



Friday, June 12, 2020

The Honourable Geoff MacLellan  
Minister of Business  
Department of Business  
PO Box 2311, Halifax NS B3J 3C8

Re: Tourism Nova Scotia

Dear Minister MacLellan,

I would first like to take this opportunity to thank you and your team at the Department of Business for their great efforts in supporting the business community in Nova Scotia. This has been an unprecedented time and we applaud the collaboration and communication that has occurred during and external to our Nova Scotia Business & Labour Economic Coalition meetings.

The Chamber and business community are happy to see that businesses are beginning to safely open and that our province is reawakening. We know that a Maritime bubble is being discussed at the Council of Atlantic Premiers to increase regional tourism and local spending and we hope that this accommodation comes to fruition soon. In the short term however, we believe that Nova Scotian businesses and citizens that rely on tourism will need the tangible support of the province to recover from the effects of Covid-19.

This summer will be tremendously different for tourism operators and the many businesses that rely on tourists visiting our province. While we hope a Maritime bubble could lessen the blow from the loss of non-Nova Scotia tourists, we are concerned that the lack of events, concerts and gatherings will inhibit interest in travel. In order to ensure that Nova Scotians travel in Nova Scotia, and stay in accommodations, eat in restaurants and visit our museums and scenic locations we need to provide an incentive.

Here are three ideas to provide Nova Scotians with immediate incentives to spend:

1. A \$1000 Nova Scotia tax credit for staying at local accommodations or taking advantage of local events could provide the necessary encouragement to have Nova Scotians book travel and accommodations in our province. If a Nova Scotian receives a tax credit for accommodations, they will need to spend on food and drink as they travel throughout the province.
2. As the economy began to reopen in China, the Chinese government instituted an online voucher for \$50, with a \$100 redemption value. Not a large amount and not insignificant numbers but the uptake by consumers was immediate. Retailers followed suit, with malls and chains offering similar vouchers or points programs to incent consumer spending. The province of Nova Scotia should contribute to this initiative.
3. Much like the Restaurant focused Dine-Around in February, we believe that providing customers with incentives will help encourage people to visit and shop locally. This program will need support from government to encourage participation. At this time, restaurants cannot afford to lower margins when they are already at 50% capacity. A grant for restaurants to participate is needed.



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# HALIFAX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

These are just a few tactical examples of, direct programming to incent the type of consumer behavior that will be critical for the tourism sector to get back on its feet.

What we would ask the Province of Nova Scotia to consider funding these types of initiatives. There may be others and encourage engagement with the Restaurant Association and Hotel Association to flesh these out. We can work to make these conversations happen.

Our tourism sector relies heavily on the economic generation of non- Nova Scotian tourists. We know that the cruise ships and international travel will not be available this summer, and the Atlantic bubble has not yet been approved and even if approved, will not provide the traffic required to offset the losses. Our province, therefore, will rely on Nova Scotians to support our local businesses, in all sectors, to ensure they remain open. We would like to see the province provide the tactical incentives Nova Scotians need.

This letter is signed by representatives from The Halifax Chamber of Commerce, The Nova Scotia Restaurant Association and the Hotel Association of Nova Scotia to convey the urgency and commitment from three groups to these initiatives.

Once again, we would like to thank the Nova Scotia government for their dedication to our business community, and we hope to continue our collaboration over the coming months.

We hope to hear from you quickly on these ideas. Time is very short to support businesses in Nova Scotia.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Sullivan".

Patrick Sullivan  
President and CEO  
Halifax Chamber of Commerce

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Clark".

David Clark  
General Manager  
Atlantica Hotel Halifax

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon Stewart".

Gordon Stewart  
Executive Director  
Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia

Cc: Bernie Miller, Deputy Minister, Department of Business  
The Honourable Stephen McNeil, Premier of Nova Scotia  
David Clark, General Manager, Atlantica Hotel Halifax  
Gordon Stewart, Executive Director, Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia