



Honourable Kevin Krueger
Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts
Room 301
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

November 2, 2009

Dear Minister Krueger,

On behalf of the members of the Council of Tourism Associations (COTA) I would like to provide you with an update on recent Council activities.

COTA held a variety of tourism industry meetings from October 28 - 30 in Vancouver. The meetings focused on a number of issue areas that are causing the industry widespread concern, including but not limited to the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST), Tourism BC's dissolution, and the future of our community, regional, and provincial marketing system going forward.

Tourism BC Dissolution

The Council continues to strongly oppose government's decision and rationale for dissolving Tourism British Columbia, a recognized best-in-class model for tourism destination management and marketing.

To reconfirm its position, the COTA Council amended its September 2, 2009 resolution at its General Meeting held on October 29.

Resolution: Tourism British Columbia

The COTA Council therefore recommends:

That COTA work with the Province to ensure that an effective, consumer-driven marketing organization be established that meets the mutual needs of industry and government, including the incorporation of these key principles: an autonomous, industry-led governance model free of political interference that operates on sound business principles, with formula-funding that enables long-term strategic planning over a multiple year long-term planning horizon.

On a related note, the Council is not in agreement with your decision to create a "Minister's Council on Tourism" to provide oversight and input on tourism industry progress, and has directed COTA to not participate on the Council. To codify this direction the COTA Council endorsed the following resolution at our meeting on October 29:

RESOLUTION: 'Minister's Council on Tourism' (MCT)

The COTA Council therefore recommends:

That COTA not participate in, or endorse any such proposal for a Minister's Council on Tourism, nor should a member of the COTA Board be assigned or nominated for such a Council.

If it is your decision to proceed with some form of advisory body, our members have also suggested that you consider renaming the body a “Minister’s Committee” or other such name that distinguishes it from the COTA Council.

Industry Progress Monitoring

Industry looks to COTA as the forum for gauging the overall health and competitiveness of our sector, while holding all relevant stakeholders accountable for contributing to its success. Arguably the most critical prerequisite for achieving industry objectives is the existence of an effective marketing system. In light of recent government decisions that appear to be contrary to industry interests, the COTA Board passed the following resolution:

Motion: That COTA develop a report card to assist the Government of British Columbia in achieving its stated goals and objectives of developing a more effective and efficient marketing system, with funding at least equivalent to prior levels plus stated administrative savings, to ensure tourism revenues reach \$18 billion by 2015.

We will be developing just such a report card, and it is our intention to release it on a regular basis.

Recent government decisions continue to cause widespread concern within the tourism industry. We hope to return to a strong growth position in the near future, through positive industry-government relations and sound decision making that is in all our best interests. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jim Storie, Chair
Council of Tourism Associations (COTA)

Cc: COTA Council
Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier of British Columbia
Honourable Colin Hansen, Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier
Lori Wannamaker, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts.