



Hon. Premier John Horgan
Hon. Adrian Dix
Hon. Lisa Beare
Hon. Carole James
Hon. Michelle Mungall

May 21, 2020

Premier Horgan & Ministers,

The [Canadian Association of Exposition Management](#) (CAEM), is writing to you, on behalf of the hundreds of trade and consumer exhibitions that take place across British Columbia annually, as well as the tens of thousands of British Columbians employed in the sector, and our collective intentions, to work with the Province, to lay the groundwork for the responsible, safe and effective reopening of exhibitions.

As an industry, we believe we have the ability to get people back to work safely, by implementing enhanced protocols that are aligned with Health and Safety Guidelines. We are asking the Province to consider allowing trade and consumer exhibitions, to resume some business activities, in a phased and structured approach, with measures to be put in place, to operate safely and limit health risks.

According to [Meetings Mean Business Canada](#), a 2018 Global Economic Impact Study, validated the importance of Business Events worldwide. This study confirmed some important economic drivers for Canada:

- Canada ranked 6th out of the top 50 countries for Business Events
- Business Events had a direct spend at \$33 Billion
- Business Events are responsible for 229,000 direct jobs
- Business Events contributed \$19.3 billion of direct GDP
- Globally, business events generated more than \$1 Trillion of direct spending, over 10 million in direct jobs and generated \$621 Billion of direct GDP

Exhibitions have the ability to play a key part in BC's Restart Plan, by allowing companies and people to re-engage in the buying and selling of goods and services, thereby injecting liquidity into the marketplace.

The fall exhibition season is critical to our industry and the British Columbia economy. **Several months of lead up time are needed**, to plan, prepare, market and execute exhibitions. We hope to collaborate with the Province to develop safe and responsible guidelines, that would allow us to work toward the resumption of some business activities in our sector after Labour Day. **A loss of the fall exhibition season (Sept. – Dec.) would have a devastating impact on the British Columbia economy**, cascading into further job losses – already significant after the cancellation of hundreds of spring and summer exhibitions – putting more employees on employment insurance benefits and posing a serious threat to the survival of many businesses in our industry.

We are requesting to engage in a consultative process, to lay the groundwork for our industry to resume some business activities, in a phased and structured approach, based on the following tenets:

- Trade and consumer exhibitions are business events, promoting trade and commerce, where products and services are displayed and information is disseminated within a given industry. Whether they are business to business events or business to consumer events, participants are focused on buying products and services, exchanging information and sharing knowledge.



- Trade and consumer exhibitions are NOT festivals, civic events, concerts or sporting events, which are leisurely and discretionary in nature.
- On May 6th, Germany's national government confirmed the separation of exhibitions from "mass gatherings" paving the way for exhibitions to reopen again in the country. CAEM welcomes and supports this [decision](#).
- Trade and consumer exhibitions should NOT be compared or subject to the same constraints as concert halls, theatres and sporting arenas.
- Our business events have much greater flexibility when it comes to layout and design, as they are held in a controlled facility environment, allowing them the flexibility to design layouts that accommodate people very differently than other venues and events.
- Exhibitions can adhere to medically substantiated safe density ratios and/or capacity restrictions. In the same way that grocery stores have been able to continue operating safely, exhibitions can also operate safely, with plans limiting health risks through enhanced physical distancing measures and enhanced cleaning and hygiene protocols.
- Unlike other types of large events, trade and consumer exhibitions have much greater control over the flow of traffic, within their space. Producers of trade and consumer exhibitions, in collaboration with their venues and suppliers, have the ability to manage and direct the movement of their attendees - from arrival at the venue, to entering the exhibition hall, to navigating the exhibition floor, to food and beverage areas, and washroom facilities.
- By implementing strict social distancing measures, increased health and safety measures and enhanced crowd control protocols, trade and consumer exhibitions can be held safely, in accordance with specific health and safety guidelines.

Our industry supports the Province's framework for a careful, step-by-step restart, and we respect that ultimately, decisions will be guided by public health advice to protect the people of British Columbia, especially those who are most vulnerable and at high-risk.

When we are allowed to hold our events again, the health and safety of all exhibition stakeholders - workers, exhibitors and attendees – will be paramount, and will guide our approach, with any and all reopening actions to be informed by health data, defined criteria and the adoption of clear and consistent measures.

The Canadian Association of Exposition Management, has formed a [taskforce of industry leaders](#), to develop a framework to guide our approach. This framework will include Best Practices Guidelines that will outline the method and principles we propose to use in order to allow trade and consumer exhibitions to resume some business activities, safely and responsibly. We look forward to submitting these Best Practices Guidelines for your review and consideration in early June.

We would request a meeting/call to discuss this with you further.

We thank you and your teams for your tireless efforts to protect public health and safety, while balancing the needs of people and businesses.

Respectfully,

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