

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.,
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A2

February 10, 2023

Sent via Email

Ref: Ensuring the Federal Tourism Growth Strategy Supports the Recovery & Competitiveness of Ontario's Tourism Industry

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism has been one of the hardest hit sectors. With the support of the Government of Canada, tourism businesses have weathered the storm and reopened their doors to visitors. But as Canada emerges from the pandemic, it's important to remember that reopening doesn't mean recovery. While other economic sectors are returning to pre-pandemic levels, tourism is simply not there yet.

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) is the voice of the tourism industry in Ontario, representing over 200,000 businesses and over 400,000 jobs, and we've seen and heard firsthand from operators that have done all they can to get through the pandemic, rebuild their businesses, and welcome visitors back to Ontario. While our industry is recovering, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a severe and enduring impact on the tourism industry in Ontario. Border closures, capacity restrictions, and lockdowns exacerbated structural issues that have left the industry far from recovery.

As a result, while the rest of Ontario and Canada moves forward, businesses that rely on the visitor economy are still dealing with the lasting impact of revenue losses of up to 93%, staggering six-figure debts, and the displacement of tourism workers to other industries. New and longstanding challenges further hinder recovery, with tourism businesses struggling with recruitment and retention, supply chain disruptions, inflation, rising taxes, reduced commercial insurance coverage, and gaps in transportation infrastructure. Moreover, not all visitor markets and regions are rebuilding at the same pace: business travel and events have yet to fully return, Northern Ontario is still hard-hit due to the slow return of US visitor markets, and as many as 4 in 10 Ontario tourism operators do not expect to be profitable until at least 2024. Alarming, according to the latest Ontario Economic Report, business confidence has dropped to a new low, with only 16% of organizations expressing confidence in the outlook of Ontario's economy in 2023.

Thanks to the support of government programs and the entrepreneurial spirit that exists in Ontario, we've managed to mitigate the very worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the members we represent are looking to the future, hoping to hire more Ontarians and help our

economy rebound as quickly as possible, our global competitors are already moving forward and capturing a growing share of visitor spend. At this critical juncture, it is imperative that we invest in a national tourism growth strategy that unleashes the full potential of our industry. We can't be left behind.


To enable our industry to overcome barriers and fully leverage the opportunities to recover and prosper—now and for the future—we need a national tourism growth strategy that best positions our industry to move forward. This includes tangible economic investments that take destination marketing to the next level, enable businesses to rebuild and grow innovative made-in-Ontario experiences, and support the capacity of Ontario's tourism offer to remain globally competitive. Together with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, TIAO has outlined just such a blueprint in our [2022 State of the Ontario Tourism Industry Report](#), one which aligns with the [national strategy](#) put forward by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC).

Tourism and hospitality matter for Ontario and for Canada. Its economic impact extends beyond our own industry, benefiting other businesses, sectors, communities, and the economy as a whole through tax revenue, community infrastructure, and creating vibrant communities to work and live in. Tourism is therefore not only a key economic driver as an industry; it is an indispensable component of broader economic development across the country.

That is why we're asking for your support in calling on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Tourism to ensure our industry remains one of the most competitive and successful in the world.

Thank you for your consideration of the contents of this letter. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in contact with us.

Yours sincerely,



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Rebecca Mackenzie
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Chief Executive Officer
Festivals & Events Ontario

Neil Ellis



Neil Ellis
Mayor of Belleville
City of Belleville

Kevin Eshkawkogan



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Tourism London

Sara Anghel



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Rick Layzell
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EVENTS BY
DIONNE

Dionne Bishop
Founder & CEO
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ORHMA
ONTARIO RESTAURANT
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Tony Elenis
President & CEO
Ontario Restaurant Hotel &
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DEERHURST
RESORT
MUSKOKA

Jesse Hamilton
Vice President, Operations
Freed Hotels & Resorts



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

Minerva Ward
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Camping
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Alexandra Anderson
Executive Director
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Resorts of Ontario

Grace Summit
Executive Director
Resorts of Ontario

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Troy Young".



Troy Young
CEO
Attractions Ontario

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Crockatt".



Michael Crockatt
President & CEO
Ottawa Tourism

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott Simmons".



Scott Simmons
President
Ontario Craft Breweries

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Nichol".



Kevin Nichol
President
Ontario Snow Resorts
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Finn".



Cheryl Finn
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CENTRAL COUNTIES
TOURISM

Chuck Thibeault
Executive Director
Central Counties Tourism

Cc: The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P., Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance; and The Honourable Randy Boissonnault, P.C., MP., Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance