



Department of Tourism and Culture (L-1)
PO Box 2703 (L-1), Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

March 5, 2021

Liz Hanson, Chair
Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation

Dear Ms. Hanson

Re: Response to the Special Committee on Civil Emergency Legislation

Thank you for your letter of January 18, 2021, requesting information on Tourism and Culture's experience with Yukon's *Civil Emergency Measures Act*.

A key issue to raise from the perspective of the Department of Tourism and Culture relates to a lack of flexibility and options in the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* regarding states of emergency.

Due to the limitations of the Act, the way states of emergency have been utilized has had unintended and negative consequences for the tourism industry and other sectors of the Yukon economy.

The Act provides only one option for declaring a state of emergency, and states of emergency may not be in place for longer than 90 days, though of course a new declaration can replace an expired declaration.

This creates two problems:

- The first is that the Act creates an "all or nothing" situation. There are no levels of degrees or types of states of emergency to allow a declaration to be tailored to the specific needs of a given emergency, which we have learned this past year can be very difficult to predict.
- Second, there may be times when actions to respond to an emergency should not be limited to 90 days. For example, over the past year, border controls and travel restrictions have been put in place in 90-day increments. This created uncertainty for tourism businesses as they had to deal with unprecedented declines in tourism visitation and business revenues, while at the same time having to maintain readiness in the event borders re-opened within the next three months. It also

caused problems for businesses and individuals trying to access travel insurance benefits in the event of cancelled trips.

I will not offer specific solutions. Rather, I would like to urge the Committee to consider building greater flexibility in the Act, to as much as possible to equip Yukon to respond to the full range of possible but unknown types of emergencies Yukon may face in the future. Further, I urge the Committee to proactively seek out the views of the tourism industry and other sectors to learn, firsthand, how they have been impacted by emergency declarations over the past year.

I would be happy to assist the work of the committee in examining the experiences of the tourism sector, the cultural industries sector, and other economic sectors in Yukon.

Thank you for including the Department of Tourism and Culture in your study on civil emergency legislation. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Valerie Royle
Deputy Minister, Tourism and Culture