



Key Messages: EMCR Commercial Accommodation Portal

- The Commercial Accommodation Portal is a pilot project that is being developed in partnership between the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) and the BC Hotel Association (BCHA) and is supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport.
- Funding for this 2024 pilot project has been provided by a grant from EMCR to the BCHA.
- The purpose of the Accommodation Portal project is to help Emergency Support Services (ESS) and commercial accommodation operators better coordinate accommodation availability tracking and evacuee placement by providing real-time bookings and streamline the administration of this work.
- The Portal is to first focus on providing dedicated ESS online reservation capabilities to the larger communities of Kamloops, Kelowna, and Prince George, with the potential of adding additional communities to the system during the summer of 2024.
- The initial suggestion of using an online reservation system of this nature was discussed with EMCR's Emergency Support Services as far back as the 2017 wildfire response when BC tourism industry partners suggested a more efficient way to monitor availability and booking accommodation.
- During the pandemic, the Hotel Association of Canada, and their provincial counterparts (including BCHA) were contracted by the Canadian Government to create a national emergency accommodation reservation system to help place essential workers and travellers needing isolation – the system developed is called *Check In Canada™* and is still in operation across Canada.
- Meridian Reservation Systems provides the technology supporting *Check In Canada™* and has over 25 years of providing digital reservation and ticketing solutions for individual and flagship commercial accommodations, destination marketing organizations, and others around the world.
- BCHA's EMCR Portal system provider is Meridian Reservation Systems.
- BCHA and Meridian have presented to the Ministries responsible for Emergency Management and Tourism since 2021 using *Check In Canada™* as the proof of concept for the Portal that is being implemented in 2024 to support EMCR's ESS programs that are delivered locally across the province.
- Should EMCR wish to pursue a more permanent technological solution for a commercial reservation system beyond 2024, this pilot project will be useful in determining technological specifications that may be applied in scoping a Request for Proposal as part of an open, competitive procurement process in future.
- Work is currently progressing on the development of the technological and administrative systems supporting the Commercial Accommodations Portal with input from BCHA, EMCR, TACS, along with representatives from Kamloops, Kelowna, and Prince George: on behalf of the community Hotel Associations, Community Destination Marketing Organizations, Local ESS and Municipality staff; and Northern BC and Thompson Okanagan Regional Tourism Associations.
- The anticipated launch of the Commercial Accommodations Portal is set for June 28, 2024.