

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Canada's Premiers

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, governments have necessarily taken public health seriously. To protect the public, we shut down businesses and stayed indoors. For the travel and tourism sector, this has resulted in serious impacts to their ongoing viability, and more specifically to the jobs that many Canadian families rely on. As our economy begins to reopen, it becomes more important than ever that governments focus on balancing public health and labour market considerations.

Workers and their unions have worked tirelessly with many employers in the travel and tourism industry to implement health and safety protocols that will increase the safety of workers and the travelling public. These protocols include: ensuring workers have access to appropriate PPE, enhanced cleaning and sanitization measures, appropriate social and physical distancing measures, the development of a clear pandemic response plan, and much more.

In fact, it's safe to say that industry and unions have gone above and beyond in doing our part to ensure the safety of employees and the public. Now, we believe it's time for governments at all levels to also step up, and turn their attention to the historic crisis facing our industry and its workforce.

The travel and tourism sector has been effectively shut down for over 16 weeks with no plan for re-opening. This is no longer sustainable, or even justified – based on the most recent actions of other countries that are flattening the curve and cautiously re-opening their own jurisdictions for limited travel. It's time for the federal government to immediately take action to both protect public health and support Canada's economically vital travel and tourism industry.

The notion that both cannot be done is simply false.

We believe that through a cautious approach, and guided by the advice of public health experts, we can consider opening up travel to safe countries. We also believe that, guided by that same approach, Canadians should soon be free to visit other provinces. Other countries, equally guided by public health concerns and with similar epidemic curves, have decided to cautiously open their own domestic and international travel sectors – why can't we?

Governments at all levels, but especially the federal government, have had to develop a response to the COVID-19 crisis at a scale, scope, and speed that is truly historic. We recognize the need for caution, and acknowledge it is impossible to get every detail right on the first go. Respectfully, we do not believe our national interests are best served by trying to neatly distill re-opening the travel and tourism sector down to a decision between public health and economic considerations. In fact, it is anything but that. The collapse of Canada's travel and tourism sector would have broad economic and public health impacts that would be devastating for millions of Canadian workers and their families, both in the short- and long-term.

As we've already noted, countries around the world with COVID-19 curves similar to Canada's have made the decision to put in place measures to allow for a safe re-opening. In fact, those countries, such as many in the EU, have recognized that Canadians are safe to travel into their borders without having to quarantine. They trust Canadians to act responsibly in their travels abroad, and have faith in our collective approach to keeping each other safe. Conversely, our own government, by maintaining overly-restrictive quarantines and blanket travel advisories, is essentially telling Canadians that despite their proven track record in having flattened the curve, they cannot be trusted to travel.

It is time to lift overly-restrictive quarantines and blanket travel advisories and allow Canada's travel and tourism sector to slowly and cautiously re-open. Our members – and millions of Canadians who make their living in the sector – are eager to return to the jobs they love, and we are confident we can all come together to ensure workers and the travelling public are kept safe as we do so.

Prime Minister Trudeau and Premiers across Canada – it's time for a more nuanced approach.

It's time for our governments to cautiously re-open the tourism economy, allow Canadians to explore Canada this summer, and re-open our borders to other safe countries.

The future of Canada's travel and tourism sector depends on it.

It's time.

Join the movement with **#timetotravel**



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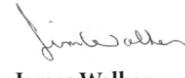
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