



March 4, 2021

Open Letter to all levels of Canada's Government and the Public Service

I am writing to you on behalf of the nearly 600 members of the Canadian Rental Association (CRA). CRA members rent equipment that supports construction, infrastructure, healthcare and municipal activities as well as for events like weddings, festivals, tradeshow and other business and social gatherings. As you are aware public health restrictions on social gatherings have all-but-destroyed this once vibrant industry nearly overnight. To our collective credit Canadian governments at all levels were quick to enact sweeping financial support programs that helped mitigate some of the devastation caused by necessary public health measures, while giving medical experts time to learn about this new threat.

The vast majority of our members are utilizing the successful CEBA, CEWS and CERS programs and many are now being approved under the HASCAP program, although its addition of more debt financing cannot be viewed as anything more than a stop-gap solution. What our industry needs most right now is consistent and reliable messaging from our federal and provincial governments.

Since last summer our members have endured countless sleepless nights while waiting for last-minute extensions to the financial lifeline programs that they rely on to avoid bankruptcy and further job losses. Even worse they've agonized as a Friday afternoon announcement changes their business operations on Monday morning.

Despite having nearly a year's experience with this new virus, federal and provincial governments are still governing without a clear, well-communicated, and well-implemented plan of action. Worse, those governments that did have a plan last year quickly abandoned them when a vocal minority of citizens began calling for more restrictive measures.

Businesses can adapt to nearly any framework for reopening that is well thought out, communicated and implemented. In fact the business community is willing and able to help governments at all levels work through the challenge of creating those frameworks. However, the messaging coming from our government leaders has been that restrictions will continue until COVID-19 disappears completely. This goal of getting to zero before gathering restrictions will end is unproductive at best, and downright disastrous at worst. The events industry needs a framework that allows in-person events to take place safely. We need guidance from PHAC and the provincial Chief Medical Officers of Health that would envision a threshold greater than zero for the return of live events.

Other industries are allowed to bring people together in person and have demonstrated that it can be done safely. We also already mitigate many other environmental risks through clear regulations on air quality monitoring and sanitization requirements, so the precedent is there to support some level of exposure to a hazard being an acceptable part of our normal life experience. On top of that WHO guidance has been clear, and unchanging from the start of this

pandemic that well implemented track-and-trace and isolation policies are far more important than arbitrary restrictions and lockdowns.

Lockdowns are meant to be an emergency measure; they are not a long-term solution.

CRA members are willing to be a part of the solution to COVID-19, but they urgently need a framework for reopening that envisions a modest level of acceptable risk, as well as a well-regulated and consistent mitigation process for that risk. Our members are coming up on a one year anniversary of nearly complete revenue loss and additional debt. They need to be allowed to safely work and help people to safely facilitate weddings, funerals, business events and other milestones.

Our members welcome the last-minute extension of the CEWS and the CERS program. They are also participating in the additional debt-financing of the new HASCAP program because they have no other option. But what the events industry needs right now is a glimmer of hope for the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Maltby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mike Maltby, Chairperson  
Government Affairs and Regulatory Concerns Shared Interest Group  
Canadian Rental Association