



Online Tourism Operators Forum – March 23, 2020 (10am)

10am – Welcome and Overview:

TIA Yukon Executive Director, Blake Rogers

- Participate every week with other Tourism Industry Association's (TIA's) and Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC).
- TIAC and Hotel Association of Canada are advocating and lobbying the Federal government to put focus on tourism as a major industry to support with any stimulus.

10:10am – TIA Yukon Status Report

TIA Yukon Chair, Neil Hartling

- Thanks to everyone for completing the survey (73 completed since Friday)
- There is a lot going on right now, tedious week over week, but important to get survey data.
- The surveys have helped get concerns on the radar, trying to figure out what the situation will mean for the industry going forward and how to best tackle it and come out stronger on the other end
- It is clear from the surveys that marketing is important, but realistically, other practical business support – training, financial health, infrastructure and other core needs
- We have divided two of the clear calls from the surveys into two categories:
 - Relief
 - Recovery
- We are working to streamline the communications and explanations of these programs in two areas and we working with chambers and other NGOS to help get information out clearly and not buried deep in one website
- Good news – very big numbers of relief from federal government but it is not simple to give out billions of dollars quickly and effectively and fairly.
- Develop program (from scratch) likely can't happen fast enough from the Federal and Territorial level
- Advice: as soon as programs are available be persistent, sign on, stories of long waits for access, use online when available, phones will be busy – 1000s of businesses trying to access.
- I've run across few best practices from forums I've been involved in

- We need to focus on how we want to be seen on the other end, we need to keep to the high road (during turbulent times), how we deal with it now is how we will be regarded in future.
- Keep out of box ideas firing look alternative revenue streams
- Example: river outfitters in mid-west US, suffer from cycles of drought, forest fires shut down rafting operators, use busses that are rafting to transporting fire fighters – adaptability and cash flow management
- Keep eyes open – use your assets to expand business models
- Another take away is our voice and how we use to keep in touch with our clients who are concerned with bookings and deposits. In your communications use a personal approach, warmth, competency, support. Avoid using clichés. People respond well to personal approach.
- In the North, we need to respect small communities – don't enter without invite, this may apply for sometime after official clearance announce as they are vulnerable. TIA issued a statement yesterday through the Minister of Tourism and Culture stating priority of members is community health and health of our workers and we support this by limiting border access.
- Key to one of pillars of Yukon Tourism Development Strategy of maintaining community support if we are going to be sustainable going forward. We can't afford to be seen as self serving or greedy, but seen as being assets to our community
- On theme of communication – TIA encourages all operators (even non-TIA Yukon members) to sign up for our communications, we are offering at no cost. Please contact info@tiayukon.com to be added to the Industry Update list.
- Please this pass along to colleagues and continue to contribute to information sharing
- We will all be stronger if we are informed in sharing information

10:30am – Yukon Tourism & Culture Update
Deputy Minister Valerie Royle & Director of Tourism, Pierre Germain

Entrepreneurs will bring creativity and are critical to our recovery.

Two main areas

1. Business Relief – help businesses remain solvent during this time – literally overnight tourism has dried up. How to keep businesses solvent – reemerge stronger than ever.
 Economic Development is leading this for YG. T&C helping Ec Dev – in regular contact. Federal level programs being led by Ec Dev for Yukon. Changes to employment standard regulations with the plan to have changes by end of this week. We can do this locally.
2. T&C focus – business recovery and being well positioned to salvage 2020 and be strong for 2021/2022/2023.
 Looking at TCMF, domestic marketing (not going to happen today, not appropriate) we will be ready when it is appropriate. We will start flow funds to you, so you can do your marketing.

- New for us as result of YTDS is in destination marketing – marketing to Yukoners, looking additional for funds, look at Yukoners moving around. First thing with recovery.
- Constant contact with Yukon Parks, look at their openings because that is a great way to get Yukoners out and about in YT communities – spending money.
- Looking at Parks Canada and Visitor Information Centres (VIC) when they will open.
- Whitehorse VIC closed last week after the last booked tour.
- We can't control numbers of people and germs in the VIC space
- Lobby open, WIFI, water, public washrooms, 1-800 #s visitors can call to get info. Aren't many left, a couple today from the UK, logged on to wifi and discovered the world had changed. Off grid in the RV.
- Encounter any of those folks – we want to help.
- Yukon Tourism Advisory Board (YTAB) appointed last week.
- Three industry reps on the board – Neil Hartling, Maxime Gouyou-Beauchamps, Denise McHale.
- For the full release: <https://yukon.ca/en/news/new-yukon-tourism-advisory-board-appointed>
- A very experienced board, appointed in urgent fashion, first meeting tomorrow
- Sole priority is COVID-19 business relief and responses.
- Overarching goal was to steward YTDS, but the shift become to Minister advisory, conduit to get into government.
- Premier announced last Monday of the Business Advisory Council - 20 reps of every industry – Denny Kobayashi is the tourism rep on the Business Advisory Council – pull together this week. Another way to communicate to business to get your ideas and concerns to the table.
- Minister Dendys is on a weekly personal call with Minister Joly – heads up on Federal things that are happening.
- Constant contact with Destination Canada, with Holland America – cruise industry critical, right now as cruises are banned until July 1 and in contact with the airlines.
- We are not considered critical but are essential. All staff working from home (except for 10 staff in the T&C building), phone #s, emails to get in contact.
- More funding for Product development and experienced development – explore business concept – dig into and do research – want to support you. Get funding to support you.
- Our Industry Advisors going out more frequently – get on that list. Link: <https://yukon.ca/en/promote-tourism#subscribe-to-our-industry-newsletter>
- Dr. Brendan Hanley is taking suggestions and seriously.
- TIA reached out about F&B and he personally reviewed and got back to us in 24 hours.

