

## **Operation Survival: Phase II**

### ***Member advocacy supporting documents for political meetings***

*This document provides an overview of ACTA's Operation Survival: Phase II, key speaking notes for travel agency owners, managers, travel agents and independent travel agents meeting with political officials, and a template letter for contacting Members of Parliament.*

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The future is bright; but we need continued government support to get us there!

**75%** of travel agent businesses say they will close without continued assistance.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, travel has ground to a halt. Canada's travel industry businesses are the hardest hit, were the first to stop operations and will take the longest to recover. Global travel advisories remain:

- Avoid non-essential travel outside Canada until further notice
- Avoid all cruise ship travel outside Canada until further notice

While some Canadian are travelling again, travel advisories, complex vaccination and testing regimes are blunting the travel sector's ability to recover. We do not see substantial recovery until 2022.

### **CEWS, CERS, and CRB kept us alive for COVID Year One**

We need to get the attention of MPs, MPPs, MLAs, Senators and electoral candidates, because it is widely believed that a federal election will be imminently called.

Canada's travel agent businesses need to know that government will continue to provide support until necessary public health restrictions are lifted and normal travel can resume. CEWS, CERS, and CRB are scheduled to terminate in October.

We are asking for a new, sector specific wage/financial support and fixed-cost support programs for Canada's hardest hit businesses to ensure their survival into the fall and winter. We are also asking for continued full-level CRB support for independent travel agents.

We are also asking that the government address gaps in commission protection, including recalls on NET fares, by supporting suppliers or implementing a fund to protect the incomes of travel agent businesses.

## **KEY MESSAGING GUIDELINES**

- Travel agencies should talk about the number of people employed and whose jobs are at risk.
- Travel agency leaders, travel agent employees, and independent travel agents should passionately convey how COVID has personally impacted your business, your personal life, and the constituents in your community.
- Discuss that without tailored support measures, Canada's vibrant tourism and travel sectors are at considerable risk.
- Employees will lose their jobs; independent travel agents will lose their livelihoods.
- Consumers will be without the travel agent experts trained to navigate the increasingly complex travel landscape.
- If you have a deeply compelling personal story, share it! Our goal is to "pull at their heartstrings." Our recovery will take longer as continued border closures, lingering necessary public health restrictions and lack of outbound travel continues and we need government support to bridge business operations and keep travel agent businesses from bankruptcy and permanent closures through this challenging period
- Travel agent businesses are typically not paid until clients travel, so we are at least months away from attaining the revenue needed to keep us afloat. A heavy demand now for 2022 does not equate to money in the bank today; this revenue will come in 2022.
- There's an urgent need for continued and tailored government support programs.
- The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS) programs have been critical lifelines for travel agency businesses.
- CRB is the lifeline for independent travel agents.
- There are significant gaps in commission protection, including on NET fares. This puts already earned income at risk.
- Independent travel agents are often left out of federal and provincial support programs.
- Our sector is more than 75% women owned and operated.
- According to our May survey, nearly 75% of respondents say that without sustained support through the end of 2021, or 90 days after the advisories are lifted, they will be unable to stay in business.
- Our sector will thrive once government restrictions and advisories are lifted. Our sector needs support for only a while longer to ensure survival and ability to see economic recovery.

### **Association of Canadian Travel Agencies (ACTA)**

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## Key Ask

We need sector specific wage/financial support and fixed-cost support programs as soon as possible, with a focus on hardest hit businesses, who have continued significant revenue losses. For instance, most of our industry has seen continued revenue losses of over 90% compared to 2019. An extension of CEWS, CERS, and CRB ending in October will decimate our industry. We have a bright future, 2022 is looking promising, don't give up on us now.

*These talking points are a guideline. You can pick and choose the bullets that resonate with you. Speak from the heart and describe your concern for the future. Your job is to get politicians worried that there is a significant problem that won't solve itself without more government investment. Meet with policy decision makers, members of provincial parliament, electoral candidates, and Senators.*

Now more than ever, meeting with politicians and electoral candidates is key to making financial support for our industry an election issue. To measure our campaign and ensure we are reaching all areas of the country we ask that you report your meetings here:

<https://www.acta.ca/advocacy-meetings>

**The travel and tourism industry is aiming for a combined 1,000 meetings per week between now and the end of September. The Travel Agency – Travel Agent contribution to this goal is 150 meetings during the election period to influence government decisions and potential election platforms!**

*Follow ACTA on LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter and be sure to like and retweet our messages!*

*You can find your local Member of Parliament here:*

*<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Members/en>*

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**SAMPLE LETTER to MP**

Dear Mr./Ms. ,M.P.,

I am writing as your constituent and a member of the Association of Canadian Travel Agencies (ACTA) to inform you of the dire and worsening situation of Canadian travel agent businesses. I am requesting urgent continued financial aid for our sector as my career and business are at risk.

During these challenging times, I appreciate the federal government's efforts to keep Canadians safe during the COVID-19 health and economic crisis.

Unfortunately, after 16 months, our industry:

- Has lost 67% of full-time employees;
- Has 88% reliance on CEWS support;
- Has had over 800 businesses permanently close, and most remaining businesses remain on the brink of bankruptcy; and
- Independent travel agents have heavily relied upon the CRB as a lifeline, while being excluded from most other financial support programs.

I am asking for a new tailored wage and fixed cost support program for Canada's hardest hit businesses, travel agents' key among them. With global travel advisories, mixed vaccine challenges and costly PCR testing, our industry will not rebound simply from attaining a fully vaccinated population.

This is an urgent matter. I would appreciate 20 minutes of your time to hear my story and discuss how you can help me survive the economic impact of COVID-19 so we get back to providing Canadian travellers with personal and professional travel services.

Sincerely,

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