

RELAUNCH OF LIVE EVENTS IN ALBERTA BEYOND CURRENT RESTRICTIONS

Proposing a safe increased capacity and re-introduction of face-to-face events in the age of COVID-19

PURPOSE

Live events, conferences, trade shows, and entertainment are people-based businesses that rely on the creation of emotional experiences and human interactions. In Canada, live events stimulate 1/3 of tourism activity, sustains 229,000 direct jobs, and generates \$33B in direct spending, with \$19B contributing Canada's annual GDP*.

The impact of such events runs deeply into the economy. Each of our key industries in Alberta rely on live events to inform investors, transact business and engage with opportunities to export and expand their businesses. This creates jobs in industries including Energy, Health, Agriculture, Transportation, Aerospace, Forestry, Technology, and all emerging sectors of the Alberta. These same industry sectors that will drive the recovery of our economy.

COVID-19 has perilously impacted thousands of small, medium and large event organizers, venues and associated contractors. With capacities set at 100 people for indoor and 200 for outdoor events, simply put - organizers and the thousands of suppliers that organize and host them **will not survive in 2021**. Facilities, venues, associations, concert halls, hotels, caterers, audio/visual, show decorators, florists, suppliers, printers, public relations, marketers, musicians, graphic designers, stage/artistic professionals – anyone who is involved in building of a live event, cannot generate enough revenue for their businesses with audience limits of 100 and 200.

The purpose of this document is to call upon the Province of Alberta and Alberta Health Services to take immediate action to work with industry professionals to safely increase the audience capacities. We are recommending that health officials increase capacity of indoor events to 50% of the occupancy limits of established venues while maintaining required physical distancing of 2 metres outside of province designated cohorts, and reintroduce face-to-face, professionally organized live events, in controlled settings. We are seeking the same, controlled and professionally implemented permissions granted to restaurants, airlines, movie theatres, churches, shopping malls, schools, salons, trade shows and exhibiting events.

*Sources: https://tiac-aitc.ca/_Library/Travel_Economy_Series_/MEETINGS_-_TIAC_Travel_Economy_Series_EN.pdf, <https://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.ca/>

CHALLENGES UNDER THE CURRENT RESTRICTIONS

Although the Government of Alberta does currently allow live events for up to 50 (and 100 for seated events), very few professionally hosted business events have taken place since March 2020. Simply put, too many venues have been shuttered, thousands of staff have been laid off, and fiscally very few organizations can host well organized events for 50-100 without losing a significant amount of revenue.

As an example, if we take a Conference, and use 100 as the maximum (and this number includes organizing staff, venue staff, caterers, audio-visual personnel), we can host approximately 75-80 guests. If those 75 guests each pay \$200 to attend (by industry standards, a low fee), this \$15,000 must cover venue rent, catering, audio visual and staff time. There are typically other costs such as registration fees, printing, décor, and marketing to be considered. Events must have a minimum number of participants to break even. Currently this is not feasible.

NOT ALL EVENTS ARE EQUAL

Face-to-face interaction is part of the human condition and mental well being, and events play a significant role in bringing people together. Live events bring people together for numerous reasons including education, commerce, celebration, worship, demonstration, sports, music, arts, politics and learning.

The risk of attending a live event is no greater than shopping at a large box store, going to a restaurant, going to school, or heading to the mall. **The difference is this: event organizers are professionals who are experts in the art of bringing together large groups while controlling human traffic flow, mitigating risk, deploying policies and procedures, and creating a safe environment for all audiences.**

Professionally managed events, in a controlled environment and the adherence of reasonable guidelines, should present one of the safest environments for people to meet face-to-face. Through ticket sales and pre-registration live events also allow for contract tracing to be facilitated.

The contributors to this document know that by following robust standards, industry best practices, policies and procedure, proper preparation and professional event management, these risks can be greatly reduced through mitigation and larger audience sizes can be safely accommodated.

All events are not equal. We provide a thorough examination of each type of event below.

- **Meetings**

Meetings are often specific to an individual company, association, project or field. Most frequently, the participants are already partially coming together to get a business education, certification learning, membership meeting, or business-to-business networking. In addition, meetings also include the gathering of attendees from separate offices or groups that may have specific technology or facilitation needs (example: designation exams).

Recommendation: Increase capacity for meetings up to 50% of venue occupancy, or follow the guidance for restaurants, cafés, pubs and bars for seating arrangements and maintain 2 metre physical distancing between persons of different cohorts while mobile.

- **Social Events**

Association-led social events, weddings, award ceremonies. These are normally private, invite-only events.

Recommendation: Increase capacity for social events up to 50% of venue occupancy. For social events where alcoholic beverages may be served, which may be deemed to contribute to the spread of Covid-19, organizers can be asked to limit alcohol intake of guests.

- **Fundraisers & Galas**

Fundraisers, galas, dinners and social networking are often the single most important activity for many not-for-profit organizations that rely on fundraising/membership fees to support their operations.

Recommendation: Increase capacity for fundraisers & galas up to 50% of venue occupancy, or follow the guidance for restaurants, cafés, pubs and bars for seating arrangements and maintain 2 metre physical distancing between persons of different cohorts while mobile. For events where alcoholic beverages may be served, which may be deemed to contribute to the spread of Covid-19, organizers can be asked to limit alcohol intake of guests.

- **Conventions**

A convention is an organized meeting of industry or professionals (often from larger regional, provincial, national or international areas) to share knowledge, network and celebrate. By nature, a convention (also known as a congress) often contains the elements of all or some of the previous categories (meeting, exhibition, social events).

Recommendation: Increase capacity for conventions up to 50% of venue occupancy and limit participation to regional audiences, follow the guidance for restaurants, cafés, pubs and bars for seating arrangements and maintain 2 metre physical distancing between persons of different cohorts while mobile.

- **Festivals, Concerts and Sporting Events**

Festivals (indoor and outdoor), concerts, ballet, opera, cultural, or sporting events. These are normally ticketed events that bring people together and may include food & beverages.

Recommendation: We believe that each event in this category must be addressed on a case-by-case basis, as there are more potential risks, depending on the particular event. For certain events, increase capacity for festivals and concerts up to 50% of venue occupancy, as long as 2 metre physical distancing is maintained between persons of different cohorts. If appropriate physical distancing is also available for attendees. For social events where alcoholic beverages may be served, which may be deemed to contribute to the spread of Covid-19, organizers can be asked to limit alcohol intake of guests.

SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS

The health and safety of all Albertans is the TOP PRIORITY to the event industry; but we must recognize that COVID-19 will be with us for the foreseeable future. In the meantime, we implore the Government of Alberta to work with us now to develop safe plans for people to meet again. It takes months and in some cases years of planning for an event to take place, so we are not expecting that larger events will be hosted immediately, but we must plan now for future opportunities.

With that, all parties must place an increased focus on health, hygiene and safety. Similar to trade shows, venues being used for other live events will implement and maintain a plan for regular cleaning, safety and physical distancing. Each event type has unique risk profiles that can be mitigated based on current accepted practices in Alberta. Event organizers can limit their audiences to regional or domestic groups. **Similar to the guidance provided for the relaunch of trade and consumer shows, we seek similar permissions granted to trade shows and exhibiting events (as per the Government of Alberta COVID-19 INFORMATION GUIDANCE FOR TRADE SHOWS AND EXHIBITING EVENTS) and/or similar permissions granted to restaurants, cafes, pubs and bars (as per the Government of Alberta COVID-10 INFORMATION GUIDANCE FOR RESTAURANTS, CAFES, PUBS, AND BARS).**

By implementing physical distancing measures, increased health and safety measures and enhanced crowd control protocols, events can be held safely, in accordance with specific health and safety guidelines. The suggested measures constitute recommended best practices which allow business activities in the event industry to resume, in a structured approach, with clear measures to safely increase audience participation while mitigating health risks. For the most part, these recommendations were previously submitted as part of the **Alberta's Event Industry COVID-19 Relaunch Plan**.

