



## **Online Tourism Operators Forum #2 – Friday, March 27, 2020 (12pm)**

### **12pm – Welcome and Overview: TIA Yukon Executive Director, Blake Rogers**

- Slido #27905 for questions
- 112 participants on the Zoom call
- Remember to refer to the side bar on the right with information in the chat

### **12:05pm – TIA Yukon Status Report TIA Yukon Chair, Neil Hartling**

- Great work with surveys helps us help you as owners of SME's. There is a survey out there right now that is due by 11:59pm tonight.
- Employment size constitutes small, medium and large businesses as:
  - Small: 1-99,
  - Medium: 100-499
  - Large: 500 or more
- Joel Hibbard made a great comment I wanted to share: you are all in business and want to continue to work on the business. Rings very true.
- As a business owner, I've been through at least 5 of these crashes through 35 years. They are brutal times but I survived. And, I want to be clear with expectations as we work through these processes that we are speaking to.
- Government organizations and NGOS can try and give you an edge to survive, but as an owner, you and the team have to do the heavy lifting. Expect severe challenges and austerity.
- Hopefully the measures we achieve as NGOS and Government, help you to keep at least one nostril above the water. If we can do that for as many of you as possible, we have achieved an incredible feat.
- No government owes you a business but they can help to shape the business environment.
- A high tide, raises all ships.
- Some operators have been able to find additional paid work, do not be afraid to look at lifelines, don't let pride to get in the way as this is not business as usual.

### **12:10pm – Government of Canada Update Yukon MP and Parliamentary Secretary for CanNor, Hon. Larry Bagnell**

- We have Ayesha Khaira on the call who is responsible for EI questions. Feel free to ask her questions during the Q&A.

- Thank you to all of our workers on the ground for keeping us alive. They are our heroes.
- I am here to listen and answer any questions.
- When the crisis started I wrote to all of industry, associations about the initial aid package and asked for feedback from the industry, then sent to Ottawa and I think it helped - informed two packages from this week.
- For information on the packages, it is all clearly outlined on the Canada.ca website. There are ten things for individual support and nine things for businesses.
- Will mention the four things announced today for additional support:
  1. The wage subsidy went from 10% to 75% to keep staff on full pay. The full details will be released on Monday. But, it is backdated to March 15.
  2. The Canada Emergency Business Account allows for \$40k in interest free loans for a year (small businesses) and if paid by December 31, 2022, 25% is forgiven that you won't have to pay back.
  3. The first package that was announced had \$10 billion in loans for businesses from the BDC and EDC. But, some people don't go to BDC or EDC, they go to their regular banks and the banks did not guarantee the loans. \$12.5 billion has been added to that with \$6.2 billion for medium sized businesses. Full details by Monday.
  4. GST/HST/Import/Export Duties that originally had to be paid between March – May have all been deferred to the end of June. All of this should be up and running in the next 3 weeks. We are working on a package for airlines. A lot of great suggestions from Joe Sparling to the Federal Transport Minister.
- Keep your feedback coming as it informs our future support. We want to ensure no one falls through the cracks. I think the changes we made this week helped inform decisions.
- Your suggestions took care a lot of those facts that were released today.
- CanNor is streamlining the approval process for smaller projects. Putting it down lower on the system.
- The Bank of Canada has done a lot to increase by adding 5 trillion in bonds to ensure banks have money to lend.

## **12:25pm – Yukon Tourism & Culture Update**

### **Deputy Minister Valerie Royle & Director of Tourism, Pierre Germain**

- Yukon Tourism Business Advisory Board (YTAB) had their first meeting on Tuesday, March 24.
- They put together a series of recommendations based on industry feedback that we were able to share with our MP, on a Federal Provincial Territorial (FPT) call with Minister Joly yesterday and shared with the Business Advisory Council. The concerns of the tourism industry are being heard and funneled to all appropriate places.
- We understand that business solvency and equity are big concerns and that is what we are working towards.

- Tourism Cooperative Marketing Fund (TCMF) will be increased for 2021 by \$1 million.
- Businesses will not have to provide their 50% as 100% of the costs will be covered by Yukon Government.
- We didn't include this announcement with yesterday's announcements because we as an industry understand we need to spend money to market today to have visitors in the future (even if we can't have visitors right now), but the general public may not understand this. But, if we don't market in 2020 we will not have visitors in 2021/2022/2023.
- We are working on all the eligibility criteria, which will be expanded and will include local marketing. We anticipate Yukon will open up first then domestically open up and then internationally.
- Minister Dendys will be releasing the press release later today on TCMF: <https://yukon.ca/en/news/government-announces-1-million-increase-tourism-cooperative-marketing-fund>
- Measures for arts and culture sector: <https://yukon.ca/en/news/interim-supports-arts-and-culture-sectors-announced>
- We have rejigged almost every program we have to get money out of the door.
- We are keeping our museums and cultural centers whole in 2021 with their full Transfer Payments Agreements.
- Working on other relief measures – stay tuned for more announcements.
- Working on individual emails for YTAB to connect with members directly
- In conjunction with the current work that TIA and Chamber of Commerce's are doing to get a sense on impacts, the Department of Tourism and Culture is working with the Department of Economic Development on a broad based survey on impacts happening to them, so Yukon Government has a good understanding of all of the sectors.
- The first survey is scheduled to be released at the beginning of April to assess the impacts in March. There will be a survey out every month after that until this subsides so we can keep a running track of impacts and to get a sense of when things are turning around for businesses.
- People who currently have applications for TCMF, there is additional flexibility on reporting. We will reach out to them individually as to what that looks like.
- Intent is to get the money in the hands of the applicants who need it immediately and to relax reporting until they are prepared to provide the reporting.
- Next fiscal, additional communication will go out for funding that relates to NGOS, future years – will come out next month with an application
- Opening period of May 1<sup>st</sup>, apply and approve will be able to claim on projects retroactive to April 1<sup>st</sup>. No one will miss out for the month of April.

**12:35pm – Yukon Economic Development Update**  
**Assistant Deputy Minister Helen Booth**

- Please check on what the Department of Economic Development has been doing on Yukon.ca

- We have had a lot of feedback from industry on the needs during this period, which has been very helpful
- We have been working very closely with our Federal counterparts
- We have been working on Yukon based programs at this time
- March 16<sup>th</sup>, Premier Sandy Silver announced a \$4 million dollar stimulus package. In that package was support for Yukon workers to take sick leave. We can announce it is now fully in effect. If you have a worker who needs to take sick leave and you have a sick leave program Yukon Government will rebate you for that sick leave, so you don't have to pay. Contact the department of Economic Development for details. This includes up to 10 days of sick leave, so a person can take 14 days needed to self isolate – so they don't have to go on leave. This program is backdated to March 11. It is also available to the self-employed. If they need to take longer they can access the federal government program.
- Yukon Government and Federal Government are working to ensure no one falls through the cracks.
- We have the Business Advisory Council (YBAC) established. The council is going to have their first meeting soon.
- We have had a lot of contact that people would like to be on the YBAC.
- We have established a way for people to contact the council to feed up concerns as we have had a lot of direct contact from businesses and we want to make sure the YBAC is hearing those concerns from businesses.
- We are going to do a survey with the Department of Tourism and Culture as Pierre mentioned. This survey will be one of the key ways to see how you are being impacted and how our programs are and/or are not working for you.
- Economic Development takes care of immigration. Many businesses have Yukon nominees and are wondering what will happen to the nominees if they are laid off. Previous version of the program was the nominee would receive a 90-day letter, saying you would have to find new job. Now, this is not the case during the public health emergency. This provision has been placed on hold. The nominee will not have to seek a new employer. They will be given a letter stating the provision has been suspended. The nominee can go on EI or find another job if they like. If that is not possible, their Permanent Residency application is still in process and not at risk. Once the public health emergency is over, the nominee can return to their current employer (many employers have expressed that they would like to hire their employees back), so we have changed the program to enable this to occur.
- All of the above information is on our website: <https://yukon.ca/en/immigration>
- We are here to answer any questions.
- We have one # and one email [ecdev@gov.yk.ca](mailto:ecdev@gov.yk.ca) to contact the Department of Economic Development
- Feel free to contact me directly at any time, [helen.booth@gov.yk.ca](mailto:helen.booth@gov.yk.ca)

**12:40pm – Q&A**

**1. Is April 1 still the opening for new the TCMF applications under this new 100% program? Do you anticipate that it will be over subscribed again as usual?**

(Pierre Germain and DM Royle responded)

- April 1 will not be the New Year for TCMF. It will start on May 1 as it will takes us a bit of time to reassess the eligibility criteria for applicants and projects. Because we are expanding the program there needs to be a bit of work done on that.
- Every year, it is over subscribe but we never spend money. A lot of people have good intentions, but it is not all spent. \$1.7 million out the door with more applicants and projects. Expanding to local marketing to get the right things out the door.

**2. Do we know if Yukon Energy is looking into decreased rates through this? If not are there any plans to have discussions regarding this?** (Helen Booth responded)

- We are continuously taking a look at where businesses are struggling and this is an issue that has come up.
- We are looking at the issue now as well as any other types of payments needed to be made into government.
- We have also formed a committee across all of the departments to see where these pressure points can be lifted.
- The new Federal announcements on keeping businesses in tact is where we can see some alleviation of pressure as well.
- We are trying to keep people as whole as possible.
- We are looking into this, but right now, it is an initial conversation at this point.

