

ABLE BC 2021

COVID-19 ADVOCACY REPORT

Updated September 01, 2021



200 – 948 Howe Street
Vancouver, BC V6Z 1N9
Web: www.ablebc.ca
E-mail: admin@ablebc.ca
Phone: 604-688-5560

MESSAGE FROM ABLE BC'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JEFF GUIGNARD

It goes without saying that British Columbia's hospitality, accommodation, and tourism industries were hit first and hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. By any measure, the past year-and-half has been the most difficult and complex business environment in a generation. While stringent and frequently changing public health orders have had devastating impacts on your businesses, we also know that months of sacrifice, hard work, pain, and inestimable financial hardship have taken an exhausting toll on you, your workers, and your families.

Since the start of the pandemic, ABLE BC has been working hard every single day to advocate for your interests, protect your businesses, and help ensure the survival of our industry. In the past year, we've helped ensure that liquor retail was declared an "essential service," secured permanent wholesale pricing for hospitality customers, allowed liquor retailers to sell to Special Event Permits, amended countless public health orders for your benefit, pushed for direct industry financial support, coordinated urgent and immediate policy changes to keep BC's liquor and food primaries afloat, and more. In total, we have been directly responsible for securing nearly \$200 million of direct financial support for your businesses.

The following report outlines some of the work we've done on your behalf over the past 18 months. In the months ahead, we'll continue to have your back until our industry fully recovers. To that end, don't hesitate to connect with me directly at jeff@ablebc.ca to discuss our efforts on your behalf.

01

KEEPING YOU INFORMED

Things moved fast and we worked hard to get answers for you. ABLE BC has sent **over 200** daily and weekly email updates since March 2020 giving you the information you need to know - in a clear and concise format.

02

BEING YOUR VOICE

During the COVID-19 crisis, ABLE BC has been an active participant on **multiple committees** focused on managing the crisis and reopening the province, including:

- BC COVID-19 Cabinet
- BC Technical Advisory Panel
- Metro Vancouver Tourism and Hospitality Response and Recovery
- COVID-19 Industry Engagement Table
- Coalition of BC Businesses
- Vancouver's Hospitality Sector Roundtable

We also **speak with senior officials** at all levels of government on a daily and weekly basis to advocate for your interests, gain clarity on public orders and regulations, and share

the devastating impact of COVID-19 on your businesses. **We also pushed for rationale and data** to support hospitality industry closures, banning in-dining, and travel restrictions.

03

HEARING YOUR CONCERNS

- › At the start of COVID, we began hosting **regular Zoom calls** to update you on rapidly changing policies, answer your questions about public orders, and get your feedback on current protocols.
- › Since April 2020, we've put out **10 surveys** to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on your businesses. Your feedback has played an essential role in informing our government relations and advocacy efforts and securing more financial support for your businesses.
- › In February 2021, we kicked off our new **monthly Q&A series** with ABLE BC's Executive Director where we update you on policy changes, our advocacy work, and the state of BC's liquor industry.
- › In March 2021, we launched ABLE BC's new **policy committees** for Liquor Primaries, Licensee Retail Stores, and Cannabis Retail Stores. The committees help inform our policy priorities and government relation strategies and provide direct member feedback.

04

HISTORIC POLICY WINS

HOSPITALITY PRICING

Effective July 20, 2020, **hospitality customers can purchase products at wholesale price**. The policy was made permanent on February 23, 2021.

This is one of the most important and significant liquor policy changes in a generation. The pricing change will help thousands of pubs and restaurants walk back from the brink of bankruptcy and give them a legitimate chance at surviving the pandemic. Accessing wholesale prices can reduce the cost of liquor purchases for pubs and restaurants by as much as 20 per cent, which could translate into five per cent savings that goes directly to their bottom line.

SELLING TO SPECIAL EVENT

On July 13, 2021, the provincial government announced a significant policy win for liquor retailers. For the first time in our industry's history, **private liquor retailers can sell to Special Event Permit holders**.

This change not only introduced a new revenue stream for private liquor retailers, it also corrected the previous unfair policy of forcing consumers to purchase only from the government's BC Liquor Stores.

LICENSEE SALES

ABLE BC continues to work on the introduction of **licensee-to-licensee sales** (allowing pubs and restaurants to buy from private liquor stores). We are optimistic that we are very close to a workable solution that will enhance private sector opportunities across BC's liquor industry. Securing approval for private liquor stores to sell to holders of Special Event Permits was an important first step.

Although industry has been seeking both of these policy changes for years, these policies came as a direct result of ongoing advocacy work by ABLE BC and the Business Technical Advisory Panel.

05

POSITIVE LIQUOR POLICY CHANGES

In addition to the historic wins above, a number of policy changes made during the COVID-19 crisis were in direct response to the advocacy work of ABLE BC, the Business Technical Advisory Panel, and our industry partners.

BTAP worked to coordinate urgent and immediate recommendations that specifically support BC's devastated hospitality industry and its 190,000 workers. The panel played a significant role in pushing through the changes below.

TEMPORARY CHANGES

- › Temporary authorization for hospitality customers to sell their existing liquor stock
- › Temporary extension of patio and service areas [policy deadline extended to June 1, 2022] with expedited provincial approval and a simplified online process
- › Temporary authorization for liquor manufacturers to direct deliver
- › Temporary authorization for liquor primaries and food primaries to sell growlers with takeaway and delivery meals
- › Extension of license expiry date for licenses expiring between March and June 2020

PERMANENT CHANGES

- › Liquor and food primaries can sell alcohol with takeaway and delivery meals
- › Liquor and food primaries can sell cocktails to-go with takeaway and delivery meals
- › Liquor stores can permanently extend their hours [7:00 am to 11:00 pm]



06

OTHER ISSUES WE'VE ADVOCATED FOR

We speak with senior officials at all levels of government on a daily and weekly basis to advocate for your interests and share your concerns. Here are some of the other issues ABLE BC has played a key role in advocating for and pushing forward - to help ensure the long-term survival of our industry.

MUNICIPAL

- › Worked with British Columbia's municipalities to secure flexible, innovative, and expedited patio permitting
- › Worked with municipalities to delay or defer property tax increases
- › Helped increase capacity at Vancouver's liquor primary establishments by fixing outdated occupancy load calculations

PROVINCIAL

- › Secured extension of temporary layoff provisions to August 30, 2020, giving businesses time they needed to restart operations, bring workers back, and help revive our economy
- › Ensured liquor and cannabis stores were defined as an essential service in BC preventing their closure during the pandemic
- › Requested a delay to the minimum wage increase on June 1, 2020
- › Advocated to allow businesses to defer Employer Health Tax and PST payments
- › Worked with our partners at the LDB to get information on how COVID-19 could impact the supply chain and advocated to resume bottle pick service
- › Raised concerns about mandatory paid sick leave for employees to receive vaccinations

FEDERAL

- › Connected directly with the Prime Minister's Office, Minister of Small Business, and Minister of Finance to underscore the significant crisis in BC's hospitality industry and urgent need for liquidity and rent support
- › Advocated for working capital grants and adjustments to the federal rent and wage subsidy programs, and raised concerns that the Canada Emergency Response Benefit disincentivized employees from working
- › Called for comprehensive federal paid sick leave program

FIGHTING FOR YOUR INTERESTS AND THE LONG-TERM SURVIVAL OF OUR INDUSTRY

AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

07

FUNDING AND GRANTS

ABLE BC pushed for urgent and direct financial support for BC's hospitality industry and helped you get access to funding. We did everything we can to ensure government understands the devastating impact this crisis is having on BC's hospitality industry and what they can do to help.

PROVINCIAL

- › **\$300 million** Small and Medium Sized Business Recovery Grant: grants up to \$45,000 for businesses impacted by COVID-19. The fund was a direct result of work by ABLE BC and our industry partners.
- › **\$125 million** Circuit Breaker Business Relief Grant: grants of up to \$20,000 for businesses impacted by the April 2021 circuit breaker public order. The fund was a direct result of work by ABLE BC and our industry partners.
- › **15 per cent cap** on delivery service fees: in December 2020, the provincial government announced a 15 per cent cap on food delivery fees and a 5 per cent fee cap on additional online ordering and processing fees. The limits are in place until three months after the provincial state of emergency is lifted. This change was a direct result of work by ABLE BC and the BCRFA.