PROPOSED GUIDELINES

Many of these recommendations are already in place at larger event centres in the province, and we believe can be further rolled out to smaller centres, hotels and other event venues.

1. Venue Cleaning

- Hand sanitizer stations placed prominently throughout public areas and within meeting spaces. Notably at all primary arrival/exit points, elevators, escalators and other key contact areas.
- Lobby greeters to ensure physical distancing requirements of 2 metres between participants is followed (for general people movement, queue management, etc.)
- Locations, surfaces and equipment that are occupied and frequently touched will be disinfected at a minimum of once per hour:
 - Guest elevators and escalator handrails
 - Venue entry/exit doors
 - Seating (benches, public area furniture)
 - Waste bins
 - Washrooms
 - Within meeting spaces tables, podiums & chairs, AV accessories including carts and trolleys, thermostats, doors & door handles
- Table linens to be single use only and replaced between guest interaction

2. Safety

- Attendees will need to pre-book and pre-register to attend events and for larger audiences timed entries could be utilized
- Contactless registration systems will be introduced to reduce waiting times and limit contact between organisers and guests
- Attendees will be encouraged to print their badges at home/office to minimize contact points at registration
- All persons in the venue must wear a face mask (covering nose and mouth). Venues will have disposable face masks available.
- All participants will be asked to use hand sanitizer upon arrival
- Writing pads and pencils will not only be provided

- Paper handouts and gifts will no longer be offered
- Entrance to event or conference spaces will be staggered to reduce queuing and overall capacity will be limited to ensure social distancing can be maintained
- Spaces between exhibition booths will be increased and aisles widened to achieve social distancing requirements
- Introduce barriers and mark floors to allow only one-way traffic flow maintaining 2 metres of social distancing
- Designated isolation room and rapid response plan for dealing with any guest showing signs or symptoms of COVID-19
- Decrease the amount of high touch points by propping open doors, offering touch-free amenities, as well as reducing unnecessary space and furniture when possible
- Attendance tracking strategy in place to be able to provide information regarding attendees
- Signage re-enforcing hygiene, physical distancing signs and symptoms of COVID-19, mask requirements, traffic flow patterns, room capacities displayed prominently throughout facility
- Increasing overall air flow and maximize outside air supply to occupied space, optimizing air handling schedules to start at least 2 hours before attendee arrival and 2 hours past attendee departure

3. Audience Capacities and Physical Distancing

While keeping safety top of mind, these recommendations are provided with operational industry standards which are regulated by occupancy load certificates. These certificates authorize the operations of event space and are further supported by regulations of local and provincial Building Codes, Fire Codes and AGLC regulations. **At this time, we are requesting 50% of current facility occupancy certificates or in some cases something similar to the current guidelines being used by restaurants, cafes, pubs and bars.** In addition to half capabilities, live events can also offer:

- Single entrance and exit points will be used whenever possible
- Signage (wall, standalone and floor decals) posted prominently reminding participants of 2 metre physical distancing protocols
- Attendee social distancing protocols / reminders displayed at each seat
- Controlled environments
 - Most events have much greater flexibility when it comes to layout and design, as they are held in a controlled facility environment. Allowing 50% occupancy provides the flexibility to design layouts that accommodate physical distancing best practices.
 - All event floor plans, and traffic flow plans will be reviewed on an event by event basis to ensure social distancing protocols are followed (no less than 2.79 square metres per person per gross square metre of room)

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4. Food & Beverage Protocols

- Self-serve buffet style suspended until further notice
- Cashless payment
- All food & beverage servers to wear face masks and non-porous gloves
- All beverages available in single serve format only
- All cutlery to come in a rolled-up napkin or single serve format only
- All condiments in single serve format
- Removal of any shared F&B amenity (water coolers)
- Disinfect furniture after every meal period
- Coffee and other break items to be served by an attendant, with individually wrapped condiments available
- Passed appetizers suspended until further notice. Stations with staffing will replace this experience.
- Beverages should be served to the guest (self-service is discouraged)

5. Employee Hygiene and Wellness

In addition to protecting the health and safety of event participants, the safety of employees and volunteers is also priority. All employees and volunteers will be asked to stay home if they are not feeling well.

