



Emergency **READI™** Roadmap Report



**TOURISM EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS**
PRÉPARATION AUX URGENCES
DANS L'INDUSTRIE TOURISTIQUE



**TOURISM INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA**
ASSOCIATION DE L'INDUSTRIE
TOURISTIQUE DU CANADA

Executive Summary

Canada's tourism sector is increasingly exposed to climate-driven emergencies, workforce instability, and fragmented emergency management (EM) systems that do not consistently include tourism operators as formal actors. At the same time, tourists themselves represent a vulnerable, mobile population often absent from municipal and provincial emergency planning assumptions.

This report proposes the development of an Emergency READI designation -- a national tourism sector readiness and resilience endorsement under TIAC's READI initiative. The program will be designed to provide tourism businesses and destination marketing organizations (DMOs) with a clear, practical, and scalable framework for emergency preparedness, response capability, and recovery readiness.

The Emergency READI program responds to key structural gaps that were identified within research conducted as part of TIAC's Tourism Emergency Preparedness initiative funded by The Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED).

These palpable gaps include:

- A lack of a national tourism emergency management framework
- Low uptake of existing SME preparedness tools despite their availability
- Limited integration of Indigenous tourism operators and cultural safety considerations
- Fragmented governance across federal, provincial, municipal, and Indigenous EM systems

The proposed Emergency READI program addresses these gaps through:

- A standardized assessment and scoring framework
- A bilingual (English/French) qualification process
- A training-aligned designation pathway
- A governance model integrating Indigenous, regional, and industry partners
- A phased rollout strategy with pilot testing and national scaling

Emergency READI is positioned as a practical operational tool that facilitates the improvement of business continuity, visitor safety, workforce resilience, and destination recovery capacity.

The READI™ Program's Importance for Tourism

Enhancing Competitiveness

The READI program aims to equip the Canadian tourism industry with the necessary information and tools to remain competitive and succeed. This includes providing insights and strategies that help businesses innovate and adapt to changing market conditions.

Capacity Building

The program focuses on building capacity within the tourism sector through workshops, training sessions, and other educational resources. These initiatives are designed to empower businesses and organizations to grow sustainably and improve their operational capabilities.

Sustainability and Regeneration

One of the central goals of the READI program is to promote sustainable tourism practices. It encourages businesses to develop models that balance economic growth with environmental responsibility and social well-being.

Networking and Collaboration

READI fosters a collaborative environment by encouraging information sharing and partnership-building among tourism businesses, organizations, and stakeholders. This approach aims to strengthen the industry's collective ability to overcome challenges and seize new opportunities.

Adapting to Change

The program is essential for helping the tourism industry adapt to evolving consumer behaviours, economic conditions, and technological advancements.

Promoting Innovation

By encouraging the adoption of innovative practices and solutions, READI helps businesses stay relevant and competitive in a dynamic global market.

Economic Impact

The program supports economic growth by helping tourism operators enhance their offerings, attract more visitors, and ultimately contribute to the national and local economies.

Community Engagement

Through its focus on sustainable and regenerative tourism, READI helps ensure that tourism development benefits local communities and preserves cultural and natural heritage.

Canada's Tourism Sector & Emergency Preparedness

Current landscape

Canada's tourism sector supports more than 280,000 businesses and employs over 2 million people. In 2025, it generated \$132.9 billion in economic activity and contributed \$52.5 billion to Canada's GDP. Tourism businesses and assets are critical economic infrastructure in many communities. Events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, nationwide wildfires, floods in Nova Scotia, and hurricanes in Atlantic Canada have shown how quickly visitor economies can contract—especially in rural and Indigenous communities where tourism is a primary employer.

Insights gleaned from the national survey and series of six discussion forums conducted through TIAC's Tourism Emergency Preparedness initiative provide evidence of the precarious position of tourism sector businesses in relation to weather- and climate-based emergency events, as well as specific needs and support gaps that should be addressed through future policy, resource allocations, and industry training.

Key factors heighten the vulnerability of tourism businesses and communities

Tourism operators are particularly vulnerable to emergency events as many of Canada's visitor-driven economies operate within a high-risk environment characterized by:

- Climate-driven hazards (i.e., wildfires, floods, extreme heat, storms)
- Seasonal workforce turnover
- Populations of visitors not captured in readily available data
- High dependency on physical place-based experiences

Emergency management systems are highly fragmented

Tourism businesses are often the first point of contact for visitors during emergencies yet are not systematically integrated into formal EM systems.

Current EM systems are:

- Distributed across multiple jurisdictions
- Inconsistently connected to tourism operators
- Not standardized nationally for tourism applications

Notably, British Columbia represents the most advanced provincial model but remains an outlier rather than a national standard.

Climate change is a persistent risk

Climate change is not a discrete risk but a persistent operating condition for many tourism operators, increasing the frequency of disruptions, duration of recovery periods, and potential for infrastructure instability in destinations across the country.

Indigenous tourism and an emergency management equity gap

Indigenous tourism is one of Canada's fastest-growing tourism segments. Unfortunately, with many of its businesses operating in remote or infrastructure-limited areas, this key tourism segment is highly exposed to climate-driven disruptions.