FEDERAL

- › Got the liquor and cannabis industries access to BDC loans
- › Connected with the federal government to underscore issues with the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, Canada Emergency Response Benefit, and Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy
- › Successfully pushed to have the wage and rent subsidies extended

At this point in the pandemic, we know you have likely accessed the provincial and federal programs available to you, and have already incurred significant debt to get to this point. We continue to push for government to provide new financial support for BC's hospitality industry.



08

REOPENING INDUSTRY

ABLE BC worked with the Provincial Health Officer, WorkSafeBC, and other senior government officials on the safe and logical reopening of our industry:

- › In May 2020, we worked with the PHO and WorkSafeBC to establish **sensible reopening** guidelines for liquor and food primaries
- › In September 2020, we worked tirelessly to get Dr. Henry's verbal orders - ending on-premise liquor sales at 10:00 pm and leaving our industry in crisis waiting for clarity - amended. ABLE BC and our industry partners sent an urgent letter to the Premier and senior ministers expressing our significant concerns about aspects of the order and calling on the Premier to intervene. BTAP submitted data to government about the immense economic fallout from the order, as well as practical recommendations to achieve Dr. Henry's objectives while balancing the financial realities of our industry.
- › In April 2021, we worked with the BCRFA and Ministry of Health on **a patio guidance document** to clarify confusion around outdoor dining
- › In May 2021, we provided our feedback on **BC's Restart Plan and were** pleased to see liquor service restrictions, physical distancing requirements, and group limits lifted in Step 3. We also worked with the PHO to get nightclubs reopened in Step 3.
- › Since the vaccine rollout, we have requested priority access for vaccines for BC's front-line retail and hospitality staff.

We have also worked with the PHO and her team on an ongoing basis to **amend and clarify public orders** for Food and Liquor Serving Premises and Gatherings and Events. Changes we advocated for include:

- › Removed the 1.2m height requirement for physical barriers
- › Removed food service requirement for liquor primaries to reopen
- › Removed 50 per cent capacity limit
- › Permitted liquor primaries to reopen for takeaway and delivery
- › Permitted all liquor primaries to reopen
- › Permitted liquor primaries and food primaries to sell packaged liquor with the purchase of a takeaway or delivery meal
- › Allow lotto and self-serve terminals when patrons were required to be seated

We shared with you as soon as we knew of any changes to the public order and helped you understand how the orders would impact your business and the changes you needed to make to your operations.

We helped industry get through major events, including New Year's Eve, the Super Bowl, and St. Patrick's Day. After NYE, we pushed for a more collaborative process with Dr. Henry to avoid last minute public orders - and the detrimental impact of sudden changes - particularly around big holidays.

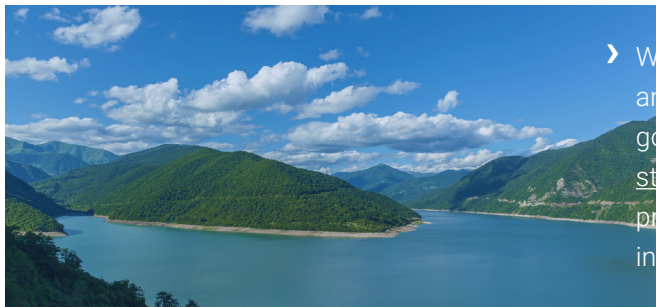
09

REBUILD CONSUMER CONFIDENCE



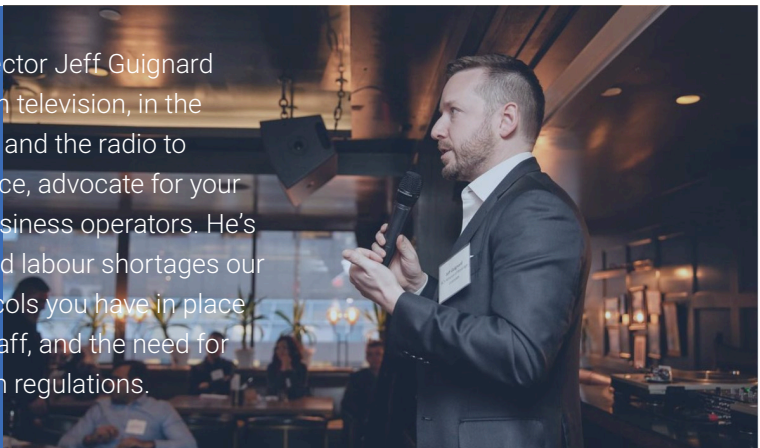
› In spring 2020, we worked with the BCRFA, BC Craft Brewers Guild, Chefs Table Society of BC, and Wine Growers British Columbia on a public campaign to **build consumer confidence** for tasting experiences

› In March 2021, we launched a new consumer confidence video campaign with TIABC to tell British Columbians: it is safe to dine out and drink out in BC



› We helped develop **BSAFE**: a free health and safety training program hosted by go2HR and designed to build customer and staff confidence in the health and safety protocols of BC's tourism and hospitality industry.

