



caem CANADIAN ASSOCIATION  
of EXPOSITION MANAGEMENT

acge L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE  
de GESTION D'EXPOSITIONS

## Written Submission for the new post-pandemic Federal Tourism Growth Strategy

SUBMITTED BY THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF EXPOSITION  
MANAGEMENT

JULY 20, 2022

# Recommendations:

- 1- Introduce a targeted tax credit for eligible Small and Medium Businesses who exhibit at trade shows, consumer shows, expositions, conferences, or conventions.
- 2- Invest in skills development training and promoting the tourism and business events industry as a viable employment opportunity for students and newcomers to Canada.

On behalf of the Canadian Association of Exposition Management (CAEM), we are pleased to provide this submission as part of the new post-pandemic Federal Tourism Growth Strategy. The Canadian Association of Exposition Management represents over 500 producers, venues, and suppliers of commercial events – also referred to as trade shows, consumer shows and/or expositions. The business events industry, including commercial events, directly employs 229,000 people across the country and contributes 33 billion in direct spending annually to local economies. Expositions contribute to increased business development, support for the tourism and transport industries, and drive research, innovation, and professional connections across countless industries.

The commercial events space has been one of the most impacted sectors in the pandemic. There is no work-from-home option for expositions. Unlike retail, gyms, and restaurants, trade and consumer shows were not permitted to re-open to any degree. Further, the collapse of the travel industry, including reduced airline schedules, mandatory testing and hotel quarantines, and advisories against interprovincial travel that we witnessed in 2021 further diminished the confidence of individuals who might consider travelling to events as restrictions were slowly lifted. To date, the government has focused its attention and funding opportunities for hardest-hit sectors like tourism, but there has been minimal support for commercial events. The sector was not recognized as being part of the tourism industry and therefore was not eligible for funding programs such as the Major Festivals and Events Fund and the Tourism Relief Program. With CAEM's involvement in the Coalition of Hardest Hit Business and with the help of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, trade shows and consumer shows were finally recognized as part of the tourism industry when they were included as eligible businesses in the Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program (THRP). While the relief provided by the THRP was a welcome respite, the reality is that trade and consumer shows are just now beginning the long road to recovery. It is clear that more targeted support is needed. The exposition sector serves as the driving force behind countless other industries, from travel to tourism, and from local small businesses and sports to manufacturing.

Canada's high vaccination rates and the lifting of travel restrictions have provided crucial relief as the sector begins to turn the corner. However, not all players within the sector have been able to turn the corner at the same pace. Canada must continue to support and invest in the restart of the business events industry, which was one of the hardest hit and will be the last to recover.

Face-to-face events make a significant contribution to the Canadian economy. They build community and drive innovation, workforce development and education. They are vital and will play a pivotal role in Canada's economic recovery from COVID-19. Giving a hand up to this industry, whose members are active participants in their communities, provides

a golden opportunity to simultaneously support local economies, including sparking the creation of well-paying jobs and making it possible for small businesses across the supply chain to not just survive, but succeed. To support these businesses through these continued challenging times, we ask that the following recommendations to the new Federal Tourism Growth Strategy be implemented:

**Recommendation 1: Introduce a targeted tax credit for eligible Small and Medium Businesses** who exhibit at trade shows, consumer shows, expositions, conferences, or conventions.

Conventions, conferences, expositions, consumer shows and trade shows are all events that stimulate interaction between business leaders, thought leaders and government officials. These events drive business transactions, promote international and regional travel within Canada and bring foreign investors to Canada. This intellectual superhighway of business and innovation is part of our country's economic backbone. Prior to COVID-19, the business events sector supported around 229,000 jobs across Canada. These jobs represent a significant taxpayer base that are major contributors to the Canadian economy.

Businesses in the events hosting and facilitating space have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The proposed tax credit for eligible businesses will help stimulate the return of business events to Canada. As business events recover, they will also provide increased economic benefits for the services that support the sector, such as restaurants, hotels, audio-visual companies, event rental companies, event planners, and transportation companies that will subsequently benefit from the return of large-scale business events to Canada.

Before COVID-19, Canada was the number six market in the world for business events, Canada can rank even higher as a destination for business events post-COVID-19 with the right policies to support and promote the business events industry.

**Recommendation 2: Invest in skills development training and promoting the tourism and business events industry as a viable employment opportunity for students and newcomers to Canada.**

As the exposition industry has re-opened one of the key challenges it is facing is a scarcity of skilled workers. As an industry that was on complete pause for 2 years, thousands of workers were left with no choice but to find alternate employment as there was no timeline as to when the exposition industry would be allowed to re-open. Now, at this critical

uncture, when expositions are beginning to take place and plan for future events, the talent vacuum and loss of industry knowledge is having a major impact that is slowing the recovery process. The shortage of labour is not unique to the tourism and business events industry, however, increased collaboration between government and industry is crucial to identify and address systemic challenges, such as labour shortages, and improved advocacy for, and understanding of, the unique nature of the industry and its sectors.

The government of Canada needs to assess skills training deficits and identify opportunities to support training and professional development within all sectors of the industry to support the workforce. Canada needs to invest in skills development training while promoting the business events industry as a viable employment opportunity for students and newcomers to our country. For one, the government should invest in post-secondary education and training to support Canadian students who enrol in tourism and hospitality certificate, diploma or degree programs, tourism-related apprenticeships, and trades training.

Additionally, in order to meet the labour needs of employers, the federal government should:

- Address the significant backlog of immigration applications already in the system;
- Improve the immigration system to increase the availability of skilled, qualified workers;
- Increase labour force participation among older people and other under-represented groups.

**Bianca Kennedy**  
Past President, CAEM  
[bkennedy@powersportsservices.ca](mailto:bkennedy@powersportsservices.ca)

**Jennifer Allaby,**  
Executive Director, CAEM  
[jallaby@caem.ca](mailto:jallaby@caem.ca)