**ACTA talking points for discussion with MPs – updated as at February 5, 2021**

*Please be sure to include your own story about how the pandemic has affected you and your business personally. It is important MPs understand the impact with concrete examples. For those that are having a video meeting with an MP and using ACTA’s prepared PowerPoint deck, the talking points have been structured that you can follow along with the slides.*

(SLIDE 1)

* Hello
* I am a: (*Travel Agency owner, Travel Agent, Independent Travel Agent*)
* I desperately need to explain to you (*my Travel Agency –or why* I) --and our industry-- needs government help now.

(SLIDE 2) – The Canadian Travel Industry

* 14,000 **Travel Agency Businesses** including approximately 4,000 storefront locations and 10,000 self-employed independent travel agents (home based businesses)
* Between the period of March to December 2020, there has been a loss of about 400 storefront locations or 10% across the country
* 24,000 **Travel Agents and Independent Travel Agents**, more than 75% of us are women. We have seen a 19% drop in employment since the start of COVID. There is no indication our colleagues/myself can return to the work we have committed our careers too.
* What once was a $30 billion dollar industry, we have now been now working in a negative cash flow position for the past 11 months.

(SLIDE 3) – Restrictions and Impact

* There has been a Global Affairs travel advisory in place since March 2020, advising Canadians to avoid all travel outside of Canada and avoid all cruises.
* The government’s shut down of Caribbean and Mexico routes to April 30 is devastating for all sectors within the travel industry – from airlines to hotels, tour operators, and to me.
* The latest blow is the extension of the cruise ban in Canadian waters for a full year – February 2022.
* The Prime Minister’s recent and frequent messages to Canadians that “it’s not the time to travel either internationally or even across the country” and the heightened new travel safety measures including new testing on arrival on top of the pre-flight testing, mandatory hotel quarantines and the 14-day quarantine has plunged the travel industry into even more dire circumstances than before. In essence, our businesses have been shut down by the government due to COVID-19.

(SLIDE 4) – Restrictions and Impact

* We understand the importance of protecting the health of Canadians, especially in light of the new more infectious variants.
* However, the impact of the new measures and the travel bans will further delay any meaningful recovery for the entire industry.
* The financial situation for Canadian travel agencies (travel agents and independent travel agents) is **critical.** Any bookings we had have all cancelled and consumers are demanding refunds, which means travel suppliers recall our commissions.
* If the government mandates consumer refunds as a condition of financial aid, it is critical that the government provide airlines and tour operators funding to cover travel agent commissions to ensure the survival our businesses.
* The travel industry is doing our part in the fight against COVID-19, but the travel industry is collapsing and is in need of urgent, emergency aid NOW or widespread bankruptcies will occur, along with long-term damage to the infrastructure.

(SLIDES 5, 6 and 7) – My Ask, our Need

* Travel Agencies and Travel Agents are asking for the following:

*(please pick from the following according to your priorities)*

1. **Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB)**

Almost half of the travel agents in Canada are self-employed, independent travel agents who are reliant on the CRB program. These benefits run out at the end of March and ACTA is asking the government to **extend the CRB program to at least the end of September 2021 and until government travel advisories are eased.**

1. **Government Aid for Commission Recall**

The government must recognize the devastating impact of requiring mass refunds by airlines and tour operators --and the unintended consequences of a recall of commissions on Canadian travel agencies and travel agents.

ACTA is urging the government that **additional funds be included in any airline or tour operator aid package** with the condition that travel agency commissions on airline and tour packages cannot be recalled, and for a Fund to cover past bookings already recalled. Travel agencies and travel agents simply no longer have these funds, or any funds, to pay for these recalled commissions.

1. **Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS)**

**Travel agencies need access to the maximum 90% subsidy** regardless of whether they are located in a jurisdiction mandated to be closed by a public health authority. The federal and provincial governments are declaring that Canadians should not travel and should cancel any bookings and therefore, travel agencies **must** be eligible for **the additional 25% top-up of this program.**

1. **Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS)**

The CEWS program has been a lifeline to travel agencies, however with heightened travel restrictions, it is vital that this program continues. ACTA urges the government to increase the **wage subsidy to 85%** for hardest hit businesses that include travel agencies until the end of summer 2021, **and with limited conditions.**

Please understand that without urgent, extended government help, there will not be a travel industry left standing to assist Canadians when they can travel freely again.

The government measures have effectively completely shut down the travel industry, we need urgent help NOW.

* We require the Government to work with the Travel and Tourism industry to create a plan to re-start travel in a safe and measured way.

• We need to be part of the planning, we are beholden to constant government changes, with travel advisories, quarantines and PRCR testing that inhibit our recovery.

• We require immediate and focused discussions with government to ensure not only the safety of Canadians and travellers – but of our travel businesses.