- You can put them through TIA, put them through DM Royle to get them to Dr. Brendan Hanley. Remembering his priorities – health side of things.
- Teleconference, last Thursday with Minister Joly. If you are struggling, talk to your Bank. Defer mortgages, payments, loans, and debt, keep cash in pocket now but pay back later. Call the bank, don't get response, and email your direct contact, so it is on record. Quickly as you can before your next payments. Have been given lots of money to enable this. Most expeditious ways to keep cash in your pocket.

10:20am – Parks Canada Update

Yukon Regional Field Unit Superintendent, Diane Wilson

- Federal Government has gone down to critical services on all front facing visitor services are suspended until further notice.
- In Yukon we don't have many things open yet. A few changes in Yukon to shut down Chilkoot trail office in Elijah Smith building and closing offices in Haines Junction and Dawson.
- Rolling in to Summer 2020; cant provide clarity on that
- Parks Canada will follow direction of public health agency of Canada and YG and Yukon CMOH
- Services that are currently open: outhouses at log cabin, outhouses and visitor lake at Kathleen Lake in Kluane.
- Other than that, doors are locked. Reduced 4 people in Dawson, 3 in Whitehorse and 1 person in Haines Junction – as safe as possible.
- Enjoy green spaces as long as. Not issue climbing permits.
- Staff working from home, and staff performing critical services are working in the office.
- Social distance in the great outdoors, continue to use spaces passively and to be extra cautious reduced visitor safety capacity. Not sure when will this change. Assessing situation trying to best thing we can do.
- Highest areas of use – Kathleen Lake and Log Cabin – monitoring situation – not social distancing, we may have to take stricter measures.
- Refunds for all visitors who have reserved to April 30th, doesn't apply Yukon as nothing has been open.
- Not taking not reservations – Otentiks, and chilkoot trail, websites 100% up to date, staff can update with all relevant information.
- Send out note to all stakeholders with managers contact info. Any specific questions, please contact us.
- **Add in contact info!!! Diane and all managers.**

10:40am – Carly Carruthers, CanNor

- Working remotely, business scrambling through Federal programs how it relates to tourism, what it means to
- Working with TIA to get info out

- Two phases: mitigation to tourism operators and second recovery – what does it look like.
- Funding request EOI – we will get back to people as we work through them. Feel free to reach out.

10:45am – Q&A

1. Is there anything planned to allow self employed to apply for EI? DM Royle responded.

- DM Royle can ask Minister Joly. There is a lot under consideration.
- Looking at EI extended when seasonal worked
- Less hours required to apply.
- Legislation will be tabled tomorrow.
- If DM Royle finds out before, she will get back to the industry.

2. Are there any updates regarding Condor and their flight schedule this summer? So far, I wasn't able to find any information – Pierre Germain responded

- Tourism and Culture is in regular contact with Condor, latest we have heard, season schedule continues to be on track.
- Official news from current we will let the industry know.
- As of yesterday we were in contact.

3. What are others doing in terms of cancellation policies for summer bookings? In particular Tour Operators? Streamlining would be a possible idea. Neil Hartling responded.

- Work with our colleagues at WTAY – majority are operators who function on deposits.
- Would be good to get some best practices out there.
- Streamline – contract with clients are between your company and your clients.
- One of the best practices – communicate with your clients.
- If we can get some best practices we can add to the TIA website.
- Maybe WTAY will be able to be involved?

Jesse Cooke's comments

- We all need to take care of and protect ourselves.
- We have more refund requests than dollars in the bank.
- Personally responding to each request and saying your request has been recorded. Put in que and acknowledging request.
- Sharing my financial burden with my clients. Going to have to wait.
- If you drain your bank then you have nothing left at the end = bad news.
- Divide up your deposits into past guests (who are returning) and new people. With past guests you can take an approach that is more familiar, buddy-to-

buddy, hope to be here at the end of this to make the Yukon travel dream come true. Win win for both in the end.

- Appealing to people at a very personal level – type of people who come to the Yukon – salt of the earth people, they will be sympathetic, help them to understand – they are facing this situation and you are too. You are listening to them. Both suffering, partners in it.

