

DATE: May 18, 2021

TO: Mayor and Members of Council

FROM: Raphael Costa, Director, Economic and Cultural Development

RE: **COMMUNICATION – Committee of the Whole (1) May 4, 2021**

Presentation #1

Laura Hearn (POST Promise) and Carol Greenwood (Tourism Industry Association of Ontario) Presentation - Increasing consumer confidence with Safe Travels Stamp - official endorsement by Council for the stamp and POST Promise program.

Recommendation

1. That Council recognize the POST Promise and Safe Travels Stamp programs in support of Vaughan businesses and economic recovery.

Background

Economic and Cultural Development (ECD), inclusive of Tourism Vaughan, is providing this communication in follow-up to Council's recommendation at Committee of the Whole (1) on May 4, 2021 that staff report back on the deputation made by Laura Hearn of POST Promise and Carol Greenwood of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) requesting official endorsement by Council for the Safe Travels Stamp and POST Promise programs.

As part of an economic resilience strategy, ECD is taking steps to increase consumer confidence in Vaughan businesses by assuring residents, workers, and eventually visitors, that they can safely shop, work and explore in Vaughan.

The Safe Travels Stamp was recognized and discussed by the Tourism Vaughan Board at the following meetings:

- March 31, 2021
- Jan 27, 2021
- November 23, 2020

ECD recognizes these two consumer confidence identifiers, (1) the POST Promise and (2) the Safe Travels Stamp, as programs that provide businesses with a visual cue to increase consumer confidence among locals and travelers and to support economic recovery in Vaughan.

POST Promise:

- Is a self-declaration from a business to its customers and employees that it is working hard to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Is run by a national not-for-profit corporation that was built specifically for this effort.
- Is an eligible pre-requisite for tourism businesses to receive the Safe Travels Stamp in Ontario.
- Is available to all kinds of businesses.



Safe Travels Stamp:

- An international stamp locally administered by TIAO designed to allow travelers to recognize governments and businesses around the world who have adopted health and hygiene global standardized protocols – so visitors can experience “Safe Travels”.
- The POST Promise is a pre-qualifying requirement in order to obtain the Safe Travels Stamp. Local businesses like restaurants, event venues, retail shops, event planners, attractions, and majority of Vaughan hotels have received the Safe Travels Stamp. Tourism Vaughan, as a recognized member of TIAO also has the stamp.



Economic and Cultural Development

To date, ECD and Tourism Vaughan have promoted this initiative through their website, newsletters and social media to both businesses and consumers.

ECD will engage with all types of local businesses to ensure they are aware of the POST Promise. Those that fall within the Tourism industry such as Retail, Sports & Recreation, Nature & Outdoors, Meeting & Event venues and planners, Culinary, Attraction/Entertainment, Arts, Culture & Heritage, Accommodation, and Transportation, will continue to be made aware of the Safe Travels Stamp. More than 40 businesses in Vaughan have received the Safe Travels Stamp to date through Tourism Vaughan.

In short, the following engagement for businesses will take place:

1. **All types of businesses** apply for the POST Promise; and
2. With the POST Promise, **Tourism businesses** qualify to apply for the Safe Travels Stamp and to receive the Vaughan Safe Travels Toolkit.

It is important to note, that the term ‘travel’ references hyper-local travel and creating an association with Vaughan residents to explore their own backyard. Studies in Ontario show that as soon as restrictions ease, Ontario residents will feel safest re-exploring their immediate community, before venturing to far-off destinations within the Province and/or beyond.

As the City’s destination marketing organization, Tourism Vaughan has a unique role to play in economic recovery to promote Vaughan as a place to explore, first and foremost, to the people that live and work here, and eventually to visitors. The recent Fav Spot Vaughan social media

campaign is the first element this strategy to inspire a sense of place and pride in Vaughan locals as a great place to live, work, **and travel**, with many things to see and do.

Legal and Liability Considerations

The primary area of concern for the City would be potential exposure to claims by an aggrieved patron of a business displaying a POST Promise or Safe Travels stamp, based on the patron alleging having suffered harm or illness due to a failure by a business to provide a safe travelling environment as advertised.

Legal and Risk Management are in agreement that the potential risk to the City is low, for several reasons.

- The programs are already established by the World Travel and Tourism Council and recognizable worldwide, independent of the City. Locally, the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario administers the Safe Travels stamp. Except for the fact that Tourism Vaughan is one of the organizations that has received the stamp, there is no link between the City and either of the programs.
- The point of the Safe Travels stamp is simply to identify businesses that are following standardized global health and hygiene protocols. No guarantee is provided to patrons, whether by the businesses or the City.
- The City is not providing any service and the businesses are not located on City property.
- The City has no direct involvement with the programs. It would promote the programs via social media but its logo would not appear anywhere and it would not be referred to as a partner.

As a cautionary point, Risk Management has highlighted the fact there is no insurance for COVID or pathogen related claims. Accordingly, in the event of a successful claim, the City would be responsible for all costs awarded against it. However, it is extremely difficult to establish and prove where an illness may have been picked up. This difficulty is compounded where the patron is travelling. Added to the lack of a concrete connection between the City and any of the locations in question, it would be highly unlikely that a patron could successfully maintain a case against the City for any harm or illness they might contract.

As a general rule, it is prudent for any public facing City messaging to incorporate clear disclaimers of liability where there might be any potential for problems to arise. Having that language featured in this case should assist with alleviating any concerns.

If you have any questions, please contact Raphael Costa, Director, Economic and Cultural Development at raphael.costa@vaughan.ca.

Respectfully submitted by

Jim Harnum, City Manager

