

A man and a woman are sitting on a large, weathered log by a calm lake. The man, on the left, is wearing a grey beanie, glasses, a colorful jacket, and green pants. The woman, on the right, is wearing a purple beanie, a brown jacket, and light-colored pants. They are both smiling and looking towards each other. The background shows a serene lake with a forest of trees in autumn colors (orange, yellow, and green) on the far shore. The sky is a soft, hazy blue.

Tourism in Your Community

Information and Advocacy Ahead
of Ontario's Municipal Elections

About This Document

Ontario's municipal elections take place on October 26, 2026. Ahead of these elections, the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario is highlighting the cultural and economic impact that tourism has across the province. From visitation and spending to job creation and small business growth, tourism is an economic engine for municipalities of all sizes.

This non-partisan document will help you to highlight the importance of tourism in your community. This includes the many ways that tourism supports the local businesses, festivals, and recreational spaces that residents enjoy. You can use the information within this document to educate your local candidates about tourism and encourage support for tourism in your area. You can even share this document with local candidates directly!



What is Tourism?

Tourism in Ontario is more than an industry - it is a dynamic system of community connection, cultural expression, economic growth, and global engagement. It reaches into every corner of the province, weaving together small businesses and global gateways, natural landscapes and downtown cores, long-standing traditions and future-facing innovations.

At its core, tourism is a catalyst - sparking investment, enhancing quality of life, and strengthening local identity. When people travel within Ontario, from across Canada, or around the world, they don't just fuel spending in hotels and restaurants. They activate **domestic supply chains**, **drive demand for local food**, **creative content**, **experiences**, and **transportation services**, and inject energy into sectors ranging from **arts and culture** to **construction**, **real estate**, **technology**, and **more**.

TOURISM TOUCHES MANY SECTORS



FOOD & BEVERAGE

From local flavours to world-class dining.



ARTS & CULTURE

Showcasing creativity and local identity.



ATTRACTIONS & EXPERIENCES

Natural landscapes, iconic attractions and unique experiences.



TRANSPORTATION & ACCESS

Connect people to communities across Ontario.

& MORE



Photo credit: Destination Ontario



Photo credit: Destination Ontario

Why Should Municipalities Care about Tourism?

Tourism is an economic driver that spans a vast network of sectors: accommodations, food and beverage, attractions and entertainment, meetings and events, travel services, transportation, and arts, culture, and heritage. Tourism also supports indirect industries like utilities, agriculture and agri-food, manufacturing, finance, and professional services. Through induced effects, it circulates wages into housing, education, childcare, healthcare, and everyday consumer spending — strengthening communities from the ground up.

As Ontario's economy faces unprecedented uncertainty, there is an opportunity to lean on tourism to support community resiliency. **Forward Motion: Ontario's Tourism Industry Strategy** charts an ambitious but achievable path to increase visitor spending to \$38.1 billion annually by 2030, generating more than \$1.5 billion in additional annual tax revenue and supporting over 35,000 new jobs.

815,000+

Over 815,000 people work in Ontario's tourism industry

93,000

Tourism supports 93,000 businesses across the province – the majority of which are small businesses!

\$31 billion

Tourism drives \$31 billion in economic activity and generates over \$12 billion in government tax revenue across all levels of government – including municipalities.



You can learn more about the impact of tourism in your community by using the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's new Local Impact Calculator: <https://tourismcan.ca/local-impact/>

How can Municipalities Support Tourism?

Municipalities have an important role to play in destination development. From capital investments and infrastructure to public transit, permitting, land use planning, and more, municipal councillors make decisions every day that shape tourism in their communities.

New and returning councillors looking to support tourism can reference our industry's bold, sector-led blueprint for long-term growth: **Forward Motion: A Strategic Playbook for Ontario's Tourism Industry (2025-2030)**.

Forward Motion identifies six strategic pillars for strengthening and growing Ontario's tourism sector:

- 1 Attract More Visitors & Spending
- 2 Expand Transportation Infrastructure
- 3 Strengthen Workforce Resilience
- 4 Facilitate Product Development & Capacity Investment
- 5 Advance Practical Sustainability
- 6 Foster Collaboration & Leadership



These pillars chart an ambitious but achievable path to increase visitor spending to \$38.1 billion annually by 2030, generating more than \$1.5 billion in additional annual tax revenue and supporting over 35,000 new jobs.



The Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)

Another tool that municipalities can use to strengthen their visitor economy is the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT). This is a tax on paid accommodation stays of 29 consecutive nights or fewer. Adoption is optional and enacted through municipal by-law.

Designed as a tax on visitors rather than residents, the MAT provides municipalities with a stable, non-property-tax revenue stream that grows in line with visitor demand.

