



Canadian Camping Association  
Association des camps du Canada

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**Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources,  
Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities  
by the  
Canadian Camping Association**

**April 2020**

**IMPACT OF COVID-19 on YEAR LONG/SUMMER CAMPS**

Parliament has responded quickly to the severe personal health and economic impacts on Canadian citizens of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The swift passage of Bill C-13 and Bill C-14, bringing some relief to millions of Canadians, stand as testimony to the dedication of Parliamentarians to serve their constituents and respond to a national crisis. We are grateful that Parliamentarians have risen to the challenges confronting all Canadians.

This submission has been prepared on behalf of the members of the Canadian Camping Association (CCA) to bring to your attention the extremely difficult, and unique, circumstances faced by the member camps that we represent.

**Who We Are**

The Canadian Camping Association is a not-for-profit, national association of provincial camping associations representing nearly 800 camps across Canada. Annually, we serve over 821,000 children. Canadian camps are generally operated by small business owners and charitable organizations. Camps have a close to 100-year history in Canada of providing a wide array of recreational, experiential education and cultural summer experiences for children and youth. Camps are an integral part of Canadian heritage and culture.

Our camps serve children from across the country of every religion, race and creed. Many of our non-profit camps and private camps serve approximately 351,000 campers with special needs, along with children who are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Canadian camps have a commitment to educating youth and benefitting their local communities. Indeed, this is the essence of what has defined the Canadian values that we instill in our own children.

From a purely economic perspective, our members hire over 42,000 staff each year; mature, skilled young adults to lead camp programs and teach activities. We estimate our full impact on the Canadian economy to be in the order of \$2.5-3 Billion. The non-economic impact of camps would be much more significant.



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Through our efforts, we help to develop healthy and resilient children. Summer camp helps to develop self-esteem and sense of identity. We break down barriers, from physical and emotional development, to offering enhanced opportunities for thousands of special needs children. We teach values of global citizenship, and critical thinking. And, perhaps most importantly, camp develops leadership qualities needed to improve our society as these children become adults. The exposure to different cultures and the people skills of emotional intelligence is what has helped to create our strong and healthy Canadian culture. Simultaneously, our staff, often experiencing a job for the very first time, are cultivated and trained to become the next generation of leaders.

In addition, our camps are as diverse as the communities they serve. Some examples of our camp communities include: YMCA camps, Easter Seals, and The Catholic Youth Organizations. The non-profit camps, which is about 85 per cent of the camps in Canada, offer care and support to the kids that need it most. Additionally, all private camps provide support and financial assistance to children who otherwise could not afford to attend camp, including over 450 Syrian refugee children in recent years.

### **Our Industry Is Now in Peril**

Unfortunately, some of our member camps have already made the difficult decision to close down their operations this spring and summer, in the hope of being able to conserve sufficient resources to open in 2021. However, there is a very real possibility that many camps will not survive.

This is the first time in Canadian camps' nearly 100-year history that the entire industry could be shuttered.

***Camps are unique. The majority of our member camps operate only during the summer season; they make 90 per cent of their revenue during two summer months.***

This revenue is needed to operate during the summer and throughout the following year. Summertime represents the one and only opportunity camps have to secure their revenue in any given year.

Furthermore, expenses on items such as taxes, insurance, maintenance and improvements of camp sites, are ongoing throughout the year. These ongoing, annual expenses can only be recovered from revenues earned during the summer camp season.

The support programs approved to date by Parliament are geared toward businesses operating 12-months of the year. They do not take into account seasonal businesses like ours. Not only do our member camps have the challenge of trying to recoup insurmountable losses from this spring/summer, those that survive this year will need to commence operations for the 2021 camping season on September 1, 2020. Doing so will be impossible without immediate financial assistance that lasts longer than a few months.



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Should there be a mandated closure of camps this summer, whether by the Government of Canada or by provincial governments, many camps will not survive the economic consequences. Moreover, even if there is no mandated closure, the economic impact of COVID-19 on Canadian families will affect the number of families able to send their children to camp this summer. We must prepare NOW for this real possible outcome and provide a backstop for the most vulnerable camps.

We respectfully request a voice at the table to try and prevent the financial devastation that all camps will experience, and to protect all camps' short- and long-term viability.

### **Our Proposed Solutions**

Committee members, we need your help. And, we need it quickly. Our members cannot afford to lose an entire year of income. Moreover, children and young adult camp leaders will need the community-focused, outdoor-based camp experience more than ever this summer.

As you and your colleagues consider next steps in providing support to individual Canadians and small businesses in the battle against a virus causing both a health and economic crisis, we ask you to seriously consider the measures that we suggest in the Addendum to this submission. We believe that a mix of these measures, implemented as quickly as possible, would assist our members in weathering the dire financial consequences of COVID-19.

In closing, please do not forget about us; as you consider additional support measures, take into account our unique business model – most camps generate all of their annual revenue in the summer months. As you do so, please also keep in mind the importance of 'SUMMER CAMP' to the social, cultural and economic fabric of Canada.

Thank you for considering the serious issues confronting CCA members this summer. We would be pleased to appear 'virtually' before the Committee to discuss our concerns and to respond to any questions that Committee members may have.



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## **ADDENDUM – PROPOSED MEASURES TO SUPPORT CANADA’S CAMP INDUSTRY**

1. The 75% wage subsidy would help to sustain some camps if it were designed to work effectively for seasonal businesses. Our understanding is that the subsidy is geared toward businesses that earn revenue over 12 months, as opposed to camps that earn 90 per cent of their revenue over two months. The subsidy would need to operate for a much longer period of time to enable our small business owners to hire and maintain staff. Moreover, many CCA members are small operations in which the owners are also key employees. Therefore, the wage subsidy should be applicable to those business owners.
2. Establish a Sustainability Fund directed specifically at camps and other seasonal businesses. Access to grants from such a Fund could make the difference between a camp closing permanently and managing through this crisis in our industry.
3. Permit small business owners, whose source of income is derived from the operation of summer camps, to apply for the Canada Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB).
4. The \$5,000.00 requirement for CERB recipients does not capture all of our camp counsellors and other seasonal employees. The CERB should be adjusted to ensure that seasonal workers, such as students our camps employ in the summer, can receive the benefit. This would have the added benefit of students potentially being able to afford to attend post-secondary institutions.
5. Work-sharing rules under the Employment Insurance program should be adjusted to ensure that summer students employed by camps, as well as other seasonal workers, can avail themselves of this potential opportunity to gain at least some work experience and income.