- **Employee Arrival:**
 - Designated staff arrival points for check-in and daily screening
 - Employee temperature scan. Temperatures readings of greater than 38°C or anyone showing signs of sickness will be sent home
 - Employees will be supplied Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including disposable face mask, personal hand sanitizer, and disposable gloves. PPE is expected to be worn in all public areas or when working with others in close proximity.
- **Back of House Signage:**
 - Signage on proper wearing and disposal of PPE (gloves, masks)
 - Signage on proper hand washing protocols (minimum of once per hour for no less than 20 seconds, or hand sanitizer when a sink is not readily available)
 - Signage on when hand washing must be done (after using the restroom, sneezing, cleaning, sweeping, mopping, smoking, eating, before/after shift)
 - Signage on proper health protocols such as sneezing and not touching face

- **Daily Pre-Shift Meetings:**

- Meetings are to be conducted with no less than 2 metres between participants
- No greater than 15 people per pre-shift meeting
- Done virtually when possible

- **Time Clocks:**

- Departments to stagger employee arrival times to prevent time clock queues
- Hand sanitizer units available next to each time clock

- **Shared Equipment:**

- Shared tools and equipment to be sanitized before, during and after each shift or anytime equipment is transferred to a new employee.
- The use of shared food equipment in office pantries is discontinued until further notice.
- Sanitize all public touchpoints after each interaction including countertops, pens, point of sale terminals, etc. on a regular, pre-determined schedule

CONTEXT

1. How important is the live events industry?

According to Meetings Mean Business Canada and Oxford Economics, Canadian Meeting and Business Events Industry has a tremendous impact on the Canadian Economy. Specifically, business events prior to 2020:

- Stimulated a third of the tourism activity in Canada
- Sustained 229,000 direct jobs
- Generated \$33 Billion in direct spending across Canada
- Add \$19 Billion to Canada's annual GDP

(Sources: https://tiac-aitc.ca/_Library/Travel_Economy_Series_/MEETINGS_-_TIAC_Travel_Economy_Series_EN.pdf, <https://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.ca/>)

*If Alberta is roughly 15.5% of the Canadian economy, this translates to approximately 35,495 direct jobs, and \$4 Billion in GDP contribution.

2. What is happening in other countries?

According to Event Managers' Blog (eventmb.com), below is a breakdown of capacity allowances in other countries:

Country	Indoor	Outdoor
Austria	500	750
Belgium	400	800
France	5000	
Germany	Less than 750	
Greece	No limits	
Ireland	100	500
Italy	No limits	
Netherlands	No limits	
Norway	200	
Spain	Less than 50	
Sweden	Less than 50	
Switzerland	Less than 1000	
Australia	1 person per 4 m2 up to 40,000 people	
China	No limits	
New Zealand	No limits	
USA	No limits	

Source: <https://www.eventmanagerblog.com/how-are-different-countries-reopening-events>

Many other countries are now allowing larger events to proceed. We fully support having clear limits and guidance in place, but these limits need to be based on how we can setup the space, not based on an arbitrary number, but on a person per square foot basis that allows for sufficient physical distancing.

CLOSING

To reiterate our request, the contributors to this document are requesting the opportunity to work with Alberta Health Services to develop guidelines and policies that would allow Alberta's event industry to host certain types of events on a larger scale in controlled settings. Specifically, allowing events up to 50% of venue capacity. And for these allowances to be approved in the fourth quarter of 2020 to allow for us to plan for events in early 2021.

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