July 19, 2023

Hon. Omar Alghabra
Minister of Transport
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Re: Support for Federal Government Transit Committee's InterCity Bus Report

Dear Minister Alghabra,

The Tourism Industry Association of British Columbia (TIABC) represents the interests of more than 19,000 tourism and hospitality businesses, including the motor coach sector.

On behalf of our members and stakeholders, I am writing in support of the recent (May 2023) Standing Committee Report on *Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on Improving Bus Connectivity in Canada*. TIABC is especially pleased to see the recommendation put forward by Motor Coach Canada on the need for the Government of Canada to collaborate and work with private operators to reconnect Canada by motor coach endorsed.

As you are aware, private sector transit service, specifically motor coach providers, currently do not receive support through federal or provincial transportation transfers, nor do they benefit from GST or HST fuel rebates yet these operators play a vital role in connecting our communities. In fact, private motor coach companies deliver thousands of kilometres in non-subsidized transportation services and are often the only mode of transportation into rural and Indigenous communities for both residents and visitors.

However, this current business model is not sustainable. Private motor coach operators need a level playing field with publicly funded carriers. Therefore, access to program funding, route development and sustainability support is key for this industry to reconnect Canada.

For your information, Canada's Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) shows that the transportation industry accounts for 37% of total tourism demand in Canada. The bus component, which includes charter and shuttle services, as well as sightseeing, contributed nearly $900m to Canada's economy in 2019, 37% of which was domestic demand, 7% inter-provincial, and 56% international demand.

TIABC supports all seven recommendations that resulted from the deliberations of the committee (listed below) and will reinforce these recommendations with BC's Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure in the coming weeks.

Recommendation 1 – Intermodal Connections

That the Government of Canada collaborate with all stakeholders, including provincial and territorial governments, Indigenous communities, municipalities, as well as public and private operators, to encourage the coordination of intercity bus routes with passenger rail and air travel.

Recommendation 2 – Creating a National Clearing House/Communications Platform

That the Government of Canada work the provinces and territories and with private and public bus operators to facilitate the creation of a non-profit, national clearing house/communications platform to allow for seamless travel between provinces for passengers.

Recommendation 3 – Better Intermodal Connections Between VIA Rail and Other Modes of Transport

That VIA Rail establish a system to provide real-time reporting of arrivals and departures to other modes of transportation (e.g. taxis, ride-sharing operators) to facilitate timely and convenient intermodal connections.

Recommendation 4 – Assessing and Addressing Knowledge Gaps (Habits of Intercity Transit Users)

That the Government of Canada collaborate with all stakeholders, including provincial and territorial governments, Indigenous communities, municipalities, as well as public and private operators, to assess and address the current knowledge gaps with regards to the habits and needs of intercity transit users in Canada.

Recommendation 5 – Expanding the RTSF to Cover Private Bus Carriers and Intercity Routes

That the Government of Canada expand the Rural Transit Solutions Fund to incentivize the development of intercommunity rural routes and allow private bus carriers providing services on such routes to access the Fund.

Recommendation 6 – Harmonization of Licensing Requirements

That the Government of Canada recognizes that the private sector plays an important role in providing intercity bus service and take steps to harmonize licensing requirements between provinces while respecting provincial and territorial jurisdiction.

Recommendation 7 – Government's Responsibility for Reconciliation

That the Government of Canada recognizes its role in delivering safe, reliable and affordable inter-regional transit to Indigenous communities, as part of its responsibility towards Indigenous reconciliation.

Minister Alghabra, I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how TIABC and its members can assist with moving these recommendations forward. Please feel free to contact me at the address below at your convenience. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,



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CC:

Hon. Randy Boissonnault, Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance
Hon. Rob Fleming, Minister of Transportation & Infrastructure, Province of British Columbia
Arun Thangaraj, Deputy Minister, Transport Canada, Government of Canada
Elliott Lockington, Chief of Staff, Minister of Tourism, Associate Minister of Finance
Vince Accardi, President, Motor Coach Canada