

Dear (Enter Name of MP),

I am writing as a constituent on behalf of the more than 24,000 Travel Agents in Canada to ask you to take immediate action to provide relief to our industry during these times of crisis.

The Association of Canadian Travel Agencies (ACTA) has outlined the urgent sector specific aid that is required to support travel agencies through the COVID-19 pandemic. The travel sales and ticketing industry (travel agencies) is a critical component of both the tourism and airline industry and I am calling on the Government of Canada to include travel agencies in the COVID-19 sector relief packages.

# COVID-19 Impacts on Travel Agencies:

(**Projections based on Government issued International Travel Bans remaining in effect until at least the June 30, 2020).**

* ACTA anticipates that 90% of the 24,000 travel agents will be unemployed or without income for at least the duration of March 15, 2020 to August 31, 2020. (75% of the workforce is female).
* ACTA estimates the economic loss to our industry in Canada could be up to **$30 Billion in sales** and **$3 Billion in revenue.**

Throughout the month of March and into April, Travel Agents played a critical role in cancelling and/or rebooking tens of thousands of Canadian’s scheduled to depart on winter vacations, including March Break, one of the busiest travel periods on the year. Travel Agents also played a vital role in bringing Canadians home during this critical period. With close to zero revenue coming in and the travel industry working around the clock, 7 days a week, to bring Canadians home, this put Travel Agencies in a uniquely detrimental situation. Zero revenue coming in during this period, but increased staff, ticketing, and communication expenses. Travel Agencies continue to cancel and rebook upcoming travel arrangements as airlines and other travel suppliers extend their cancellation windows due to COVID-19 travel bans.

Once the virus is under control, Government Travel Advisories are lifted and consumer confidence returns, Travel Agencies will slowly “wind up” their operations as business returns, however it is anticipated that the recovery of the travel industry will take longer than other sectors.

## Revenue Projections: (Dependent on Government Travel Bans being lifted by June 20, 2020)

Mar 15 – Aug 31, 2020 Less than 10% of normalized revenue

Sept 01 – Dec 31, 2020 25% of normalized revenue

# Sector Specific Aid:

Note - in the United States, **Travel Agencies have been included in a $25 Billion Economic Stabilization Aid Package for Airlines.** This is in the form of loans, loan guarantees and other investments to support airlines, travel agencies (ticketing agents of airlines) and other related aviation businesses to cover off expenses for 4.5 months, effective February 15, 2020. The aid package offered in the United States to travel agencies under the Small Business Interruption Loans ($349 Billion) also includes independent contractor entrepreneurs. There is no collateral or personal guaranty requirement for the loans and the portion that covers the business’ payroll, mortgage, rent or utility expenses may be eligible for forgiveness in whole or in part.

ACTA is asking the Canadian Federal Government to support Canadian Travel Agency Businesses and Workers with up to **$3 Billion in financial aid** to weather this financial crisis. It would be a travesty if multi-billion dollar air transportation organizations were given an aid package and the ticketing agents (travel agencies) that support them, and enhance competition were not included.

# Businesses Supports for Travel Agencies:

## Loan Facility:

Travel Agencies appreciate that a $10 billion loan facility is in place through the Business Credit Availability Program (BCAP). Some of our Members have attempted to access these funds through the BDC without success due to ineligibility. Understanding the immediate and deep impact the COVID pandemic is having on travel industry cash flow ACTA proposes the following for consideration to cover fixed expenses including rent, technology infrastructure etc.

* + Travel and Tourism Sector specific Aid (airlines and “ticketing agents”) with eligibility criteria and loans/forgivable loans/grants that align with the industry’s booking/revenue collection patterns
  + Request that the loans are interest free up until December 31, 2020 due to the industry’s booking/revenue collection patterns
  + Long term amortization period for repayment – 30 years
  + No collateral or personal guaranty requirements

1. **Extend 75% Wage Subsidy** to include March 15 to December 31, 2020
2. **Cancellation of Payroll Tax** between March 15 to December 31, 2020
3. **GST/HST Relief:** Permanently waive GST/HST payments for 2020. It is easier to let our industry retain the GST/HST funds in hand than set up a new system to administer special grants.

# For Workers:

1. **Employment Insurance:** Allow employers to supplement the EI benefits of high performing employees to help retain them at no penalty (similar to maternity benefits);
2. **Self-Employed (Independent Contractors):** Due to the industry’s booking/revenue collection patterns extend the CERB benefit from 16 weeks to 39 weeks if required. (Note: USA extended benefits to 39 weeks)

I appreciate your leadership during this difficult time. It is vital that the travel industry, including the Travel Agency “voice” be an integral part of the important discussions affecting our industry during this crisis. We urge you to continue to actively communicate with the Association of Canadian Travel Agencies (ACTA), which speaks on behalf of travel agencies and our customers, Canadian travelers.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

(Add your name here)

CC The **Right** Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

Hon. Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance

Hon. Marc Garneau, Minister of Transport

Hon. Mélanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages

Members of the COVID-19 Cabinet Committee

{Add in the name of your local MPP/MLA)