› ABLE BC's Executive Director Jeff Guignard has regularly appeared on television, in the newspaper, on podcasts, and the radio to build consumer confidence, advocate for your interests, and support business operators. He's shared the challenges and labour shortages our industry faces, the protocols you have in place to protect patrons and staff, and the need for patrons to cooperate with regulations.



10

FREE TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR BUSINESS

- › We took the guesswork out of COVID-19 protocols and provided you with [Liquor Primary Reopening Best Practices](#) and [Liquor Retailer Operating Best Practices Handbooks](#).
- › ABLE BC offered industry a range of free [COVID-19 signage](#), downloaded by thousands of businesses.
- › British Columbia's hospitality and private liquor industry went above and beyond to [meet and exceed stringent public health protocols](#). To support a safe and healthy industry, we provided [additional recommendations](#) on bottle returns, serving tourists, wearing masks, what to do if you have a COVID-19 outbreak, and more.
- › We sought [legal advice](#) to ensure you know your responsibilities as an operator when requiring staff and customers to wear masks and asking about their vaccination status.
- › We also [connected you with industry suppliers](#) for [PPE](#) and other COVID-19 products.
- › Our industry partner go2HR was your HR and [occupational health and safety resource](#) during the COVID-19 crisis. They provided members with information on temporary layoffs and termination, how to communicate with your employees, scripts for responding to difficult guest customers, and more.
- › ABLE BC's Associate Members stepped up in the face of the crisis and offered [member discounts](#) on their products and services, including: Rising Tide Consultants, BWI Business World Inc., Blackwood Apparel, and Sting Investigations.
- › In April 2020, our Hospitality Insurance Program partner Western Financial Group offered a [50 per cent](#) reduction in dental premiums and [10 per cent](#) reduction in health premiums in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and postponed the renewal date.
- › ABLE BC was an active member of the steering committee for [BC's Workplace Mental Health Hub](#): a digital resource hub providing the tourism and hospitality industry with access to [vital mental health resources](#).

11

ACCESS TO INDUSTRY EXPERTS

Since April 2020, we have hosted [10 webinars with industry experts](#) on topics ranging from crisis communications for BC's hospitality industry, to employment security in the midst of a pandemic, positive employee relations, and what BC's no-fault auto regime means for liquor liability.

In October 2020, we hosted the first virtual BC Liquor Conference: a two-day experience featuring an opening discussion with former Attorney General David Eby, liquor retail trends and consumer insights, a closing panel on BC's election, and seminars designed to help you adapt and survive the pandemic.

ALLIANCE OF BEVERAGE LICENSEES

ABOUT US

ABLE BC a not-for-profit society and the leading advocate for BC's private liquor and cannabis retail industries. Our membership includes pubs, bars, nightclubs, private liquor stores, hotel liquor licenses, and various agents, industry suppliers, and benefit providers.

Following the federal legalization of recreational cannabis in October 2018, our membership now includes licensed non-medical cannabis private retail stores in British Columbia.

On behalf of our over 1,000 members we advocate for a thriving and sustainable private liquor and cannabis retail industries.

The association is governed by an elected Board of 14 regionally-based Directors. We employ a full-time Executive Director and staff in our Vancouver office.



MEET OUR TEAM



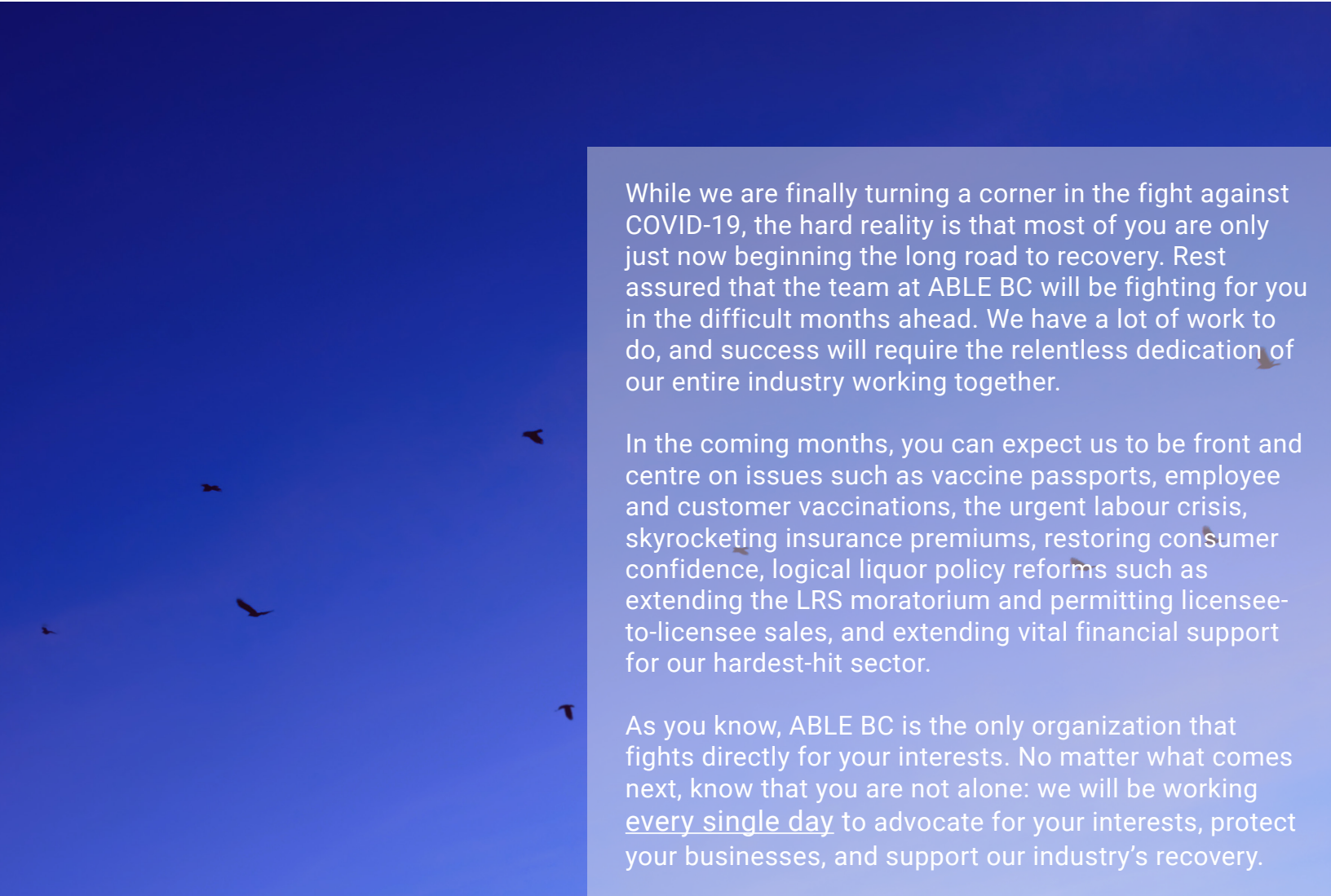
JEFF GUIGNARD

- › Executive Director
- › jeff@ablebc.ca

ANN BRYDLE

- › Manager of Membership and Communication
- › ann@ablebc.ca





While we are finally turning a corner in the fight against COVID-19, the hard reality is that most of you are only just now beginning the long road to recovery. Rest assured that the team at ABLE BC will be fighting for you in the difficult months ahead. We have a lot of work to do, and success will require the relentless dedication of our entire industry working together.

In the coming months, you can expect us to be front and centre on issues such as vaccine passports, employee and customer vaccinations, the urgent labour crisis, skyrocketing insurance premiums, restoring consumer confidence, logical liquor policy reforms such as extending the LRS moratorium and permitting licensee-to-licensee sales, and extending vital financial support for our hardest-hit sector.

As you know, ABLE BC is the only organization that fights directly for your interests. No matter what comes next, know that you are not alone: we will be working every single day to advocate for your interests, protect your businesses, and support our industry's recovery.