Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee Report

1. ISSUE

Tourism, arts, culture, sports and recreation are unique but overlapping industries. Together they represent more than $2.5-billion\(^1\) in economic impact for Greater Victoria each year. Since mid-March, when the state of emergency was declared, the COVID-19 pandemic has created near-disastrous conditions for most of these sectors. Each sector continues to function within extremely constrained conditions. Beyond the economic impact of these sectors, the mental and physical wellness they nurture cannot be overstated.

This report aligns with the work being done by Destination Greater Victoria along with the Tourism Industry Association of British Columbia for provincial-level components. It includes voices from our region’s arts, culture, entertainment, sports and recreation organizations. The committee has prepared this report to highlight the devastating effect COVID-19 has had on these sectors and recommend possible solutions for moving forward. New policies and regulations are required to help these sectors adapt to working within — and surviving — the pandemic’s limitations. Where that is not possible, new funding initiatives are required to keep them solvent through 2021.

The following actions are implementable in the next 18 months and leverage existing initiatives where possible. They are inclusive and include measurable accountabilities for progress. These actions are aimed not only at shorter-term economic recovery but also at building a more diverse, sustainable and resilient economy for tomorrow.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

**For Local Governments and the Government of B.C.**

Recommendation A: The local and provincial governments must assist businesses in adapting to the “new normal” and provide a more responsive regulatory environment.

For businesses that survive the current economic climate, a strong business environment in Greater Victoria and the province will be even more crucial. Businesses will need security and flexibility to build, invest and capitalize on emerging opportunities following the pandemic. The Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee recommends:

\(^1\) Data are from Destination Greater Victoria, CRD Arts Committee, Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Association, and the Vancouver Island South Film and Media Commission.
● **Reduce or defer property taxes and reduce or eliminate patio fees.** Given that the economic slowdown will be more keenly felt during the winter months, local governments must continue these policies through 2021.

● **Expand liquor licensing.** Make pandemic-related licensing changes permanent and allow restaurants to offer alcohol sales within expanded premises. Ideally, licensing would be consistent across the CRD, allowing business operators with more than one location to apply their best practices across multiple locations easily. Making these changes permanent gives operators more certainty with which to recoup their losses from recent months and/or to hire more staff to service the increased demand.

● **Create special protocols for outdoor venues.** Entertainment industries (live music, and cultural or special events) need certain economies of scale to be viable. During the pandemic, indoor venues are less likely to be possible within WorkSafeBC health and safety parameters. Outdoor venues, however, can isolate segments of the audience within the 50-person limit and make other arrangements for spacing and tracking attendees. More outdoor venues will allow musicians, artists, and event companies much-needed revenue without increasing the health risk, all while bringing emotional relief to a population suffering from isolation and increased stress.

● **Create toolkits to help tourism operators adapt to the new normal.**
  
  ○ Model these on the toolkits available from tourismrecovery.ca and the Adventure Travel Trade Association’s (ATTA) toolkit for adventure tourism. The goal is to help operators move past immediate crisis management and focus on health and safety, capacity, adaptation, change management, HR and financial planning. The toolkit could be created in partnership with TIABC (and other partners like ATTA for niche and peripheral experiences and industries) and would have financial support to incentivize participation.

  ○ Continue to invest in building a sustainable tourism industry (financial, environmental, cultural and social) and enhancing Greater Victoria’s already well-known reputation as a best-practice destination. This includes rewarding best practices for health and safety, employment standards, training, diversity and inclusiveness while operating to the highest environmental standards.

● **Communicate a clear pathway from Phase 3 to Phase 4 of the provincial reopening plan.** The current plan leaves many variables open-ended, which causes confidence issues in the marketplace. This is already having a negative economic impact as business investors and conference and event planners divert investment into other markets that have greater clarity in their reopening plans. The provincial government can issue clarifying addendums that make it clear that as COVID-19 tracing technologies and treatments improve, the pathway to Phase 4
would have incremental — but very clear — steps that give the market confidence to make firm decisions and investments.

- **Assess B.C.’s competitive landscape.** As a medium-term recovery tactic, the province — through partnerships with Business Council of British Columbia, Invest in Canada, the Conference Board of Canada and others — should invest in robust monitoring and public reporting of tax rates, regulatory burdens, trade barriers (both interprovincial and international) and the inflation rate relative to nearby competitors (neighbouring provinces and states). This will inform how our province can remain strategically relevant in a post-pandemic economic recession and recovery.

**For All Partners**

**Recommendation B: All partners must work together to create and implement innovative solutions to increase domestic consumer and business confidence.**

Domestic consumers and businesses need mechanisms whereby they are assured that shopping, traveling and investing domestically are not only safe but necessary to restart our economy. The Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee recommends the following:

- **Deploy communications tools that give British Columbians real-time information on health and safety practices in customer-facing businesses.** The provincial government could create guidelines for tourist destinations, arts and music venues, restaurants, retail stores, and service businesses to ensure a common playbook for safe and sustainable operations during and after the pandemic. At the same time, an app and door stickers/signage would give customers information on the protocols being followed by these businesses. As a result, businesses and customers would gain an added sense of safety and security. To ensure integrity and effectiveness in the long-term, the system would need a reporting mechanism for non-compliance so businesses could be disincentivized (e.g., losing a compliance rating or negative media coverage) for unsafe practices.

- **Encourage safe domestic travel.** A celebrity campaign was launched by Destination Canada to encourage domestic travel, but a coordinated campaign at the provincial, interprovincial, and federal level over the next 12 to 18 months is required as international travel remains unlikely. Elected and public service leaders (e.g., Mayors, the Provincial Health Minister, the Premier of B.C. and the Provincial Health Officer) could include pre-approved and consistent key messages in their regular briefings. The messaging would be a call-to-action for British Columbians to shop and travel locally to help offset the economic and financial crisis caused by the pandemic.

- **Refresh and expand Greater Victoria’s brand into a regional networked brand portfolio** As B.C. gains a positive reputation for how it has managed the pandemic from a governance and public

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52 Destination Canada videos featuring well-known figures like Rick Mercer and Peter Mansbridge have already been circulating.
health and safety standpoint, there is an emerging opportunity to position Greater Victoria favourably within a new global context in which mid-sized city-regions around the world compete based on health, safety, governance, culture, quality of life and economic vibrancy. The Committee recommends that SIPP and its partners coordinate a networked marketing portfolio and messaging campaign around why Greater Victoria is a desirable place to study, live, work, start a business and invest. The Committee further recommends that a collaborative brand family portfolio and creative campaign be developed with key partners to help refresh the brand as a thriving, globally-fluent and diverse city region. The Provincial government should create similar messaging that would work for CreativeBC, Destination BC, Trade+Invest BC, InnovateBC and other channels.

- **Increase regional emphasis to attract sporting and non-sporting events to Greater Victoria.** Stronger regional buy-in from municipalities throughout Greater Victoria would allow more events to be attracted here as both a short-term recovery tactic and a long-term high-impact strategy. Therefore, the committee recommends the following:
  
  - Municipal governments need to become involved and invest more in Destination Greater Victoria’s efforts to attract sports, major conferences and other non-sports events to the region (several municipal governments have not invested, though most have).

**For the Federal and Provincial Governments**

**Recommendation C: The federal and provincial governments must increase the competitive business environment through infrastructure and programming investment.**

Innovative and timely investments will be necessary to capture opportunities arising from the pandemic. The Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee recommends:

- **Invest in Camosun College to create meaningful equity that results in film sector education programming.** The provincial and federal governments should grant Camosun College $10-million to secure equity in a film studio project on Camosun’s Interurban campus. This unique approach would align educational programming to an on-campus film studio with three sound stages. This investment would make the region competitive in this globally growing industry where there are more projects in the pipeline than studios available to create them. Investing in Camosun College would help ensure students from the South Island region can fill many of these high-paying jobs.

- **Invest in a Canadian international gateway: Belleville Terminal.** Exploring the role of stimulus funding to jump-start this project has been a priority infrastructure investment for some time. Through this port, the South Island region is an international gateway, but a major investment is needed and has been in development. Many partners have prioritized this, but buy-in from the provincial government is needed to leverage federal investment.
• **Investment in cultural infrastructure.** Decaying local arts venues need to be refurbished and enhanced to take advantage of domestic cultural tourism. The federal and provincial governments need to make increased investments and coordinate cultural infrastructure programs to support existing activities.

**For All Levels of Government**

**Recommendation D: All levels of government must invest in financial initiatives to support financial solvency through 2021.**

Tourism, arts, culture, sports and recreation businesses and organizations are barely able to operate — and some not operating at all. To ensure this segment of Greater Victoria’s economy survives COVID-19, financial measures must be in place through 2021 to ensure these organizations remain solvent long enough to rebuild when the province fully re-opens in Phase 4. Extending the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) was a good example of the type of initiatives required. The Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee recommends:

• **Fulfill the stimulus package**\(^{53}\) **request from the Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC).** A $680-million request was made by TIABC to the province on July 21, 2020, to help keep the tourism industry solvent in the coming months and years.

• **Fulfill the set of phase one and phase two solvency recommendations from Destination Greater Victoria.** These recommendations\(^ {54}\) were made to both the provincial and federal governments.

• **Expand the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF) program and criteria.** The RRRF administered by the Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) is almost fully subscribed. This funding shortage will mean a shortfall during a second wave (or prolonged first wave as seems to be happening) of the pandemic and it needs to be expanded. Furthermore, it has become clear that the program’s parameters — which focus on rural areas and non-tourism economic sectors in Western Canada — exclude the vast majority of, if not all, businesses within the Greater Victoria visitor economy. These businesses have been hit disproportionally hard and require assistance.

• **Implement and monitor a commercial eviction moratorium.** Administered by the provincial government, this moratorium will ensure that businesses and organizations have the long-term stability to plan for recovery into 2021 and beyond.

• **Develop a clear plan for clean and safe streets.** While we realize that this pandemic has a significant impact on the region’s vulnerable homeless population, it is important to note that the economic impacts have resulted in increased panhandling, street crimes, break and enters,
etc. and can have an impact on the tourism market. Residents are less likely to frequent impacted areas, a trend that will continue if these issues are not addressed and a plan is not communicated.

- **Expand programs that support musicians and artists.**
  
  - The provincial and federal could institute programs that support living arrangements for artists and musicians. This would allow for several positive outcomes. Reducing the pressure on artists to find a means of surviving would allow them to create art and music, which in turn benefits the community and events organizations and venues. Further, our communities are at risk of becoming sterile without live art and music projects. This program could be modeled after Iceland’s (e.g., their Artist’s Salaries\(^55\) program is a good example) and could be available proven professional artists (or new graduates of specific and defined arts and music programs) and could be run as a three-year pilot program — with measured outcomes — before exploring permanence.
  
  - Municipal governments could increase grants and commission artists for public projects. This supports artists and adds vibrancy, inspiration and appeal to our public spaces, which is especially important during this time of isolation.
  
  - Municipal governments could support an artist-in-residence where artists would install public projects during a one-month residency. In the Capital Regional District, this could result in 156 residencies\(^56\) throughout a one-year project (12 residencies in 13 municipalities). Artists would be paid a one-month stipend or honorarium and would be required to submit a working plan with projected deliverables.

### 3. BACKGROUND

**Rising Economy Taskforce Objective and Benefits**

The South Island Rising Economy Taskforce was established to bring together the region's diverse leadership to create a coordinated economic recovery plan that will:

- create recovery priorities for the region that are most inclusive and maximize positive impacts on the economy;

- identify opportunities for the region that are aligned to federal, provincial and municipal stimulus policies and funding;

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\(^{55}\) [https://en.rannis.is/funding/art-culture/artists-stipend-fund/](https://en.rannis.is/funding/art-culture/artists-stipend-fund/)

\(^{56}\) 13 municipalities over 12 months, with one residency per month.
• provide confidence to our region by demonstrating that recovery efforts are well-coordinated, progressing, and responsive to the evolving situation;

• help coordinate recovery activities for the region by helping stakeholders identify common interests and develop partnerships;

• ensure that the plan informs — and is informed by — broader planning and decision-making activities across government and non-government agencies.

Sector Committees Objectives

Each sector faces unique circumstances, which is why the Rising Economy Taskforce is broken into 11 sector-driven committees. The Committees will act as primary inputs for the Taskforce work. Included in their work are the following key topics:

• Identify opportunities and conduct a situational analysis of their specific sectors for both the short term (recovery) and long term (resilience);

• Provide recommendations to the Rising Economy Taskforce on focused actions that will best position the sectors to survive and thrive;

• Provide recommendations that include ideas, policies and actions, and identifying goals, measures and potential owners of these actions. These will be included in the Regional Economic Recovery Plan;

• Focus recommendations for recovery in the short and mid-term (<6 months) then pivoting to longer-term areas of focus (resilience).

Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee

Under normal circumstances, the Greater Victoria region boasts vibrant tourism, arts and cultural, sporting and recreation sectors. These sectors have a robust impact on the region economically and culturally and contribute to the health and well-being of the region’s citizens.

Tourism alone has a $2.3-billion economic impact and employs 22,000 people.\textsuperscript{57} The region’s arts and culture sector contributes $177-million per year and includes more than 1,500 artists and 3,600 cultural workers.\textsuperscript{58} Sport tourism brings in $117-million per year,\textsuperscript{59} not including the impact of the robust facilities and recreation centres available for locals to enjoy. The region’s film and media sector has been growing steadily for the last few years with more than $20-million in annual production spending. This is

\textsuperscript{57} Destination Greater Victoria

\textsuperscript{58} Capital Regional District Arts Committee, 2011

\textsuperscript{59} Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission
still only a fraction of the $3.2-billion provincial film industry, but with a studio on the South Island, coupled with global growth trends, this can increase over time.

**Committee Members**

The Committee members were selected for their experience, breadth of knowledge, understanding of the sector and community leadership. The Committee is represented by:

- Frank Bourree (Co-Chair), President, Bourree & Associates
- Dallas Gislason (Co-Chair), Director of Economic Development, South Island Prosperity Partnership
- Nick Blasko, President, Amelia Artists; Co-Founder, Atomique Productions
- Paul Nursey, President and CEO, Destination Greater Victoria
- Mandy Farmer, CEO, Accent Inns and Hotel Zed
- Deirdre Campbell, Managing Director, Beattie Tartan
- Robert Bettauer, CEO, Pacific Institute of Sport Excellence (PISE)
- Franz Lehrbass, Executive Director, Royal & McPherson Theatres Society
- Lisa Nordstrom, General Manager, Sidney Pier Hotel
- Ian Robertson, CEO, Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (GVHA)
- Jon Tupper, Director, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (AGGV)
- Kegan McFadden, Executive Director, Victoria Arts Council
- Kathleen Gilbert, Executive Director, Vancouver Island South Film & Media Commission
- Keith Wells, Executive Director, Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission

**Summary of Process and Research Findings**

The Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation Committee was struck in May following the creation of the Rising Economy Taskforce in mid-April and met three times during May, June and July. The Committee customized the Situational Analysis Survey and administered the survey to a group of mostly arts, entertainment and sporting organizations throughout the South Island region. The Committee also partnered with Tourism Vancouver Island to receive results of the surveys they were administering on behalf of the province. These results included input from tourism operators and stakeholders from across the South Island. The Committee reviewed and analyzed survey results and other relevant reports and used these to frame a SWOT/future-casting meeting. This last meeting was focused on the identification of key themes, ideas and recommendations actions for insertion into this report.

*To request a copy of the survey findings, please contact South Island Prosperity Partnership at office@southislandprosperity.ca.*