



Online Tourism Operators Forum #3 – Friday, April 3, 2020 (12pm)

12pm – Welcome and Overview:

TIA Yukon Executive Director, Blake Rogers

- Slido #31587 for questions
- 87 participants on Zoom

12:10pm – TIA Yukon Status Report

TIA Yukon Chair, Neil Hartling

- We have a new Office Manager, Julia Herioth
- When you Google, tiayukon.com the first search that comes up is TIAC, but look for TIA Yukon
- Continuing to collect resources and post on the TIA Yukon website under the Covid-19 Updates
- Once a year, I attend an event called Confluence hosted by America Outdoors (in the US), highly recommend AO to tourism wilderness outfitters in the Yukon. You can also benefit from AO now by visiting their website:
<https://www.americaoutdoors.org/covid-19>
- If you scroll to the bottom you will see a link to an AO forum they hosted by Zeb Smith who is an accountant and adventure business specialist. He gave a great seminar on business continuity planning – very practical, down to earth stuff from a disciplined point of view. You can view here the seminar here:
<https://www.americaoutdoors.org/covid-19/>
- Savehospitality.ca is a Canada-wide website and campaign that is there to get messaging across that businesses are syncing now and need funding now (shared from Tammy Beese)
- Yukon Grown Food Facts is a Facebook campaign using remaining funds from the sun setting CanNor contract. Great way to promote local food. Visit the TIA Yukon Facebook page for details.
- On the buy local front, which is something we are hearing from every part of the economy in the Yukon and probably across Canada. We strongly encourage (people who still have jobs) to help us with our messaging, place orders, gift certificates get money in the hands of small businesses in your community. That puts money in their hands to pay their bills and to keep in business.
- Try not to buy anything online that you can get in town, need money in Yukon's economy
- Recommend to look at Covid-19 links on the Yukon Chamber of Commerce (YCC) and Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce (WCC) websites.

- YCC: <https://www.yukonchamber.com/post/yukon-chamber-members-covid-19-resources>
 - WCC: <https://www.whitehorsechamber.ca/business-of-the-month/covid-19-update>
- Check out the Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon (WTAY) who are posting great updates too.
 - WTAY: <https://wtay.com/covid-19-resources/>
- We are trying to work as a team and get stuff up as fast as we can to the business community in the various sectors
- Here are some speaking points that we continue to push forward at every opportunity, that you may want to make note of:
 - SME's represent the majority of our economy in Canada and the tourism sector has been hit first, hit the hardest and likely to be hit the longest. That includes hospitality and accommodation, etc.
 - SME's can't borrow their way out of this crisis. Most SME's are backed by personal owners of resources and their life savings.
 - Loans are not the solution
 - Tourism will be affected for multiple reasons and relief and recovery measures must endure well past the cessation of closures. Tourism will still be feeling the chill and will need support in order to properly recover.
- Chistoph Altherr of Taiga Journeys sent in a good observation, that companies need cash flow support now, if this does not happen now, there will be less activities in future seasons making the Yukon less attractive for travellers and in turn leads to fewer visitors and operators shutting down and the spiral continues to long term negative affects on Yukon's tourism industry for years to come.
 - That is part of our message that we are pushing forward. We do need money in the hands of operators now.
- We are at the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board (YTAB) table and a number of TIA members are on that committee and we are pushing these messages loud and clear.
- Also at the Business Advisory Council (BAC) table, which is a newly formed temporary emergency committee advising the Minister of Economic Development, Ranj Pillai. We are communicating messages that are very succinctly and clear coming across with no candy coating.
- From your point of view as operators, where to aim your targets:
 - Some expenses you pay are private sector based, like, Northwestel and ATCO they are very large companies on a different scale compared to tour operators, but, they are companies and they are not government. Managed and controlled by government, yes. Deferrals aren't an unreasonable arrangement, but outright cuts and grant, should be in the purview of public governments. Where those cuts come from the entire community, which are all of us as taxpayers.

12:20pm – Alaska Update from White Pass & Yukon Route (WPYR), Transportation Representative on the TIA Yukon Board of Directors

Tyler Rose, Executive Director of HR & Strategic Planning

- So many cross-interests between Yukon and Alaska
- The status is fluid of what is happening, information changing so rapidly
- Currently Alaska has 147 cases of Covid-19, 3 fatalities, one of which took place in Seattle. Majority are in urban areas – Anchorage, Fairbanks, the Kenai Peninsula. No cases in Skagway.
- There have been 12 mandates from the State government, which are very similar – shelter in place, essential business functions, etc.
- Stimulus front it is still in motion.
- White Pass and all of our industry partners are putting forth that safety comes first. We want to make sure that during this pandemic that we operate safely, keeping it under control, stemming the tide into a future for our industry. And, in the future, restoring consumer confidence in the region. We believe tourism will return.
- With the Port of Vancouver closed until at least July 1st and then Port of Seattle monitoring the situation and all of the cruise traffic that comes out of these locations has pushed things out.
- The scheduling we have does not yet account for cancellations prior to those dates. Though the scheduling, what we have currently, as of yesterday includes:
 - Holland America sailings are suspending through May 14, which is 7 ships, 14 voyages
 - Royal Caribbean and Celebrity have suspended sailings through June 30, which is 6 ships combined and 41 voyages totalling 113,000 passengers.
 - Princess Cruises is suspended through May 10 with 4 ships combined, cancelling a total of 4 voyages, around 10,000 passengers
 - Carnival Cruise Line has suspended sailings through June 30. Carnival Miracle itself has cancelled the entire season and that is 2 ships cancelling 21 voyages, which is 44,000 passengers
 - Norwegian, Oceania and Region cruise lines which are affiliated companies have suspended through May 10, which is 3 ships combined, 5 voyages and 16,000 passengers
 - Wind Star Cruises has cancelled the entire 2020 season, which is one ship, cancelling 7 voyages and 2,100 passengers
 - Viking cruise line has suspended sailing through June 30, which is one ship, cancelling 7 voyages for a total of 6,500 passengers
 - This totals out to 99 voyages cancelled and a lower birth count of 196,342
- Not good news as we had anticipated 1.2 million visitors to Skagway. We would expect into the future that there will be more cancellations. Not all vessels will directly impact the Yukon, but many would.
- As this rolls out, we will have a better picture of what the cruise season and tourism season as a whole looks like.
- Sharing information as it comes and becomes more solid as we move forward

12:30am – Yukon Tourism & Culture Update

Deputy Minister Valerie Royle & Director of Tourism, Pierre Germain

- We had some Alaskans pull up to the Visitor Information Centre, they were subject to the declaration, just stopped to use the bathroom, walk their dog and check the internet. The measures being talked about are in effect and they are being adhered to and this is an example.
- The YTAB is still meeting and working on a number of items including the new TCMF guidelines. We have had lots of feedback, so thank you.
- We are working with the department of Economic Development on a business grant program. We hear loud and clear that cash now is what is needed. We appreciate all the direct messages on this. Keep them coming. We need to hear that, that we can't wait 3-6 weeks, we need it now and that is helpful.
- DM Royle was on a Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) call with Minister Joly and all the Ministers across Canada yesterday. All provinces and territories shared with Minister Joly some of the issues with existing Federal programs that don't work for the tourism industry and for very small businesses. Minister Joly was very receptive to that feedback. As an example, one of the things raised was the fact that with the wage subsidy that you have to show a difference in revenue from March over March. This is an issue if you haven't opened yet, that doesn't apply. However, there is still a need to pay the fixed costs, etc. so that is something Minister Joly is taking that back. So, there is a need to change their programs and will change as needed.
- The more that we get feedback in to the YTAB, TIA Yukon, the Chambers, BAC then we can funnel those Federally to try and get the programs changed.
- In the mean time, we are working on something locally to be able to provide much needed business relief by working with the Department of Economic Development.
- We know business relief is the number one priority right now.
- We are working on tourism recovery measures. But, we need to have businesses to be there to recover.
- Keep those messages coming.
- T&C has reached out to clients, letting them know there is flexible reporting to advance payments on TPA's, TCMF, NGO funding.

Helen Booth, ADM for Economic Development was not available.

Larry Bagnell, MP for Yukon

- The day after the BAC and YTAB met I got all of those recommendations into the right people in Ottawa.
- All of the points that Neil said at the beginning, I've made sure to get those points to Ottawa
- As DM Royle said, we are changing some of the programs and this week there were three major business programs.

- Best place to see how the Federal programs work are on Canada.ca
- There is also a Covid-19 app as well: <https://ca.thrive.health>
- A few points where people have asked me a lot of questions relating to those programs
 - To apply for the **wage subsidy** on the Canada CRA portal – you can do so in roughly three weeks. No size limit for businesses applying. Retroactive to March 15th, 2020. How will it be paid? When you submit wages you have paid, they will send you a cheque for what you paid the employees
 - **Canada Business Account Loan** – sole proprietors are eligible as long as they have hired someone (one or more) and have the \$50k in payroll. It is up to \$40k. Interest-free for the first year and if paid by December 31st, 2022 you get to keep \$10k.
 - **Personal Assistance** there is a bit of confusion if you can earn income. You have to have 14-days of no income in the first period. Some of the days after that, in the first monthly period, you can earn income, but after that the next two months you cannot earn any income to remain eligible.
 - **Students** coming back to the Yukon, made \$5k that they need to be eligible, still not eligible because students are suppose to have lost work because of Covid. We have raised that issue numerous times in Ottawa and they're looking at it.
 - **OAS and CPP** does not preclude from applying for the CERB.
 - Continue to make the case in Ottawa; Yukon tourism sector is seasonal, if this season is wiped out, you have all winter to pay fixed costs and not revenues. I keep making this case.

12:40pm – Q&A

1. When will we hear what the new TCMF guidelines are? Finding out when applications open on May 1 doesn't allow us to plan (Pierre Germain responded)

- We are working on the TCMF guidelines now and hope to have them out in advance of the May 1st application date
- When exactly? I can't tell you, but we are working on them.

2. Any chance Yukon Government will assign tourism staff to change gears. Focus supporting business survival. Help our companies to do the work. Help, we need now. (Pierre Germain responded)

- Economic Development is the lead on business relief. We are working very closely with them along with the Department of Finance to try and find immediate business support.
- We have staff working with Ec Dev on those issues
- We have staff working on TCMF and staff focusing on the recovering element
- We are working as a one government approach to try and resolve these issues; they are complicated but we also understand the urgency.

- Hoping an announcement will be made soon,
- Press Conference at 3pm today by the Premier and Chief Medical Officer of Health - encourage people to log in to that call.

3. Are there any measures to be expected regarding travel to/from the US, considering the spreading there is fast, case numbers are high. (Peter Turner, President of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce responded)

- This concern was raised by the Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce last week.
- Worked through our Transportation Committee and we have engaged with the Southeast Alaska Chamber and this was when the subject of discussion arose
- Apparently, at the moment, the ferry that normally runs from Seattle up to Alaska is not sailing. There are good chunk of Alaska snowbirds that spend the winter in the lower 48 are transferring back to Alaska and we thought that was not happening because our impression was that would not have been treated as essential travel. We are still waiting for a little bit of clarity from border services. However, we did raise the concerns, both to Canadian border services and working with the Watson Lake Chamber of Commerce, reaching out to Health and Social Services here in the Yukon as well as Dr. Brendan Hanley.
- Late yesterday afternoon, there were new emergency measures that were released by the Yukon Government the entire document is on the website page.
 - Addresses our questions about Alaska snowbirds
 - Travellers who enter the Yukon by land or air are required to stop upon entry and fill out a travel declaration and check in with an enforcement officer before entering the Territory. This will ensure proper self-isolation measures and orders are shared with every traveller and can be enforced if necessary.
 - Non-residents who must transit through Yukon on to Alaska or the NWT or another part of Canada, may do so, but must not remain in the Yukon for more than 24-hours.
 - The Yukon's emergency coordination centre is preparing to implement enforcement measures at the entry points in the Yukon, which will be mobilized in the coming days.
 - Requirements for self-isolation apply to all essential service workers with a limited number of exemptions for residents of BC and Yukon border communities and critical service workers.
 - Communities not subject to this include: Atlin, Lower Post, Jade City, Fireside or Pleasant Camp are exempted from the 14-day self-isolation period, provided they have not travelled outside of the Yukon or their home communities in the past 14-days.
 - For all the information please visit: <https://yukon.ca/en/health-and-wellness/covid-19/current-covid-19-situation>

Larry Bagnell's comments

- The Federal Quarantine Act is now in order. So, if you are coming from out of Canada, you have to self-quarantine for 14-days and that means not going to the grocery store or anything once you get back to the Yukon
- There are Federal penalties, up to \$750,000 or 6 months in jail. That is for international travellers coming back to Canada
- Federal rules say that you are not even suppose to go outside in your backyard, but the rules are different in the Yukon.
- We are working with Yukoners who are overseas and stuck in about 6 countries – making sure they are aware of that as far as border crossings.

4. Almost all of the small businesses in the Yukon are not eligible to pay into EI. They are the backbone of the highway lodges. Without support they will not hire (Larry Bagnell responded)

- A person who is not eligible for EI is eligible for Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), the \$2k/month.
- A sole proprietor whose business is totally shut down is also eligible
- Anyone who applies after March 15 for EI will be put into the CERB stream – delivered a lot faster than EI.

5. Parks Canada has closed the parks, what happens to the money that was already paid for the Park Permits for 2020? (Neil Hartling responded)

- TIA has been in discussed with PC this week
- Parks licence fees are by legislation. In order to make changes, has to go through Parliament, or at least Order and Council, which is a major project.
- In my discussions with local PC people, prepared to be as flexible as possible within their range of possibility.
- In general most, Federal licence fees are quite small, less than \$100

6. Is it possible to speed up payment of already approved funding, to help with cash flow? (Blake Rogers responded)

- We know there is an urgent need. There has been a lot of talk of this at TIAC's and other TIA's level. Doing what we can do speed process up and come up with new solutions.

Neil Hartling's comments

- One of our main themes we are pushing as hard as we can. Hearing it from every advocacy group we are affiliated with. Make the voice loud and clear.

7. What's TIAY's current plan with the Yukon Culinary Festival? (Blake Rogers responded)

- Not moving forward with YCF this year, given with the climate with event cancellations.
- We are doing what we can to support local food.

- If we can do events later on, trying to promote and highlight local food in smaller events.
- Anything we can do, we will do. Support our farmers and restaurants – keep more money in the local economy.
- As for an event, it is a tough one. Stay tuned.

8. What does 'Status Quo' mean for Chilkoot trail and Kluane? (Neil Hartling responded)

- They are closed right now.
- For Kluane, Whitehorse people are not wanted passing through Haines Junction right now. Express request from Haines Junction is being honoured by closing access to Kluane.
- Superintendent, Diane Wilson is ready to push the open button as soon as reasonably possible to open the park.

9. Has there been consideration to change the qualifying date for the 75% wage subsidy from March 1st to March 15th to capture the true impact of the crisis. (Larry Bagnell responded)

- Covid-19 didn't get here (Yukon) as early as the rest of the country. When you put in your wages of March last year, compared to March this year, the last two weeks of March could be a disaster, but when you average out that you had no issue the first part of March, it puts you below 30% and you are not eligible. That is a huge problem. My biggest issue I have been taking to Ottawa. If that affects anyone, send me an email, so I can add to the list.

10. Currently, I have to renew my General Liability, and they ask more than \$5,000. It was increased by more than 200%. Any other experienced similar changes? (Blake Rogers responded)

- Insurance has been a topic of hot conversation – raised in surveys, operators calling us.
- We have put together best practices from other parts of the country and the board has provided input too
- Visit to [tiayukon.com](https://tiayukon.com/about/covid-19-updates/useful-resources/) under useful resources:
<https://tiayukon.com/about/covid-19-updates/useful-resources/>

Neil Hartling's Comments

- Insurance is one of those things we hate to pay it until we need it

Jessie Young's Comments

- I paid our insurance (due March 31), our insurance premium went up. Does not include any of the money we will lose this summer
- Unless we had a clause on our contract with our client, we have lost that money as well, so there is no claim that you sign up for

11. Is there support for yearly business tours? For winter season as well? (Larry responded)

- Our programs are focused on the current emergency for March, April, May and into June. We are still working on a tourism package. Details TBA.

Pierre Germain's Comments

- Our focus is on developing a program for immediate business relief.
- TCMF to increase funds will be available for the entire year of the fund. Businesses marketing in the winter and next summer will be eligible to access TCMF.

12. Mark Waldbilling, Sea to Sky Expeditions

Biggest problem is access. All the tourism companies on here probably pay their people through sub-contracts rather than employees. That simple fact makes it ineligible to even apply. This doesn't even get into the fact of all the small operators that are below \$50k in payroll to get paid out. You've got the right device, the right vehicle; we just can't get at it. (Larry Bagnell responded)

- That is the first input I have had on contractors, so I will take that back to the system.

13. 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? (Erin Deacon responded)

- Using: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/cerb-application.html>
- And under the Questions & Answers sections found this:
- Can you receive the Canada Emergency Response Benefit if you are not a citizen or permanent resident?
- To be eligible for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, you must reside in Canada and have a valid Social Insurance Number.
- Workers who are not Canadian citizens or permanent residents – including temporary foreign workers and international students – **may be eligible** to receive the Benefit if they meet the other eligibility requirements.

Carly Carruthers, CanNor

- For anyone who has a current funding arrangement with CanNor and wants to check in on payments please reach out carly.carruthers@canada.ca

Larry Bagnell's Final Comments

- There was one of the earlier calls, Neil responded about liquidity. Advancing funds for a project already approved. It would be good to know what that specific project was.

Blake Rogers' Final Comments

- TIA has done some work to find a primary contact at each of the banks. It is posted on our website under useful resources.
- Another weekly survey out helps shapes programs. They need justification. Week to week things change fast. Only takes 5 minutes. We send the responses with TIAC as well as Tourism & Culture.

Neil Hartling's Final Comments

- The weekly are Zoom calls planned for the foreseeable future and really value participation and input
- Send us your ideas ahead of time to incorporate in our planning for each week's call.

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 the Thursday, April 9th meeting.

1. CEBA qualifications are too restrictive. Only accepts T4 Summary of Remuneration Paid statement for employees NOT wages paid to contractors so we can't apply!!!
2. What is T&C recommending to Canada regarding the cruise ship port ban?
3. Are there any provisions for the delivery of Tourism related goods from BC to the Yukon and transiting to Alaska?
4. What can be done to improve communication to Tourism Operators form Government and Health Officials? There was no guidance at all!
5. Scamming and SPAM are already on the rise, can we think of a central point to keep all informed on the biggest or most common scams?
6. 75% wage contribution is for March 15th-June 6th. We are opening earliest on June 1 likely July 1. Why does the Can Government not extend so that seasonal bus can get help?
7. One of our members is asking whether local folks could deliver training courses for \$ via Skype/Zoom instead of using Emerit? Just as a stimulus idea
8. Are there efforts underway to track impact on independent contractors, i.e. the only paid employee is themselves?

9. Not sure if that has been asked before. Re' accepting gift certificates, will that have influence on to the eligibility for CERB?

10. That's not the question, TOURISM, what are you doing to have staff do what we need help with

11. If your company hires seasonal guides/employees, starting May/June, can the 75% wage subsidy be applied to them, even if they have not worked since last August?

12. Keeping Employees on the payroll requires us to pay CPP, EI and Federal Tax. Can this be delayed?

13. Scamming and SPAM are already on the rise, can we think of a central point to keep all informed on the biggest or most common scams?

14. If a business did not fully use the TCMF for last year can the clawback be forgiven under these extraordinary circumstances?

From the Zoom Side-Bar Chat

1. Janet Sanders, Alpine Aviation:

- For us it is simple if I have no insurance I loose my operating certificate as mandated by the Federal Government.

Sian Williams, Ice field Discovery:

- I agree with Janet. We need to lobby the aviation insurance underwriters to give us some options. Every thing I have presented to them so far has been denied.

Blake Rogers' comments

- From a TIA point of view, I can commit to taking this to my TIA and TIAC counterparts. We meet every week to talk about issues that are coming up.
- There might be more details on the national level.

Larry Bagnell's Comments

- No one has approached me

Pierre Germain's Comments

- This is the first I have hard of it as well. It is a good comment. I have taken notes and will share with Val.

2. Wonder if the government should put in place some measures for keeping gas

pumps sterilized, seems like a likely point of contamination contact, with Alaskans still traveling through...

3. For Valerie Royale and Larry Bagnell to push forward - CEBA qualifications are too restrictive. Only accepts T4 Summary of Remuneration Paid statement for employees NOT wages paid to contractors so we can't apply!!! (the program looks great, we just can't access it!!)

4. From Jesse Cooke

To Neil's point - yes these are private companies and not governments, and so "hand outs" per se should not be expected. However - that being said, it never hurts to ask. You may be surprised, even private landlords, small businesses, etc., may be in a position to offer some support. I've already seen many examples in my community. Don't be too proud to ask for some help :)

5. Jesse Cooke: In Dawson for example, fees for our license of occupation at Dredge No4 are now due Sept 1

(Dredge 4 is a Parks Can site)

Joost: PC license fees are small, but permits add up