3. Is there any support for small tour operators to keep the business running? (Cash flow support) Mike Ellis responded.

- Emergency Care Benefit – launched in April by the Federal Government
- \$900 bi-weekly otherwise ineligible for EI for up to 15-weeks.
- Declare ineligible for EI.
- Takes a bit of guilt and burden – some support out there.
- Help some people.

4. When will we hear a concrete plan with # for small businesses relief grants? The employees have EI, the owners have closed their doors, need relief to open. DM Royle responded

- By Friday to have concrete answers with applications from a Territorial Government perspective.

5. We are predicting this year's corporate support to drop significantly. Will there be any extra support for NGO's who rely on sponsorship to operate? DM Royle Responded.

- We already have approval for NGOs to keep TPA's regardless of being open. Working for April 1.
- We already have permission because we jumped on it early.
- Focusing getting core funding agreements out the door.
- Deliverables won't be reached. Plan for whatever is less in 2020.
- As a small business owner, be in direct contact not via program.
- Contact us directly. Yukon.ca is where our information is for YG info.

6. What is being done among operators to ensure that their staff will be available to be recalled when things pick back up? Blake responded.

- There has been a lot of discussion on this topic. Felt by everyone. It has come up with the Hotel Association of Canada as well.
- Blake – put it out get some answers for later this week.
- Neil – accumulate a list of best practices – send to us to compile, info@tiayukon.com

7. Is Northwestel going to extend their relief on data over usages to the Yukon soon? Their website only mentions Nunavut. DM Royle responded

- Yukon put in a request to the CRTC to have relief usage permission in Yukon with an added couple conditions got kicked back.
- In Nunavut there were no conditions.

- Waiting to hear back after having to resubmit.

8. How will TCMF be affected for 2020? DM Royle responded

- Go to Yukon.ca for TCMF
- Feel free to email Tourism & Culture
- Adjusting TCMF in 2020
- More information to follow

Blake's comments

- There has been a lot of talk from TIAC with government trying to coordinate some of these things - interest free loans, instant relief, deferred payments

9. Is there any discussion of Rent relief for businesses? DM Royle responded.

- Looking at those pieces.
- Urgency part is non-eviction.
- Changing regulations, landlord can't evict personal or commercial.
- Haven't heard specifically on that.
- Will follow up with Ec Dev.
- Banks are working on mortgage relief.

Questions on Slido that the call didn't get to, but noted for future discussions

1. Need to start a public discussion around deferrals with Banks. Deferrals still have interest accruing. No cost to the banks and in fact they are profiting??
2. We have a good business plan but need money to cover for our fix costs that we'll have whether we have clients or not. The development bank is very restrictive
3. What can be done to improve communication to Tourism Operators form Government and Health Officials? There was no guidance at all!
4. As small business owner it's hard to hear the answers so far: talk to bank, lay off employees, avoid outhouses, wait for future marketing - need practical relief
5. What is the recommendation for tourism operation in First Nation communities?
6. Is there a plan for VIC's and Yukon Parks and their opening?
7. For the marketing fund; it is always really difficult to access. Seems always same businesses gets the grant. Will there be more funding available this time?
8. How do we get on Industry Advisories from Yukon Tourism, Tourism Canada, TIA
9. Can results of the TIAY surveys be available to us?
10. What does 'Status Quo' mean for Chilkoot trail and Kluane?
11. Will there be any economic recovery measures to recover funds lost for tour operators that will/have lost that income?
12. Any news about the refunds from RVC? Has anyone received a refund for your booth and registration yet?
13. Have there already been fraud attempts on tourism operators, taking advantage on the current situation? We must share such info!

14. Is it possible to speed up payment of already approved funding, to help with cash flow?
15. I think the legal obligation is to provide a 100% refund.
16. I am going to suggest what has worked for us is offer full credit if they postpone their trip but only a partial refund if cash back is requested.
17. Will small coffee shops such as Monmouth be closed?
18. Will new TPA's be getting sent out in the future?
19. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-self-employed-workers.html>
20. FYI, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce is updating daily a COVID-19 business information and resource page for any Yukon businesses: www.yukonchamber.com
21. Almost all of the small businesses in the Yukon are not eligible to pay into EI. They are the backbone of highway lodges. Without support they will not hire.
22. None of the big Companies like Cruise ships and Airlines are giving back money. They are offering future credit only.
23. Not a question, but we have been offering cxl for credit - that they can use within a year to rebook. Most people have been very happy & thankful for that option!
24. Any chance YG will allow TCMF funds leftover from this fiscal, that couldn't be spent cause of COVID, to roll over to next fiscal?
25. We are a small lodge. We have about 4 bookings left from now to June. Should we cancel them? We have no more revenue at all and lost thousand so far.
26. Is everyone paying the same liability insurance premiums?

TIA Yukon Commitments going forward to industry

TIA will host a videoconference once a week going forward. We will share these details through our Industry Update and by email.