels and convention centres.

**Stage Four** would allow for meetings & events with 500 people, potentially graduating to 1,000+ people. This assumes that rapid testing is widely available, and widespread access to a vaccine. As with Stage Three, events over 250 people would be limited to compliant venues.



Over the past 8 months, evidence suggests that business meetings and events can be held safely when health and safety protocols following the [BC Meetings & Events COVID-19 Safe Restart Guidelines](#) are successfully implemented. To date, there are no known instances of COVID-19 transmission from an event planned and organized by professionals in our industry, here in BC.

We believe that with strict industry compliance and oversight, professional planning and management, and ongoing dialogue and cooperation with our province's health authorities, the BC Meetings & Events Restart Plan can generate significant economic, industry, innovation, and mental health benefits for the hard-hit tourism sector, with a very low risk to public health. It is our view that the progressive easing of restrictions related to business meetings & events will help achieve a balance between health & safety and economic recovery for our province.

In light of recent developments in the spread of COVID-19 in BC and related event restrictions, we have held off submitting this proposal until the new year. At the recommended time, we will be presenting it to Dr. Bonnie Henry and Minister of Health Adrian Dix. Copies will be sent to the Minister of Tourism, Melanie Mark and Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation, Ravi Kahlon.

Our proposal will follow the recent recommendations made by the Province's Tourism Task Force for additional funding and a strategic approach to rebuilding a viable tourism industry. While business meetings & events are not specifically mentioned, points made by our working group in a presentation to the task force were addressed in their final report. [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/tourism-and-immigration/tourism-industry-resources/tourism task force final report - dec 9.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/tourism-and-immigration/tourism-industry-resources/tourism_task_force_final_report_-_dec_9.pdf)

It is important to recognize that many of the companies supporting meetings & events do not fall into the "tourism" category for funding. As such, the need to restart our sector at the safest and soonest possible moment to get people back to work is that much more critical in preserving our industry for the future.

As we move into 2021, there is new hope with an effective vaccine being distributed in Canada and throughout the world. The new year holds promise yet the uncertainty still remains around the process and timeframe for testing, the vaccine and re-opening the border. Our phased approach considers this uncertainty and is intended to align with a gradual and potentially slow distribution of the vaccine.

The working group applauds the energies and commitments of all members of our meetings & events community including Salman Azam, Assistant Deputy Minister of Tourism Sector Strategy and Dr. Brian Emerson, Deputy Provincial Health Officer, in keeping this important sector of our economy alive and finding ways to sustain and propel into the future.

We are unified in our passions and we have demonstrated resilience by banding together in support of each other and the industry. We will prevail and be stronger for it.

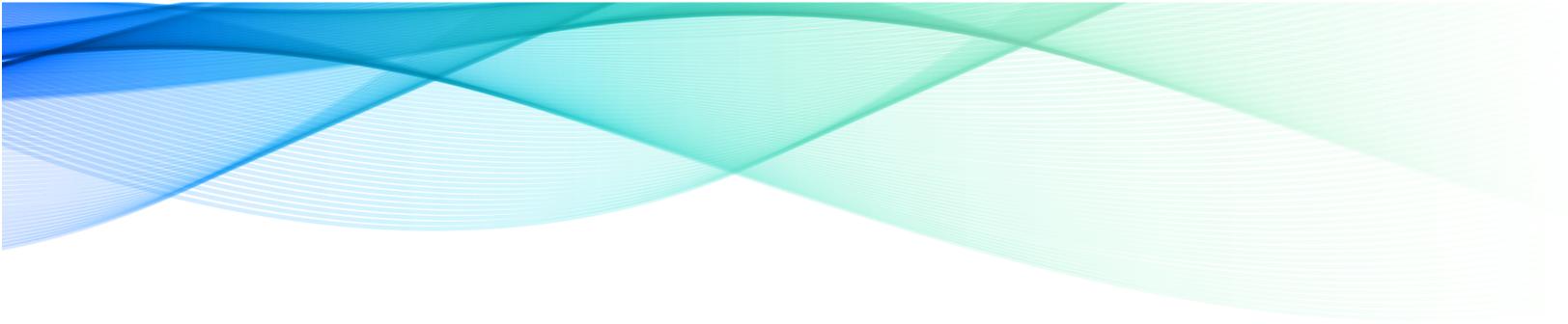
Wishing you and yours a *calm, kind and safe* holiday season. May the new year hold opportunity and prosperity for all.

Yours truly,

The BC Meetings & Events Industry Working Group

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

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