

February 8, 2022

The Canadian Association of Exposition Management (CAEM) is pleased to share its 2022 Ontario Pre-Budget Submission. **We recommend providing critical funding relief to producers of trade and consumer shows, thereby preventing significant job loss and bankruptcy within the industry to ensure these shows survive to drive tourism to and within Ontario, while also stimulating billions of dollars of commercial transactions across thousands of different sectors and industries.**

Due to the in-person nature of trade and consumer shows, the exhibition industry shut down from March 2020 through September 2021. In December 2021, the industry was once again closed and continues to be limited by the provincially mandated 50% capacity limit. Despite these ongoing restrictions, **trade and consumer show producers have not been eligible for any Ontario government COVID-19 relief programs.**

According to survey data collected from CAEM members in January 2022, 77% of survey respondents have experienced a revenue loss of 70% or more compared to pre-pandemic revenues, with 47% of these members reporting a 90% to 100% loss in revenue. Also, because of the most recent restrictions on events in Ontario, over 30% of CAEM members have been forced to lay off or terminate additional staff, with another 35% saying additional layoffs and terminations are now under serious consideration.

When surveyed on the future-outlook of the exhibition industry, 65% of survey respondents reported that continued public health restrictions will negatively impact their business into 2022, with an additional 25% reporting that continued shutdowns will have increasingly negative impacts, to the point they may need to consider shutting down their businesses. Additionally, over 80% of survey respondents anticipate negative impacts from public health restrictions will persist for a minimum of 12 months and up to 24 months after the events industry is allowed to permanently reopen.

By including producers of exhibitions in one or more of Ontario's COVID-19 relief funding programs, this Government can protect the \$14 billion Ontario trade and consumer show industry from bankruptcy and the loss of 100,000 jobs. This can be achieved in two ways:

- Under the Ontario Business Costs Rebate Program or the COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant expand eligibility to include producers of trade shows and consumer shows
- Recognize producers of trade shows and consumer shows as businesses in the tourism and travel sector and include them when launching tourism relief funding programs such as the Ontario Tourism Recovery Program

While indoor meeting and event spaces are eligible for COVID-19 relief funding, these venues rely heavily on revenues from trade show and consumer shows producers who continue to be excluded from provincial support programs. Without access to this funding, these producers may no longer be in business when the industry is allowed to permanently reopen, jeopardizing the recovery of meeting and event spaces and the overall tourism economy. **As a result, the Government must consider expanding eligibility of COVID-19 relief funding when reviewing ideas to continue to support businesses during the pandemic and build an economic recovery.**

Thank you for your support,

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