

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

Sent via Email

October 19, 2021

**Ref: Parity Needed in Reopening to Full Capacity Across Tourism Sectors**

Dear Premier Ford,

We are writing on behalf of Ontario's tourism and hospitality industry to express our deep unease regarding concerns that the province might choose to pursue a sector-specific reopening of the tourism and hospitality economy. The sectors we represent across all regions of Ontario include hotels and accommodations, resorts, restaurants, food and beverage vendors, live events, attractions, recreation, transport operators, and culture and heritage.

We wrote to you on October 14, 2021 regarding the lifting of capacity limits for a select number of sectors and the need for parity in reopening across the tourism and hospitality industry. We now reiterate this message in response to concerns around a sector-specific reopening. While we would welcome the further lifting of capacity limits, we are troubled by the differential treatment of sectors that this would entail within the tourism and hospitality industry regarding reopening.

We are concerned that seasonal businesses such as tour boats and attractions may be left off the list of sectors eligible to reopen at 100 percent capacity. This would carry severe economic ramifications for businesses in these sectors, for the following reasons:

- Many outdoor attractions will in fact continue to be open throughout the fall season until weather no longer permits, and indoor attractions are open year-round. As such, these businesses absolutely stand to benefit from the lifting of capacity limits, as it will enable them to generate the revenue necessary to be able to afford to close for the off-season.
- We have heard from our attractions that current capacity restrictions and lack of certainty over when they will be lifted are impacting sales of season passes for next year. Season passes are a much-needed source of cash flow for major attractions as well as an important indicator for next season's business, and their sale is directly tied to consumer confidence. Lifting capacity limits will help boost consumer confidence to drive these sales.

- Distancing requirements coupled with the no-show rate on pre-booked reservations mean that businesses are not even operating at the capacity that they could be. Lifting the maximum cap on capacity will not be enough.
- The revenues generated from being able to open at full capacity are essential to keeping these businesses viable. Without this revenue, additional government funding will be required to keep tour boats and attractions financially solvent—an avenue unpalatable to these businesses, who want to get on with their jobs and not have to continue relying on government.
- As the province rolled out its proof of vaccination system for select ‘high risk’ settings, tour boats and attractions have consistently been deemed ‘low risk’ (especially tour boats and outdoor attraction parks) and therefore not required to mandate the proof of vaccination requirement. It is unclear then why ‘low risk’ settings are to remain at capacity restrictions while ‘high risk’ settings are permitted to open at full capacity on the basis that ‘high risk’ settings are required to mandate proof of vaccination. It is especially unclear when our ‘low risk’ small businesses can observe and enforce mask-wearing far more effectively than what is happening at ‘high risk’ major sporting events.
- Importantly, while these businesses are not mandated to implement a proof of vaccination requirement, many have done so voluntarily in the interests of patron and employee safety. By additionally participating in our [Safe Travels Stamp](#) program, our operators have gone to huge lengths to follow the highest level of health and safety protocols outlined by the World Travel & Tourism Council. They are ready and prepared to safely reopen at full capacity while protecting the health of Ontarians.

We stress that parity of reopening and recovery across the tourism industry is vital. In order to give all tourism and hospitality businesses a fair shot at recovery, there needs to be a level playing field. **Given that many businesses have enacted their own workplace vaccination policies and proof of vaccination policies for patrons, we recommend that:**

- **All businesses be allowed to open at 100 percent capacity if they have enacted their own proof of vaccination requirements for patrons.**

With potentially different sector-specific reopening timelines for tourism and hospitality businesses, recovery from the devastating impacts of COVID-19 is now more uneven than ever before. Seasonal tourism businesses and attractions will continue to face unprecedented revenue losses of more than 90%; mounting debt that will take at least 2 years to resolve; and a labour crisis that has resulted in reduced operating hours, reduced capacity, and lost potential revenue. With the key period for sales for 2022 lost for most of our operators and federal financial supports coming to an end, the need is urgent for all of our operators to fully reopen and given a fair shot at recovery.

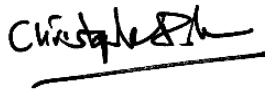
If the province continues to delay its full reopening and exit from the Roadmap to Reopen, the consequences for seasonal businesses and attractions will be dire. On top of cancelled and postponed bookings and sunk business costs, it will mean even greater reliance on continuance funds from the province's additional \$2.2 billion in COVID-19 spending. The risk of bankruptcy and permanent closure is

closer to becoming a reality for the small seasonal businesses and made-in-Ontario attractions that drive visitation throughout the province.

We would like to work with the government to lift capacity restrictions to make full reopening possible for all of our tourism and hospitality businesses. We would like to meet to discuss this at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for considering the contents of this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Bloore", with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

**Chris Bloore**  
President & CEO  
Tourism Industry Association of Ontario