



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR MEMBERS

REPORTING PERIOD SEPTEMBER 2020

The most noteworthy issue underscoring discussions between the tourism private sector and policy makers in September has been the extension of the Phase 1 reopening of the tourism industry. This decision was met with a myriad of uncertainties expressed by members.

Concerns included uncertainties in management of human resources, mismatch between end of NIC unemployment benefits for industry workers and end of layoff period, continued staff redundancies, absence of a definitive date for commencement of phase 2 of the reopening, introduction of the accommodation head tax, Staycation, Destination Marketing, Airlift and creation of protocols for non-accommodation sectors.

The Secretariat dispatched a flurry of correspondences to various policy makers in relevant Ministries, appealing for urgent talks to ameliorate perceived threats to business activity, clarity on interpretation of legal instruments and advice on how best to proceed.

Over the period March 2020 – September 2020, over 35 letters were dispatched to various Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and Heads of other Government institutions outlining concerns of members, prescribing solutions and making recommendations for mutually agreeable compromises. A number of SLHTA internal committees were established to further distill concerns, explore solutions and craft protocols applicable to respective sectors.

Notwithstanding the progress generated through these efforts, September also witnessed the solidifying of sectoral Associations agitating for more targeted attention from policy makers. In the interest of wider industry welfare, the SLHTA's Executive Committee adopted an open door policy of engagement, allowing non-SLHTA members to contribute to the discussions and experience the benefits of SLHTA membership. This open-door engagement will however culminate on 30th September 2020, at the end of the SLHTA's annual operational cycle. As at 1st October 2020, the Association will revert to providing services exclusively to SLHTA members.

Monitoring of regional and international trends continued this month with particular attention paid to COVID-19 infection rates in source markets, UNWTO: One Planet Vision for a Responsible Recovery of the Tourism Sector: <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/One-Planet-Vision-for-a-Responsible-Recovery-of-the-Tourism-Sector.html?soid=1109087067672&aid=olEgmIS6VJo>

ILO Standards and COVID-19: Protecting Workers, and provision of Nurses for SLHTA Members.

Follow up activities to pursue discussions with the OECS on matters outlined in our correspondence dated 2nd June 2020 will continue over the coming weeks. The correspondence recommends sub-regional discussions on matters related to Economic Stimuli, sustainably restarting tourism activities, training and education in the new normal environment support for unemployed persons displaced by contractions in tourism, support for tourism entrepreneurship and community based tourism development. See link here: <http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Dr-Didacus-Jules-OECS-Letter-020620F-1.pdf>

On 26th August 2020, on behalf of the SLHTA the President attended the Meeting of the Sustainable Development Goals National Coordinating Committee (SDGNCC).

At this time the document titled Final National SDG Roadmap awaits endorsement by the Minister responsible for Sustainable Development.

For more information please visit us at <http://www.slhta.com/coronavirus/> or email us at evp@slhta.com with your specific enquiries. SLHTA Secretariat can also be reached at 758 452 5978.

UPDATES -

	ISSUE	UPDATE
1	Head Tax	<p>The SLHTA has met with the Honorable Prime Minister, the Minister for Tourism the Permanent Secretary for Tourism and other officials in the Ministry of Finance regarding the implementation process of the Head Tax. The SLHTA reiterated in these discussions, our support for the Head Tax in principle but that our core challenges were with the mechanism for implementation and whether the time for such implementation was feasible. The SLHTA wrote to the Prime Minister on 9th September 2020 again outlining our support for the tax and called for discussions on recommendations made in our correspondence of 31st July 2019 on other measures which will ensure the neutrality of the Tax on operational expenses. We also echoed our concerns regarding the impact on smaller accommodation establishments and noted the need for sector specific support for small accommodation providers. The contents of this letter can be found at: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/PM-Letter-re-Accommodation-Head-Tax-090920.pdf</p> <p>This week the SLHTA CEO and President met with Mr Janai Leonce from the Ministry of Finance to discuss the following concerns among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Should the Head Tax be applied based on the room rates of accommodation establishments, instead of number of rooms?- How will a 5 room villa be treated since the tax may be applicable to properties with 6 rooms and over?- Proposed date of implementation of the tax once it is approved by Parliament- Can we introduce a lower tier Head Tax rate for small properties?- Will the Head Tax be retroactive? <p>The need for another discussion on SLHTA's recommendations in our letter to Honorable Minister Stephenson King on 25th March 2020 for assistance for displaced employees – see link here: http://www.slhta.com/wp-</p>

		<p>content/uploads/2020/09/Minister-Stephenson-King-letter-SLHTA-DEAP-250320.pdf</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The need for a more comprehensive discussion on Tourism taxation at a later date has been flagged by the SLHTA as critical in order to rationalise and justify the various taxes on tourism operators. The SLHTA is of the opinion that reduction in the tax burden on tourism operators particularly small and medium enterprises and ensuring easier access to these incentives and concessions are important stimuli for regenerating the industry. -
2	Reducing Operating Costs	<p>In discussions with the Honorable Prime Minister and a number of other policy makers, the SLHTA has flagged the critical need for assistance from government to facilitate discussions aimed at reducing the cost of electricity. On 10th September 2020, the SLHTA penned a letter to LUCELEC re: Business outlook for St Lucia’s hospitality and Tourism sector appealing for urgent discussions on the contents presented. Please find link here: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Trevor-Louis-LUCELEC-letter-Business-Outlook-for-Saint-Lucias-Hospitality-and-Tourism-Sector-100920.pdf</p> <p>SLHTA has also reached out to the Bankers Association for a discussion on debt restructuring, better rates for new financing and a number of other recommendations to cushion the negative impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality sector. The Association is in the process of preparing a formal correspondence to the bankers Association and the Honorable Prime Minister to expedite these discussions.</p> <p>We are currently compiling a list of PPE’s used by the industry in order to explore support from government for procurement. The Prime Minister has requested our urgent response in this regard and members have been asked to provide this information.</p> <p>Other discussions on the reduction of operating costs included more sustainable and resilient waste management and integration of renewable energy into the grid.</p> <p>At some of these discussions with the accommodation sector, members flagged the high costs and challenges associated with operating nursing stations, staff showers and the cost of obtaining health certificates for staff. The Prime Minister has suggested that discussions with the CMO should focus on making Dr’s available on certain days each week to examine and provide health certificates to team members free of charge, thereby reducing the costs on team members who would ordinarily have to pay for them.</p> <p>The SLHTA also met with the Cuban Ambassador to discuss the viability of working with their government to procure suitably qualified Nurses to assist the hospitality sector in adhering to the protocol requirements. Our members were asked to provide details of their specific needs. This is currently being assessed.</p>

		<p>On 7th September the SLHTA communicated formally with the CMO on a number of recommendations for the easing of protocols in a manner that does not create any negative exposure to the people of St Lucia. The secretariat is following up with the office of the CMO for a subsequent discussion on this matter. Please see link: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CMO-Letter-protocol-relaxation-070920.pdf</p> <p>See here for the link to the medical station protocols: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Hotel-Medical-station-18June2020V4-1.pdf</p>
3	Employees / Workforce issues	<p>Further to member concerns regarding the maturity of the layoff period from 11th September, the SLHTA convened an urgent discussion with the Minister for Labour to discuss synchronizing the end of the layoff period to coincide with the end of the State of emergency and possible extension of unemployment benefits for displaced workers and finally the impact of temporary resumption of employment on the layoff period. Please see the following link regarding correspondence from the Labour Commissioner on the matters discussed - http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Letter-from-Labour-Dept-030920.pdf</p> <p>On 8th September the SLHTA communicated to the Chairman of NIC on the issue of prorating NIC benefits at the ending of the layoff period. Please see communique here: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Isaac-Anthony-September-NIC-Payment-request-correspondence-080920.pdf</p> <p>The correspondence was met by the usual prompt response from the NIC outlining the legal constraints associated with considering the request. Please see link to the response here: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/NIC-ERP-response-letter-110920.pdf</p>
4	Group Medical Insurance	<p>The SLHTA is in advanced discussions with Sterling Insurance Brokers and Beacon Insurance on the creation of a Beacon Medical provider network which will ensure that in any medical needs of our members, they will only be required to pay the initial 20% as per the policy. The facility concerned will then charge Beacon Insurance directly for the remaining 80% of the charges attributed to the member's healthcare needs at the time. Currently training is being had with various partners within the medical provider network and we expect the full roll out of the plan sometime in October.</p> <p>The SLHTA has appealed to employers to encourage displaced employees to remain on the group medical insurance plan as independent hospitality workers. The SLHTA has waived until further notice SLHTA membership dues for all employees who were previously on the plan, but have since lost their jobs due to COVID-19.</p>
5	Soufriere Beach Issues	<p>On Tuesday 1st September 2020, the SLHTA convened a meeting of accommodation members in Soufriere who have thus far been approved to operate under the Phase 1 reopening protocols. The meeting sought to facilitate</p>

		<p>discussions between non-beach hotel operators and those located on beaches. The meeting was attended by representatives from Anse Chastanet/Jade Mountain, Sugar Beach, Caille Blanc, Ladera, Tet Rouge, Stonefield and Fond Doux Plantation.</p> <p>The SLHTA drew to the attention of the Ministry the following issues that affected the beach based resorts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That they continue to suffer recurrent severe financial losses, loss of business and reputational damage, caused by the unregulated and uncontrolled influx of non-resident visitors, both from the land and the sea side, to the beaches adjoining their properties 2) absence of regulatory framework to manage safety and environmental concerns related to overcrowding and congestion both on the beach and in the marine areas nearby 3) reluctance to make further investments in luxury expansions if value and related revenue to Government cannot be safeguarded by authorities 4) the beach experience is the primary reason for leasing the queens chain and a key contributor to the luxury experience offered by these properties 5) there has been a critical need for some time now, that other beaches be opened for use given that in the Soufriere area, there are a number of resorts that are not located at beach level and along with a growing number of luxury villas and numerous Airbnb's there are now many hundreds of accommodation rooms and guests all seeking a beach experience <p>The Ministry of Tourism has since convened a meeting with various stakeholders from a number of Ministries and Departments with a view to proposing a solution on the matter by week commencing 28th September.</p>
6	Staycation	<p>This month the SLHTA met with the CMO to discuss a recommendations and concerns from Bay Gardens Hotel Group regarding phase one restrictions and extensions, staycation, Caribcation and recommended solutions. Please see link: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CMO-letter-with-BGRs-report-260820.pdf</p> <p>The SLHTA is assessing the volume of staycation and Caribcation requests to inform subsequent discussions on the subject with the authorities. The issue of intermingling between foreign visitors and locals continues to be a much debated concern as the tourism industry continues its reopening while currently such intermingling of guests is discouraged, we are hopeful that stricter adherence to the protocols will result in some level of normalization in the near future.</p>
7	Luxury Villas	<p>Further to the establishment of the SLHTA's Luxury Villas Alternative accommodation sub-committee chaired by Marella Devaux, the SLHTA communicated with the CMO opportunities which could rebound the St Lucian Economy if we were to advance the reopening of this sector. Please see the correspondence link: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CMO-Letter-Luxury-Villas-and-Alternative-Accommodation-150920.pdf</p>

8	Weddings	<p>In collaboration SLHTA Member Awesome Caribbean Weddings the SLHTA has shared protocols for reopening of this sector with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Tourism. We expect further discussions on these protocols over the coming week. Members interested in seeing a copy of the protocols can request this directly at evp@slhta.com</p>
9	Duty Free Retail sub sector	<p>The SLHTA has created a Duty Free Retail sub sector committee which is headed by Sherma Flavius – General Manager Sea Island Cotton Shop. Further to discussions with the sub-sector, the SLHTA penned a note to SLASPA outlining the concerns of our members. Please see the link for correspondence: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Daren-Cenac-SLASPA-Follow-up-letter-on-Moratorium-issues-020620.pdf</p> <p>Correspondence was also sent to the Permanent Secretary Esther Rigobert informing her of discussions between SLASPA and the SLHTA, please see the link to this correspondence here: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Letter-to-PS-Rigobert-on-SLASPA-discussions-020620.pdf</p> <p>After discussions with SLASPA’s management the SLHTA received a response from the authority dated 6th August which can be found here: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Letter-to-SLHTA-re-Request-for-Relief-to-Facilitate-Recovery-Efforts-During-and-Post-COVID-19-SLASPA-Response-060820.pdf</p> <p>Subsequent to SLASPA’s response the SLHTA then convened a further meeting with members to respond to their offer. The feedback from our members to this correspondence was captured in our response to SLASPA on 7th September 2020. This response can be found here: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Daren-Cenac-SLASPA-Request-for-Relief-to-Facilitate-Recovery-Efforts-During-and-Post-COVID-19-RESPONSE-070920.pdf</p> <p>To continue with discussions on this matter the SLHTA has convened a meeting of this grouping on Wednesday 30th September at 10am to discuss a revision of their position on the matters outlined in earlier correspondences. The meeting is open to both SLHTA and non SLHTA members who are tenants of Hewannora International Airport, La Place Carenage and Pointe Seraphine whose businesses are dependent on the Cruise Ship and Air Travel trades. We are mindful that this would include Duty Free Retail operators as well as Food and Beverage Establishments.</p> <p>The secretariat is cognizant that some degree of compromise on the way forward is very important given SLASPA’s financial commitments and the fact that there is zero cruise related activity taking place at this time.</p>
10	DMC’s	<p>The SLHTA has put forward draft protocols to facilitate the reopening of the Destination Management Sector. These protocols have been shared with the CMO and the Ministry of Tourism. We are awaiting discussions with authorities over the coming weeks on this subject. Members who wish to access a copy of these draft protocols may do so by emailing evp@slhta.com</p>

11	Day Boat Operators	<p>SLHTA's water based tourism members have re-engaged the secretariat over the past few weeks on a number of concerns which have been plaguing the sector for some-time now. In collaboration with SLHTA's director Corey Devaux the secretariat dispatched a letter to the Honorable Minister Stephenson King summarizing concerns and queries for immediate attention. Please see following link for this correspondence: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Minister-King-Maritime-request-correspondence-250820.pdf</p> <p>The secretariat continues to follow up with the authorities for engagement on these matters</p>
12	Independent Restaurants	<p>The Independent restaurant sub-sector committee was formed and is now chaired by Wadi Zakhour of La Mesa. At a meeting earlier this month between Wadi Zakhour, Chef Orlando Satchell and Matthew Hartman the following matters were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ministry of Tourism will support marketing initiatives of Independent Restaurants with a EC\$2000 contribution. A decision was made to apply the funding towards social media based marketing on the SLHTA Dine Around Program. The initiative will also encourage non SLHTA Independent restaurants to share their information on the site for marketing purposes. - The SLHTA is also working on a logo to differentiate SLHTA member independent restaurants from non-members. - The initiative will also seek to showcase the diverse culinary appeal of the Independent restaurant sector and allow each member to present their comparative advantage to consumers. - The SLHTA will pursue further discussions with the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Authority to ensure greater visibility of the culinary offerings of Independent restaurants on their websites. <p>All SLHTA member restaurants who are interested in identifying specific days to cater to foreign guests are encouraged to notify the SLHTA of the days and times for sharing with the hotels which have reopened.</p>
13	Tourism Satellite Account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The preliminary results from the draft TSA for Saint Lucia, based on the 2016 Supply and Use table benchmark found that tourism activities represent 34% of total GDP. NOTE: This amount and the methodology used to estimate it are subject to review by the Central Statistical Office (CSO), since a joint PRASC-CSO TSA compilation mission that was initially scheduled for March 2020 and which was meant to validate and finalize the preliminary results, was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic's travel restrictions. Notwithstanding, virtual TSA compilation meetings with PRASC continue on a regular basis. • In terms of exports this represents 76% of total exports from Saint Lucia. • The majority of this activity is found in Accommodation and Food Services but other notable areas include Recreational Activities, Tour Guide Services and Transport Services. Ratios were taken from the Canadian Tourism Satellite Account where available but were also incorporated for the Saint Lucian experience where applicable.

		<p>Please see relevant links here:</p> <p>http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Saint-Lucia-Tourism-Satellite-Account-Documentation-1-5.pdf</p> <p>http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TSA MoT Presentation v1 23July2020-4.pdf</p> <p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B2kD9q5ax0robk0Gmc44dw4mc2fnMH2t/view?usp=sharing</p>
14	GEF / SLHTA Collaboration	<p>The SLHTA continues its collaboration with the Global Environment Facility, building on the knowledge fair event co-authored a few years ago. The Collaboration pushes for more sustainable organic food production, reduction of our food import bill and greater consumption of local foods.</p> <p>On Tuesday 15th January 2019, the Saint Lucia Hospitality and Tourism Association (SLHTA) signed a historic memorandum of understanding with the Global Environment Facility – United Nations Development Programme Small Grants Programme (GEF – UNDP SGP). Born out of months of discussion and the SLHTA's significant contribution to the UNDP's Knowledge Fair in December 2018 – this partnership opens the door for the development of projects aimed at environmental sustainability, poverty reduction and capacity building. The memorandum of understanding will serve as a catalyst for both organization's active support of projects that meet the shared objectives of environmental sustainability, poverty reduction and capacity building. Specifically, future collaborations will surround the areas of climate smart agriculture, alternative energy, pollution reduction, habitat and species conservation, and sustainable livelihoods.</p> <p>In collaboration with SLHTA Honorary member Boo Hinkson the SLHTA has launched an Eat What We Grow Campaign which will be promoted through a jingle, talk shows and other appearances.</p>
15	Implementation of National Policy and ratification of ILO Convention C155	<p>The SLHTA was represented at a meeting on National Occupational Safety and Health Policy hosted by the Ministry of Labour. The discussions focused on the ILO Convention C155 Occupational Safety and Health Convention of 1981 for which feedbacks and comments were invited from the private sector for finalization and onward submission to Cabinet. For more information on St Lucia's National Occupational Safety and Health policy please visit this link:</p> <p>http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/C155-Occupational-Safety-and-Health-Convention-1981.pdf</p> <p>http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/National-OSH-Policy-Mar-28-2017-2-2.pdf</p>
16	COVID-19 Prevention and Control Bill	<p>The SLHTA have submitted correspondence to the Permanent Secretary for Tourism pertaining to the COVID-19 Prevention and Control Bill scheduled to be passed through Parliament – Tuesday 29th September 2020. Please see link here: http://www.slhta.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/PS-Donalyn-Vittet-letter-Prevention-and-Control-bill-290920.pdf</p>