More than 80 municipalities in Ontario have implemented a MAT, collectively generating \$250 million annually.

A defining feature of Ontario's MAT framework is the requirement that at least 50% of net revenues be allocated to an eligible tourism entity for destination marketing, management, and product development. In turn, municipalities can use their share of MAT revenues to support tourism-related infrastructure and services such as public realm improvements, cultural and sports facilities, transportation, and more.



If your municipality has a MAT, tell candidates how it helps drive tourism and encourage councillors to invest in local tourism infrastructure. If you don't have a MAT, encourage candidates in your municipality to consider it, and share our best practices on how to get started!

Learn more about MAT best practices and access resources that can help your municipality!



Photo credit: Destination Ontario

How to Engage with Local Candidates

There are several ways to engage with municipal candidates on behalf of local tourism:

01 | Send an Email to Local Candidates



Don't forget!

When you send your email, please **copy us**.

Sending local candidates an email can help to put tourism on their radar before the election (and beyond). Below is a template that you can use to get started, though we encourage you to revise the letter to reflect your local experience!

Dear [Candidate's Name],

My name is [Your Name] and I am a [business owner/resident] in [your municipality]. Ahead of the upcoming municipal election, I wanted to share some information with you about the importance of tourism in our community.

Tourism is an economic driver that spans a vast network of sectors: accommodations, food and beverage, attractions and entertainment, meetings and events, travel services, transportation, and arts, culture, and heritage. Over 815,000 people are employed in Ontario's tourism industry, supporting over 93,000 businesses – most of which are small businesses. In total, tourism drives \$31 billion in economic activity and generates over \$12 billion in government tax revenue across all levels of government – including municipalities.



BONUS: Add local economic impact data

Use the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's Impact Calculator:

<https://tourismcan.ca/local-impact/>

You can also add details of your own experience here.

Municipal governments can support tourism in several ways. From land use and transportation policy to permitting and heritage preservation, councillors make important decisions that shape the visitor economy. Municipalities can also use a Municipal Accommodation Tax to support destination marketing, local events, and tourism growth.

I invite you to learn more about how you can support local tourism by reading our industry's new strategic plan: **Forward Motion: A Strategic Playbook for Ontario's Tourism Industry**.

I am also happy to meet with you to discuss the opportunities facing our local tourism industry, based on your availability.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

02 | Voting in a Municipal Election

Voting in a municipal election is a powerful way to share your voice. While TIAO does not endorse specific candidates, we encourage you to engage with local candidates and ask them how they plan to support tourism in your community!

Here are some examples of questions that you can ask:



How do you plan to support tourism in [your municipality] if elected?



Is there anything that [your municipality] can do better to grow local tourism?



What role do you believe tourism should play in [your municipality's] economy?



You can pose these questions directly, via email, or even on social media! Be sure to tag TIAO if you engage online.



Did You Know?

If you're a resident in more than one municipality, including seasonal and cottage properties, you can cast your vote in each municipality in which you are a resident!

03 | Advertising During a Municipal Election

In some cases, you may wish to run paid advertisements in support of, or against, a candidate in your local elections. To do so, you must register as a third-party advertiser ahead of **Friday, October 23, 2026**.

You can learn more about what qualifies as third-party advertising, and the rules that govern third-party advertising, here: [**Third-Party Advertisers' Guide**](#).

Note that advertising about an issue, rather than a specific candidate or a yes/no question on the ballot, is not considered third-party advertising. For example, signs saying "support local businesses" or "support tourism growth" would not be third-party advertising, even if a candidate has made those issues part of their campaign.

Understanding the Tourism Network

Ontario's tourism system is shaped and sustained by a diverse network of interconnected partners — public, private, Indigenous, and non-profit — each playing a distinct yet complementary role and each with unique business models and varying degrees of funding consistency and certainty. From provincial ministries and national marketing agencies to local operators and Indigenous tourism leaders, this collaborative ecosystem enables the delivery of visitor experiences, guides investment, shapes policy, and drives economic and cultural impact.



Learn more about Ontario's tourism system in
Forward Motion: A Strategic Playbook for Ontario's Tourism Industry.



About the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) is recognized by the government and the industry as **the voice of tourism**. TIAO works on behalf of its membership, collectively representing tourism businesses and employees across the province, to take on pressing policy issues that impact the Ontario tourism industry. TIAO leads the way in government relations on behalf of the Ontario tourism industry, including tourism businesses and operators, DMOs, RTOs, and educators. TIAO is focused on ensuring the political, economic, and regulatory environment allows for the continued exponential growth of the industry.



TIAO members can be found across Ontario's 444 municipalities.
Learn more about the benefits of a TIAO membership!

Because #OntarioNeedsTourism