Thank you David.

It’s been 28 days since my last DC Webinar update and a lot has changed.

Not much of the change has been good.

Lockdown orders continue in most places and it looks like physical distancing rules will persist even when the Canadian economy begins to open up.

Throughout all of this, the Canadian tourism sector has been disproportionately impacted: we were hit first, we were hit the hardest and we will be the last to recover.

Yet, the tourism sector in Canada clearly hasn’t given up.

I know the team at Destination Canada is inspired by the sector’s resolve and is working very hard to support you now and through to recovery.

What is Destination Canada doing?

First and most importantly we’re listening to industry.

Commercial partners of all sizes and destination marketing organizations are telling us in real time how the sector is being impacted.

And the biggest message we’re hearing is liquidity is needed – now. If the small businesses that make up the backbone of our industry go bankrupt, there simply won’t be anything to market.

And that’s why we’ve focused our research program on understanding the economic impact of this crisis.

Last Monday we released two research reports which you can find on our website: one from Oxford Economics on COVID-19’s impact on domestic and international travel. This report breaks down its findings to a provincial level.

We’ve also worked closely with McKinsey & Co on an analysis of what the industry is currently experiencing and what it will take to get our industry through to the other side of the pandemic. The executive summary and first portion of this work is currently live on our website.
We will continue to provide this type of analysis to industry and the government. Having an honest assessment of a problem is the first step to solving it.

Second, since this crisis hit, meaningful communication with industry has been a priority for the Destination Canada team.

We’ve created a COVID resource page on our corporate website to help the tourism industry access the most relevant resources.

We are monitoring government announcements and programs closely and will communicate any new information across our channels.

Finally, the tourism sector experienced a period of growth in the last couple of years. Four years ago we took advantage of a strong period to get Team Canada aligned and prepared for less good times.

I’m happy to say that the Team Canada approach continues and, while we’re not sure exactly how these partnerships will look coming out of this, we are certain we’ll be working together.

We are working with Google and other online travel agents to develop a Signals Framework so we can use the online behaviour of consumers as an early warning system that the public is ready to think about travelling again.

We are also hearing that any recovery plan needs to start small. Most of our partners agree that we should be starting with hyper-local campaigns and then moving to regional, provincial and international.

We know the key to a successful local campaign – one that will kickstart our sector – is the local DMO.

Many of our DMO partners are experiencing significant reductions in budget so we are working to support them wherever we can. Our support includes covering the sunk costs of the Team Canada activation after ITB was cancelled. We are also waiving the cost of our research partnership buy-in.

We are also supporting all other members of the industry, including small and medium-sized businesses where we can. For example, we’ve made sure that every RVC participant received a full refund on their registration fees and we are increasing access to more of our research which we are making available for free on our website.
Before I hand the mic back to Dave I want to reiterate how passionately the Team at Destination Canada feels about the tourism sector and how each member of our team understands the magnitude of the challenge that you, as an industry, are facing right now.