**3. 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??**

(Blake Rogers responded)

- This has come up a number of times and there is discussion on it.

Neil Hartling's comments

- This is a common opinion and situation with most of our SME's the latest loan announcement from the Federal Government is quite an improvement from the original loan program.
- Can't see it as well advised to take out loans that are accruing interest.
- We are putting that message as hard as we can – this morning's response is partly due to that push we are doing. We have moved the dial a bit and need to continue that message.

**4. Any update on CONDOR? Condor was supposed to be bailed out by LOT after Thomas Cook went down last Fall. Has this deal gone through?** (Pierre Germain responded)

- We are in regular contact with Condor.
- We can't comment on where they are at in the buy out package.

- Do know like most airlines, they are struggling with the current situation. More updates in the coming days and weeks. We will pass on to TIA and industry.

Daniel Sokolov comments:

- Condor has applied for a \$200 million euro loan.
- Lufthansa has cancelled contract that they have had with Condor for years. This will end the feeder flights sometime next year.
- Remains to be seen to find a viable feeder partner. Might not have enough passengers to fly to Whitehorse from Frankfurt.

**5. Is the Yukon Department of Tourism re-profiling funding from wages and programs to new services that can be more useful to help our businesses.** (DM Royle responded)

- That is exactly what we are doing.
- Not doing FAM Tours right now.
- Do we double up on FAMS in the Fall? It depends.
- We do know our Visitor Information Centres (VIC's) will likely not open on May 1 – savings there
- Moving those funds into other programs for immediate release.
- No formal announcements yet on VIC's.

**6. Is everyone paying the same liability insurance premiums?** (Neil Hartling Responded)

- No insights, doubt a time when people are paying same liability premiums. We could add to a survey going forward.

Jesse Cooke's comments (The Husky Bus / The Klondike Experience & TIA Board Member)

- Had a call with my phone line insurance company – projected income to 20% of last year's and they're honouring that.
- Reduced services we are no longer doing – bicycle tours.
- Reduced my 5 million policy as there are no contractual obligations to keep it at 5, so, put down to 2 million.

**7. How much influence does government have on/over/with banking institutions completely waiving vs deferrals? Need this question to get out in media or back avenue.** (Neil Hartling responded)

- A good question. No answers.

MP Larry Bagnell's comments

- Finance ministers are meeting weekly, sometimes daily with the banks to put more pressure to be more cooperative.

**8. What is the recommendation for tourism operation in First Nation communities?** (DM Royle responded)

In Yukon, we don't have any on reserve First Nations so the Federal stuff doesn't apply. What applies is the Chief Medical Officer of Health and their recommendations. It is not recommended to travel in between communities.

- Ross River declared their own state of emergency this week. Good to touch base with the First Nation.
- Our industry is limited.
- Keep watching Dr. Brendan Handley, Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- Keep in touch with the First Nation if you are operating in their Territory.

Stanley Noel (CEO Dena Nezzidi Corporation) comments

- Ross River has and other First Nations including Na-Cho Nyak Dun and more recently Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have all put different to varying degrees statements about their communities.
- I can only speak to Ross River, but there is a high degree of anxiety in the community about community transmission of Covid-19 - very concerned.
- The First Nation taking are taking the approach that we are all in the same boat – reach out to Chief and Council talk about to needs and concerns. Case by case basis.

Lawrie Crawford's comments

- Carcross Tagish First Nation (CTFN) have emergency contacts to reach out to
- Carcross is quite concerned about recreational visitation especially without public washrooms and community transmission.
- Recommended no travel between communities.
- Seeing people coming from Skagway, stay at home order since Wednesday.
- Nervousness and anxiety
- Pressure coming to Carcross and not able to maintain hygienic standards.
- All CTFN buildings are closed and there are good websites and Facebook to find out what you need to know.

**9. How are Companies dealing with their insurance payments do you have any suggestions?** (Blake responded)

- This has been a topic of discussion.

Jesse Cooke's comments (The Husky Bus / The Klondike Experience & TIA Board Member)

- For payments themselves the insurance companies are not willing to delay or defer.
- I pay a lot in auto-insurance.
- Just parking them and get money back.

**10. Has there been a conversation with procurement around giving a higher preference to local businesses who employ local staff?** (DM Royle responded)

- A good point and I will bring it forward to the Deputy Ministers Finance and Economics committee meeting this afternoon and will bring forward.

**11. For the marketing fund; it is always really difficult to access. Seems always same businesses get the grant. Will there be more funding available this time?** (Pierre Germain responded)

- Yes, increasing funding from \$700,000 to \$1 million for a total of \$1.7 million
- Expanding list of eligible applicants and projects.

**12. 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?** (DM Royle responded)

- Difficult from a Government perspective, but we are trying to get as much money out of the door as possible.
- Being more flexible, and allow reporting a bit later.
- We expect most of the money to be spent because of the flexibility with reporting deadlines.

**13. Holland America has been awfully quiet - anyone know the state of their cruise season? This is a HUGE question for many operators and Yukon communities.** (Pierre Germain responded)

- Looking at what is going to happen on July 1<sup>st</sup> when Canada has indicated that they will open ports to cruise ships.
- Lots of rumours flying around. Happy to share once we have more information.

**12. \$1M more in TCMF, paying 100%, more eligible businesses & oversubscribed, how will you get money into the hands of more operators? Not the same ones as always?**

(Pierre Germain responded)

- Intent is to make sure that with the new TCMF program that there is an opportunity to make more people eligible for those funding programs and to increase the number of eligible projects that people can apply for.
- We think this will be a much more attractive fund to more businesses in the Yukon that rely on tourism for revenue.
- We expect lots of interest and applications
- Everyone has an opportunity to apply for those funds equally.

**Denny Kobayashi – Introduction – Chair of Yukon Tourism Advisory Board**

- We meet every week.
- Our role is to provide advice to Minister Dendys on anything arising in the tourism industry
- We meet Tuesday afternoons so that the Minister has the information from us because she has a weekly meeting with Federal Tourism Minister Joly on Thursdays.
- Minister Dendys has asked us to pass it on to MP Larry Bagnell so he has it in his hands
- I sit on the business advisory council on behalf of YTAB.

- We have 8 members you can find all information on Yukon.ca
- Quick actions
- Something troubling you make sure to get it to one of the members or call me and we will make sure we get it on the agenda for our weekly meeting.
- YTAB press release: <https://yukon.ca/en/news/new-yukon-tourism-advisory-board-appointed>

### **Blake Rogers' last comments**

- A reminder to fill out the survey as it allows us to gauge how businesses are impacted by the pandemic.
- We are doing a week over week analysis.
- Share the link with people who may be interested, we really need the data
- We are sharing with our partners (Tourism and Culture and TIAC) to help shape our advocacy efforts and initiatives to help you.
- 10 multiple choice questions and takes a few minutes.
- Aim to have these meetings every Friday at 12pm (noon) and we will be doing up some notes from this one to share next week.

### **DM Valerie Royle's last comments**

- Dr. Brendan Hanley, Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health has a press conference today at 3pm, you can view on CBC Yukon.
- Recommend to have a listen to see what has changed today and see what implications it may have for the industry

### **MP Larry Bagnell's last comments**

- I have the YTAB's first set of recommendations in the hands of the appropriate Federal Ministers'
- Encourage everyone to fill out the weekly TIA surveys as it is very helpful in informing next steps of support we can give.
- If you didn't get your answer to your question, feel free to call me directly at (867) 393-6858 or email, [larrybagnell@gmail.com](mailto:larrybagnell@gmail.com) or regular contact for my office.

1pm – Adjourn

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

**Please note: All of these questions will be put on Slido for Friday, April 3's meeting.**

1. Have there already been fraud attempts on tourism operators, taking advantage on the current situation? We must share such info!

2. Is the 2020 TCMF staying the same as last year
3. Could you increase the % paid by Yukon Government pays to 75%. The program is in place and it would help businesses keep their products in front of everyone
4. What can be done to improve communication to Tourism Operators from Government and Health Officials? There was no guidance at all!
5. Is it possible to speed up payment of already approved funding, to help with cash flow?
6. 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
7. Regarding CERB: Does someone know if foreign students, that have a study visa, which also allows them to work Part Time during school year, qualify?
8. What's TIAY's current plan with the Yukon Culinary Festival?
9. We have a few self-isolating reservations... folks can't go to rural Yukon or home... can tourism link with Yukon health to provide list of willing operators?
10. If we apply for jobs such as screeners at the hospital for a short term, will this impact our ability to apply for the emergency fund?
11. 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
12. 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
13. What does 'Status Quo' mean for Chilkoot trail and Kluane?
14. Any news about the refunds from RVC? Has anyone received a refund for your booth and registration yet?
15. I think the legal obligation is to provide a 100% refund.
16. Will small coffee shops such red Monmouth be closed
17. Will new TPA's be getting sent out in the future?
18. 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.
19. Wage subsidy employee vs contractor?
20. The 2 recent base rate reductions seem to have little effect. Banks reduced interest rates for a few days, then raised them again. Any plans to address that?
21. If the business qualifies for the 50% credit now, is it safe to assume that the business will qualify for the 100% credit?
22. If a hotel has a guest who has landed in Whitehorse on the way home, to areas well outside Whitehorse, what options are available? Can a hotel isolate for one night
23. If a business did not fully use the TCMF for last year can the clawback be forgiven under these extraordinary circumstances?

24. Can we get a copy of this zoom conversation was it recorded