However, Indigenous tourism remains underrepresented in EM planning systems, under-resourced in recovery funding structures, and often excluded from public coordination mechanisms.

Our primary research revealed that Indigenous tourism operators face a unique intersection of vulnerabilities when it comes to EM preparedness and planning.

These include:

- Exposure to repeated climate-related disruptions
- Limited inclusion in EM planning frameworks
- Limited access to tailored emergency preparedness tools
- Jurisdictional complexity across federal, provincial, and Indigenous governments
- Community obligations and cultural safety during evacuation and recovery
- Staff and operators frequently serve as both residents and frontline responders

These considerations and gap areas support the need for the Emergency READI designation to:

- Establish Indigenous-led advisory governance for READI (via a co-design model); and,
- Embed cultural safety and Indigenous knowledge into core assessment criteria and training content



Emergency Preparedness READI™ Framework



At the core of the Emergency READI program framework, participants including tourism business operators, destination marketing organizations, and other tourism sector stakeholders complete a bilingual assessment tool evaluating:

- Existing emergency plans
- Workforce readiness
- Communication protocols
- Visitor safety systems
- Financial continuity measures

The Emergency READI designation is structured around core emergency preparedness assessment domains and evaluation criteria based on a five-level maturity model.

The evaluation process includes both automated scoring and expert review/validation including oversight by the Advisory Committee.

Assessment is based on the minimum threshold reviewed across all assessment domains, and a weighted score is then provided for critical safety areas (i.e., visitor safety, communications, workforce stability). A gap identification report is provided to applicants.

The assessment then assigns an emergency preparedness level based on maturity model akin to the sample provided below.

Successful applicants receive the following as part of their designation:

- Emergency READI designation level
- Digital designation “stamp”
- Access to training and resource hub
- Annual renewal requirement

Emergency READI: Evidence Base & Gap Analysis

The series of nine assessment domains were developed based on recommendations and gaps identified as part of the extensive primary research and consultations conducted via TIAC's Foundations for Emergency READI project between January and March 2026.

The following key systemic gaps were identified across TIAC’s review of literature, national emergency resilience survey, and stakeholder input provided as part of a series of six policy- and SME-focussed discussion forums:

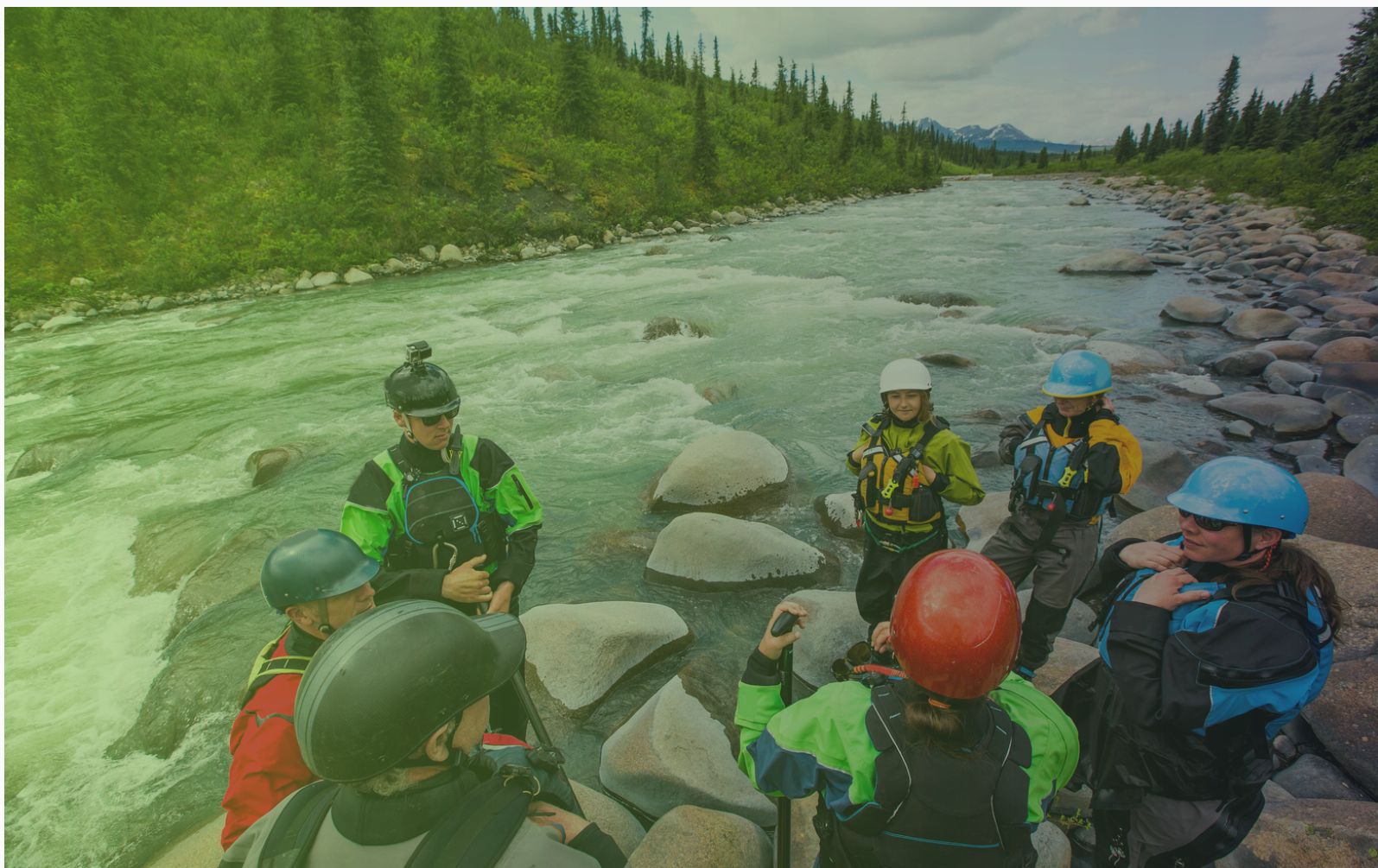
GAP	IMPLICATION FOR EMERGENCY READI
No national tourism EM framework	READI provides standardization across provinces
Low SME adoption of existing tools	READI converts tools into structured designation
Tourists not formally included in EM planning	READI embeds visitor duty-of-care criteria
Weak crisis communication coordination	READI includes recovery messaging standards
Insurance gaps for business interruption	READI informs financial resilience requirements
Lack of preparedness baseline data	READI creates national measurement system
Workforce mental health under-addressed	READI includes staff welfare criteria
Limited multilingual emergency resources	READI requires bilingual compliance
Indigenous tourism invisibility in EM systems	READI integrates Indigenous governance and cultural safety

Implementation Roadmap

The implementation of Emergency READI will follow a phased development approach over an estimated 12-to-18-month period. This staged model is designed to ensure that program design is grounded in evidence, tested in real-world conditions, and refined prior to national rollout.

Early phases focus on establishing program feasibility, governance structures, and stakeholder alignment. This is followed by the development of program assets and resources including assessment tools, scoring framework, and training curriculum. These elements are then tested through a structured pilot phase involving a diverse cohort of tourism operators across regions, business sizes, and operational contexts.

The pilot phase is particularly critical, as it will provide empirical evidence on usability, administrative burden, and the effectiveness of the scoring system in reflecting real-world preparedness. Feedback from this phase will inform final refinements prior to public launch.



Governance and Partnership Model

The governance structure for Emergency READI is designed to reflect the multi-jurisdictional nature of emergency management in Canada while ensuring strong alignment with industry realities. Rather than operating as a purely federal or industry-led designation, READI will be governed through a collaborative model that includes TIAC, provincial and territorial tourism associations, and Indigenous tourism leadership. The Advisory structure will function as a mechanism for continuous improvement, allowing criteria to evolve in response to emerging risks such as climate-related disruptions, workforce instability, and changes in insurance or infrastructure systems.

Emergency READI will be governed through a multi-stakeholder model inclusive of the following key core partner organizations:

- TIAC (program lead)
- Provincial and Territorial Tourism Industry Associations
- Indigenous tourism associations
- Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO)
- Federal government partners (e.g., ISED, Public Safety Canada, Parks Canada)

The following groups represent key inclusions of the Emergency READI governance structure:

Indigenous Tourism Emergency Advisory Circle

This body will ensure that Indigenous perspectives are not treated as supplementary but are instead embedded in the design, evaluation, and ongoing refinement of the program. This approach responds directly to documented gaps in emergency management systems where Indigenous tourism operators are frequently underrepresented or not explicitly named.

A Provincial and Territorial Tourism Association Liaison Network

The network validates assessment criteria to ensure they reflect diverse tourism contexts, including rural, northern, coastal, and seasonal differences. It also supports stakeholder mobilization by recruiting pilot participants, increasing awareness among SMEs, and engaging hard-to-reach operators.

Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) Engagement Partners

DMO partners will be engaged to ensure consistency between operator messaging and destination messaging, and advise on standard for crisis communication, and local recovery activation.

Together, the advisory bodies are responsible for:

- Validating assessment criteria and scoring logic
- Ensuring alignment with emergency management best practices
- Integrating Indigenous tourism and cultural safety perspectives
- Reviewing pilot findings and approving program refinements
- Acting as a “stewardship body” for long-term evolution of the designation

This model ensures that Emergency READI is grounded in co-design of standards, cultural and jurisdictional inclusion, and continuous alignment with EM best practices.

Conclusion

Emergency READI provides Canada’s tourism sector with its first structured, national approach to emergency preparedness designation. It transforms fragmented tools and uneven practices into a cohesive resilience system that integrates operators, destinations, workforce systems, and Indigenous tourism perspectives.

Most importantly, it shifts tourism emergency management from a reactive posture to a proactive, standardized, and continuously improving readiness model aimed at strengthening business resilience, continuity and visitor safety across Canada.

