



For Immediate Release -- October 23, 2008

B.C. TOURISM INDUSTRY SUPPORTIVE OF PREMIER'S ECONOMIC PLAN

Vancouver, BC – The Council of Tourism Associations (COTA) applauds Premier Gordon Campbell's response to the present financial instability gripping our economy, and urges other levels of government to take similarly concrete actions to support business health and consumer confidence in this uncertain time.

"The Premier's actions once again demonstrate his commitment to the economic welfare of our province, and many of these measures are welcome by our tourism industry," stated COTA Chair, Jim Storie. "Of particular importance to our sector are the reductions in small business taxes and personal income taxes, ferry fare reductions, and tax processing subsidies," he continued.

Even before the current banking and financial crisis hit, many tourism industry representatives had anticipated a challenging time for the B.C. tourism industry in 2008 and 2009. The industry was already being hit by external factors such as our high exchange rate and fuel prices – both of which have now moderated – as well as with increased competition from emerging tourism destinations. When coupled with factors such as new travel documentation requirements for U.S. citizens and burdensome federal regulations in the air transportation sector, the industry became particularly concerned about its future prospects. The present economic uncertainty has caused many industry representatives to declare the industry in a state of 'crisis.'

"In order to address these challenges both industry and governments at all levels will need to work together to enhance our competitiveness," said Stephen Regan, President and CEO of COTA. "These steps include addressing access issues at our border, reducing cumbersome air transportation fees and regulations, removing disincentives to business growth, and ensuring that we have an integrated long-term plan for our industry's sustainable future."

In February 2008 COTA released a suite of recommendations to the Government of Canada to address tourism's competitiveness challenges. This was accompanied by a report by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC), COTA's national affiliate, outlining several areas requiring urgent attention, including border management air transportation improvements.

Despite all of these challenges, the B.C. tourism industry remains relatively well situated to weather the current financial storm. Product and market diversification over the past several years have resulted in a resilient and robust sector. With the continued strong support of the province and ongoing industry collaboration COTA is hopeful that sustained growth will continue in the short and long-term.

The Council of Tourism Associations is the recognized "Voice of the BC Tourism Industry," representing B.C.'s major tourism organizations and businesses. Tourism contributes over \$10 billion annually to the B.C. economy, and directly employs over 130,000 workers.

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