

The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Premier's Office
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Room 281
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

July 11, 2023

Sent via Email

Ref: Burlington Skyway Bridge Repairs Impacting Niagara Tourism

Dear Premier Ford,

We are writing to you on behalf of Ontario's tourism and hospitality industry regarding the current repairs on the Burlington Skyway Bridge. The sectors we represent across Niagara and Ontario include accommodations, food and beverage, meetings and conventions, resorts, attractions, recreation, and culture and heritage.

We are writing to you today to express concern with the scheduling of the Burlington Skyway Bridge repairs and its impact on Niagara-bound travel. Beginning July 7, Niagara-bound lanes on the Burlington Skyway Bridge are being closed for more than 12 hours each Friday night for bridge repairs. Lane closures begin at 6:30pm with full closure of Niagara/Westbound lanes at 8pm, reopening on Saturdays by 9:30am. While bridge closures were initially planned for every Friday in the month of July, an additional date (August 11) has been added to the schedule.

We note that the Burlington Skyway Bridge repairs are taking place during the busiest time of the year for Niagara tourism and during busy travel times. Already, the weekly bridge closures have impacted Niagara's tourism market, disrupting Friday evening and early Saturday morning travel plans for Niagara-bound visitors, workers, and suppliers. Alternate routes to Niagara add significant travel time, with the Burlington Skyway being the most direct route to Niagara—not to mention the bottlenecked and added traffic volume on the Burlington Skyway before and after the closures. With visitors spending more time in traffic, Niagara businesses may see less tourism spending and visitors changing their travel plans altogether.

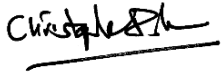
Moreover, with the planned construction having already been extended into August, we are concerned about the possibility of further extensions that will impact the summer season for Niagara tourism businesses. These disruptions are creating ripple effects for many of Ontario's most well-known tourism experiences and at a time when Niagara—like the rest of Ontario's destinations—are welcoming visitors back for a full year of tourism for the first time since 2019.

To support Niagara tourism businesses, **we recommend moving the balance of the bridge maintenance to the midnight shift and/or until after the Labour Day weekend.**

We thank the Government of Ontario for their ongoing support of Ontario's visitor economies and we thank you for your consideration of the contents of this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Christopher Bloore
President & CEO
Tourism Industry Association of
Ontario (TIAO)



Tony Elenis
President & CEO
The Ontario Restaurant, Hotel
and Motel Association
(ORHMA)



Doug Birrell
President
Niagara Falls Canada Hotel
Association (NFCHA)



CC:

The Honourable Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation
The Honourable Neil Lumsden, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport