



Media Interviews 2020

Sask. hotel association looking to play larger role in fight against human trafficking

Regina Leader Post – January 16, 2020

<https://leaderpost.com/news/local-news/sask-hotel-association-looking-to-play-larger-role-in-fight-against-human-trafficking>

Members of the RPS vice unit recently met with the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association (SHHA), which wants to play a larger role in preventing human traffickers from using the hotel industry to exploit victims.

Since late last year, SHHA president and CEO Jim Bence has been on the road meeting with municipal police forces, the Saskatchewan RCMP and the province's Justice Minister Don Morgan.

Sask. Hotel Association looking to combat human trafficking

iHeartRadio – January 17, 2020

<https://www.iheartradio.ca/purecountry/sudbury/news-trending/sask-hotel-association-looking-to-combat-human-trafficking-1.10476406>

Hotel staff have some of the most direct contact with people working in the sex trade.

"We take our role in this very seriously, we understand that there's a huge problem out there," said Jim Bence, President and CEO of Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association.

The SHHA is working on developing a training program for hotel employees to spot signs of human trafficking at their facility.

'Make sure somebody knows about it:' SHHA on hotel human trafficking

CJME/CKOM Radio – January 20, 2020

<https://www.ckom.com/2020/01/20/make-sure-somebody-knows-about-it-shha-on-hotel-human-trafficking/>

The Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association (SHHA) is trying to raise awareness of human trafficking in hotels.

Jim Bence, the SHHA's CEO and president, told Gormley many chains are implementing new training to help staff recognize the threat of traffickers. There are many signs that could be considered suspicious.

“(Staff can look for) how it is that people book rooms, who’s actually going into the rooms, where they request rooms (and) the request they get from guests,” he explained.

Saskatchewan hotel industry stepping up to help put an end to human trafficking

Global News – January 23, 2020

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6449921/saskatchewan-hotel-human-trafficking/>

The Saskatchewan hotel industry can play an important role in putting an end to human trafficking, according to the RCMP.

“I think (human trafficking) is a big problem in Canada. I think Saskatchewan has its share of the problem,” said Jim Bence, president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association (SHHA).

In a collaboration between RCMP and SHHA, an initiative is underway to institute processes and training programs that help employees recognize the signs of human trafficking and make appropriate responses.

Bence said the initiative is “the right thing to do” and the focus should be on helping those being exploited.

City of Saskatoon examines 3 options for regulating services like Airbnb

CBC – January 29, 2020

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/airbnb-proposed-regulations-1.5444912>

Jim Bence, president of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association, said councillors need to “do their homework” on regulations to ensure they understand their effect on the city.

“As they go forward, having a cost analysis done on each option as to what it would cost the city and the taxpayers of Saskatoon would be invaluable,” he said.

Airbnb to start collecting PST on Saskatchewan listings

Global News – March 10, 2020

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6655806/airbnb-pst-saskatchewan-listings/>

...Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association president Jim Bence agrees.

“From a provincial perspective, applying PST levels the playing field,” he said in an interview with Global News. “From a municipal level, this is where cities need to do the same thing. They need to follow the province’s lead.”

Hotel sector facing up to 10K Sask. layoffs due to COVID-19

CJME/CKOM Radio – March 17, 2020

<https://www.ckom.com/2020/03/17/hotel-sector-facing-up-to-10k-sask-layoffs-due-to-covid-19/>

Jim Bence, the president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotels and Hospitality Association (SHHA), told Gormley on Tuesday that the industry has experienced major losses in light of cancelled conferences and sports tournaments. “We’ve lost all of our group business,” he said. “Those are all room rates that are lost.”

John Gormley Live

March 17 - Hotel sector facing up to 10K Sask. layoffs due to COVID-19

Live: Jim Bence, president/CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association

Coronavirus: Saskatchewan hotel industry devastated by COVID-19 pandemic

Global News – March 18, 2020

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6692922/saskatchewan-hotels-covid-19/>

The president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association ([SHHA](#)) says layoffs are coming amid the [COVID-19](#) pandemic. Jim Bence said he is basically witnessed the evaporation of his industry.

“It has just devastated those of us in the visitor economy. So that’s hotels, restaurants, convention centres, casinos, all of us where we’re really suffering.”

Coronavirus: 10,000 hospitality workers expected to be laid off in Saskatchewan

Global News – March 19, 2020

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6699398/hospitality-layoffs-saskatchewan-covid-19-coronavirus/>

“Our industry is evaporating before our eyes and it’s not like anything we’ve ever seen,” said Jim Bence, president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association (SHHA). He said at least 10,000 hospitality workers in the province will likely be laid off, and that number could be even higher...

"It's really becoming a really hard place, a really hard sport for any operator that is open for the public to come in. There's a real crisis going on whether you stay open or you don't," Bence said.

Sask. councillor, industry want homeless people put up in hotels during COVID-19 outbreak

CBC – March 25, 2020

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/sask-homeless-hotels-covid-1.5509814>

Meanwhile, the Saskatchewan Hotels and Hospitality Association said they're all in favour of the plan. "We've had great discussions so far with Ministry of Health and Red Cross and are starting to put together a plan," said association president Jim Bence.

"Rather than be like some of the countries that were absolutely overwhelmed overnight, we can start to enact this." Bence said hotels would also be open to taking in people from hospitals who need non-emergency medical care.

Saskatchewan hotel association hopes to house hospital patients, homeless

Global News – March 27, 2020

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6744329/saskatchewan-hotels-house-patients-homeless-covid-19/>

Saskatchewan's hospitality association hopes to house vulnerable people in hotels during the COVID-19 pandemic, alleviating pressure on hospitals should they reach capacity.

Hospitals around the globe are overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients — something Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association (SHHA) president Jim Bence hopes the province can avoid...

Conversations between the SHHA and provincial government are ongoing, exploring ways to use those properties to house vulnerable groups, including hospital patients and homeless people.

Sask. hotels preparing to house patients if hospitals reach capacity

Saskatchewan Union of Nurses – March 31, 2020

<https://sun-nurses.sk.ca/about-us/newswire/sask-hotels-preparing-to-house-patients-if-hospitals-reach-capacity>

The Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association (SHHA) has created an emergency preparedness plan and shared it with the Ministry of Health and the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA). Jim Bence, president of the SHHA, has already had calls with the health ministry and the SHA to discuss how hotels can be utilized if they need to be transformed into field hospitals.

“What we thought was that as healthcare systems reached capacity, there’s a window of opportunity for us in Saskatchewan to make plans and at least have something in place that would allow the healthcare system to use other supports,” Bence said during a phone interview from Saskatoon on Tuesday.

Saskatchewan hotels offer discount rooms to doctors, nurses wanting to isolate during COVID-19

CBC – April 1, 2020

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/park-town-covid-19-hotel-doctors-nurses-1.5518025>

While the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association has been in contact with the authority on a number of initiatives — from temporary housing for homeless people to providing off-site medical care — no deal has been struck yet. "It just seems to be like a natural fit," said association president Jim Bence. "In the hotel industry, it's just part of something that we do. We understand that side of it."

Sask. hotels preparing to house patients if hospitals reach capacity

Regina Leader Post – April 1, 2020

<https://leaderpost.com/news/local-news/sask-hotels-preparing-to-house-patients-if-hospitals-reach-capacity>

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Saskatoon hotels face 'catastrophic' loss of business

Saskatoon Star Phoenix – April 30, 2020

<https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/saskatoon-hotels-face-catastrophic-loss-of-business>

The Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association (SHHA), which represents the province's hoteliers — who collectively employ 18,000 people — has already asked the City of Saskatoon for property tax forgiveness. A large downtown hotel can pay upwards of \$500,000 per year in taxes.

In an April 15 letter to Moe, SHHA president Jim Bence asked the province to forgive a host of taxes and fees this year, including the provincial sales tax, the liquor consumption tax, Crown utility payments and Workers' Compensation Board premiums.

Coronavirus: Saskatoon riverside hotels coping with less business during pandemic

Global News – May 10, 2020

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6926437/coronavirus-saskatoon-riverside-hotels/>

Saskatoon hotels are taking the COVID-19 pandemic in stride, with significantly less corporate and leisure business.

"To go downtown now when typically you would be feeling a lot of energy and people getting excited about what's coming," said Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association president and CEO Jim Bence, "it's really a ghost town."

More Sask. restaurants expected to close for good as pandemic, reopening costs rise

CBC – June 1, 2020

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/reopening-costs-mean-more-restaurants-closed-sask-1.5591580>

Jim Bence, president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association, said he has been notified of new closures almost every day.

He said one of the biggest struggles for restaurants right now is paying rent.

"How do they manage their costs when there's no money coming in? They still have payments to make," he said. "So, you know that that idea of an eviction or having equipment seized it keeps a lot of people up at night."

Restaurants ‘cautiously optimistic’ about reopening

CJME/CKOM – June 3, 2020

<https://www.cjme.com/2020/06/03/restaurants-cautiously-optimistic-about-reopening/>

When Phase 3 of the Re-Open Saskatchewan plan gets underway Monday, pubs and restaurants in the province will be able to open at 50 per cent capacity.

Jim Bence is the president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association. He says he has been hearing that not all restaurants are planning to reopen for many different reasons but says between 50 to 75 per cent are planning to get back to business.

Saskatchewan government puts temporary moratorium on commercial evictions

Global News – June 5, 2020

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7033231/saskatchewan-government-moratorium-commercial-eviction/>

Saskatchewan Hotel & Hospitality Association said this is a win for businesses because there wasn't an incentive for landlords to join the program keeping fixed costs high for business tenants.

“(Businesses) don't own the land outright or the building. This is a huge challenge and when there is no revenues. How do you pay those fixed costs? Without some sort of relief or protection in place, there was a lot of anxiety out there for sure,” President Jim Bence told Global News.

Gormley Live

June 8 – Today is the big day! Phase 3 of Re-Open Saskatchewan takes effect, meaning we will be able to head out to bars, restaurants, churches, daycares, and gyms (with extra precautions in place). Jim Bence, head of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association, says he expects about 50-70% of bars and restaurants will be opening, but others are waiting to gauge demand or struggling under financial pressures. Bence joins Gormley to discuss the re-opening of restaurants in Saskatchewan.

LIVE: Jim Bence, president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association.

‘People are happy to be out again:’ Restaurants reopening in Saskatchewan

CJME/CKOM – June 15, 2020

<https://www.cjme.com/2020/06/15/people-are-happy-to-be-out-again-restaurants-reopening-in-saskatchewan/>

“Operators that I talked to were excited that they were able to open. People are happy to be out again, these are good signs,” said Jim Bence, President of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association.

Despite the excitement, the outcome was pretty much as predicted based on national trends, as people were not necessarily streaming out of their homes to go to local restaurants.

“Maybe about 20 per cent broke even, and about 60 per cent operated at a loss which is really what everyone is keeping an eye on,” said Bence. “Everyone is curious as to what the revenue is going to look like.”

Federal funding disparity 'frustrating,' say Sask. tourism workers

CBC – July 3, 2020

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/tourism-funding-disparity-1.5635989>

Recently, Ottawa announced a combined \$46 million in additional tourism funding for Quebec and Atlantic Canada. However, according to Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport Gene Makowsky, the Saskatchewan industry received only a \$1.5 million boost.

Jim Bence, president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel & Hospitality Association expects that funding disparity will lead to an unequal playing field across the country. "It's going to have a huge impact," he said.

Sask. hotel loses insurance coverage due to financial liability of COVID-19

CTV News – July 16, 2020

<https://regina.ctvnews.ca/sask-hotel-loses-insurance-coverage-due-to-financial-liability-of-covid-19-1.5027970>

...“You can only imagine, you know you’d think that all the things we’re being overwhelmed with regards to you know the pandemic, now we have another priority,” said Jim Bence, with the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association.

Saskatchewan restaurants call for help from government, patrons in coronavirus recovery

Global News – July 23, 2020

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7210433/saskatchewan-restaurants-coronavirus/>

The Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association (SHHA) said that even with partial dine-in service available, businesses are unable to cover losses.

“Our revenues ... just have been devastated and although they are starting to creep back up, they’re nowhere close to where they need to be in order to survive,” president and CEO Jim Bence said.

Insurance a bigger issue than COVID for hospitality association

CJME/CKOM – July 31, 2020

<https://www.cjme.com/2020/07/31/insurance-a-bigger-issue-than-covid-for-hospitality-association/>

According to Jim Bence, president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association, insurance is becoming a bigger issue than the novel coronavirus for association members.

Bence said insurance costs have been rising for several years, but the COVID-19 pandemic has made premiums more costly than ever and insurance difficult to find. Even when coverage is available, he said premiums can be prohibitively high. According to Bence, the policies of 35 association members were not renewed, leaving their future hanging in the balance.

"Overnight that turned into a crisis for these 35," Bence said on Gormley. "Without insurance you can't operate, and you certainly can't keep your mortgage."

Gormley Live

July 31– Jim Bence, with the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association, is sounding the alarm about issues his members are facing when it comes to insurance. According to Bence, COVID-19 has created such financial liabilities that insurance is incredibly difficult to secure and more costly than it has ever been. The new issue comes at a time when the service industry is already struggling, and Bence joins Drew to tell us more.

LIVE: Jim Bence, president/CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association.

Saskatchewan announces \$35-million boost to ailing tourism sector

Saskatoon Star Phoenix – August 10, 2020

<https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/saskatchewan-announces-35-million-boost-to-ailing-tourism-sector/wcm/986a7afd-d5e7-47e3-aec0-4c7352ced460/>

"This won't be the end of the conversations, I hope," Jim Bence, president of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association, said at a news conference in Saskatoon.

"This is really, I think, meant to get some people closer to shore. Because we're all swimming like crazy to get there."

Bence said the program will help tourism and hospitality operators pay fixed costs. **Harrison said conversations with the association headed by Bence helped the province develop the program.**

Provincial government announces \$35 million to help tourism, event operators

CJME/CKOM/CBC – August 10, 2020

<https://www.cjme.com/2020/08/10/provincial-government-announces-35-million-to-help-tourism-event-operators/>

Jim Bence, president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association welcomed the news and hoped the money would help at least some businesses hang on through the pandemic.

That includes businesses like Saskatoon’s German Cultural Centre, whose operators announced through social media on Sunday that the doors would permanently close at the end of the month.

“I think this is exactly why it was designed — for those reasons. The days are full of operators and members phoning and talking about the challenges,” Bence said. “And in cases like this, this could be just the thing ...”

Saskatchewan restaurants face uncertainty as new data shows six out of 10 could go under

The World News – August 27, 2020

<https://theworldnews.net/ca-news/saskatchewan-restaurants-face-uncertainty-as-new-data-shows-six-out-of-10-could-go-under>

“It’s just a stark reality that the restaurant industry is in grave, grave trouble,” said Jim Bence, president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association (SHHA).

Although Bence predicts Saskatchewan will see fewer restaurants close their doors, based on recent surveys, he said margins are still extremely thin for many.

Saskatchewan restaurants face uncertainty as new data shows six out of 10 could go under

Global News – August 27, 2020

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7302545/saskatchewan-restaurants-face-uncertainty/>

“It’s just a stark reality that the restaurant industry is in grave, grave trouble,” said Jim Bence, president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association ([SHHA](#)).

Although Bence predicts Saskatchewan will see fewer restaurants close their doors, based on recent surveys, he said margins are still extremely thin for many.

“They’re razor thin and with these restrictions still in place, social distancing, it has made it in some cases almost impossible for operations to continue,” Bence said.

City council passes “imperfect” Airbnb regulations

Saskatoon Star Phoenix – September 1, 2020

<https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/city-council-passes-imperfect-airbnb-regulations/wcm/77b974a2-3517-4fbe-859e-3c9ea9691352/>

Entire properties are thought to make up around 60 per cent of the roughly 600 Airbnb’s known to be in Saskatoon. Bence made his case on the grounds that hotel owners have endured “catastrophic” losses during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has left them dealing with “crushing” fixed costs while revenues flatline.
