



**TOURISM EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS**

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

National Association Discussion Forum

Discussion Forum Date:

April 2026



**TOURISM INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA**

**ASSOCIATION DE L'INDUSTRIE
TOURISTIQUE DU CANADA**



Introduction

The Tourism Emergency Preparedness initiative convened tourism industry associations and sector representatives to discuss the role of tourism in emergency preparedness, response, and long-term resilience. The conversation explored the impacts of recent climate-related events across tourism industries and identified systemic challenges affecting coordination, communication, and the protection of tourism assets across Canada.

Key themes included the absence of national standards, fragmented tools and resources, and limited capacity among small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). Participants emphasized the need for improved coordination across jurisdictions, stronger partnerships -- including with Indigenous communities -- and more inclusive planning that recognizes tourism as a critical component of emergency management systems.

Discussions also highlighted the importance of leveraging local knowledge and existing industry networks to strengthen preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.



Discussion Highlights: What We Heard

Tourism's Role in Emergency Preparedness

Participants underscored the essential role tourism operators play during emergencies, particularly in accommodations, transportation, and supporting response efforts in remote areas. While the sector is regularly called upon during crises, its role is not consistently defined or coordinated.

Challenges

Fragmented Coordination

Operators are engaged during emergencies without centralized systems to guide booking, logistics, or deployment.

Impact on Tourism Operations

The use of tourism assets for emergency response can disrupt peak-season business and, in some cases, displace visitors from key destinations.

Opportunities

Centralized Coordination Models

A “one-stop” system for governments and industry could improve efficiency in deploying tourism assets during emergencies.

Expanded Role for Sector Expertise

Tourism professionals, including outdoor operators, can contribute valuable skills and capacity in remote and high-risk environments.



Integration with Emergency Management Systems

A key theme across discussions was the limited integration of tourism into formal emergency management frameworks. Participants noted that tourism is not consistently recognized as critical infrastructure, despite its role in supporting response and recovery efforts.

Challenges

Lack of National Standards

There is no coordinated national approach to integrating tourism into emergency planning.

Limited Consultation and Coordination

Decisions affecting emergency communication systems and services are not always made in consultation with tourism stakeholders.

Inconsistent Local Integration

While some regions demonstrate strong coordination between operators and local authorities, these practices are not widely replicated.

Opportunities

Formal Recognition of Tourism

Positioning tourism as critical infrastructure would strengthen its role in planning and response.

Scalable Local Models

Examples of coordination between local governments and operators -- such as evacuation planning -- can inform broader implementation.



Crisis Messaging and Asset Protection

Participants identified crisis communication and the protection of natural tourism assets as critical challenges. Ineffective messaging during emergencies can significantly impact visitor confidence, while environmental risks continue to threaten key destinations.

Challenges

Inconsistent Crisis Messaging

Misinformation and lack of coordination between media and government agencies can lead to unnecessary cancellations and economic loss.

Vulnerability of Natural Assets

Wildfires and other environmental events highlight the need for improved land and forest management practices.

Limited Long-Term Recovery Support

Operators face ongoing challenges in rebuilding and maintaining business continuity following major disruptions.

Opportunities

Coordinated Communication Strategies

Aligning messaging across agencies and industry can improve accuracy and reduce negative impacts on visitation.

Proactive Asset Management

Integrating tourism considerations into environmental and land management strategies can support long-term sustainability.



Tools, Resources, and Capacity Gaps

Discussion revealed that there may be a lack of practical tools and guidance available to tourism operators, particularly SMEs, to support emergency preparedness and climate response. Resource fragmentation and limited capacity further constrain effective planning.

Challenges

Limited Access to Practical Guidance

Operators lack clear protocols and tools to prepare for and respond to emergencies.

Fragmented Resources

Existing materials are dispersed and difficult to navigate, reducing their effectiveness.

Capacity Constraints

Smaller operators often lack the time and resources to engage in preparedness planning.

Opportunities

Centralized Resource Development

Consolidating tools and guidance into a single, accessible platform would improve usability.

Leveraging Industry Knowledge

Tourism operators possess valuable, place-based knowledge that can inform preparedness and response strategies.



Collaboration and Regional Resilience

Strengthening collaboration across sectors and regions was identified as essential to building long-term resilience. Participants highlighted the importance of partnerships, including with Indigenous communities, and the role of tourism in supporting environmental monitoring and education.

Challenges

Fragmented Efforts

Limited coordination across organizations and jurisdictions reduces overall effectiveness.

Underutilized Expertise

The knowledge and capabilities of tourism operators are not fully integrated into planning processes.

Opportunities

Cross-Sector Partnerships

Collaborative initiatives can enhance preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

Community and Indigenous Collaboration

Engaging local and Indigenous knowledge can strengthen environmental stewardship and resilience strategies.

Expanded Role in Monitoring and Education

Tourism operators can contribute to monitoring environmental changes and educating visitors on conservation and climate impacts.



Priority Action Items and Key Recommendations

National Coordination and System Integration

Participants emphasized the need for a more unified and structured approach to emergency preparedness across the tourism sector.

Develop a National Coordination Framework

Establish mechanisms to align efforts across jurisdictions and reduce fragmentation.

Recognize Tourism as Critical Infrastructure

Integrate tourism into emergency management systems at all levels.

Improve Stakeholder Consultation

Ensure tourism stakeholders are included in decisions affecting emergency services and communications.

Crisis Communication and Asset Protection

Strengthening communication and protecting tourism assets are critical to maintaining visitor confidence and supporting recovery.

Align Crisis Messaging

Coordinate communication between governments, industry, and media to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Integrate Tourism into Environmental Planning

Incorporate tourism considerations into land and forest management strategies.

Support Long-Term Recovery

Develop programs that assist operators beyond immediate response phases.



Tools, Resources, and Capacity Building

Providing accessible, practical tools is essential to improving preparedness across the sector.

Develop a Centralized Resource Hub

Create a “one-stop shop” for tools, protocols, and best practices.

Support SME Preparedness

Design resources tailored to the needs and capacity of small operators.

Leverage Local Knowledge

Incorporate operator expertise into resource development and planning processes.

Partnerships and Collaborative Approaches

Building stronger partnerships will enhance resilience and improve outcomes across the tourism sector.

Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaboration

Encourage partnerships between tourism, government, and emergency management organizations.

Advance Indigenous Partnerships

Work with Indigenous communities to integrate knowledge, support economic development, and strengthen resilience.

Expand Industry Engagement

Increase opportunities for tourism operators to contribute to emergency planning and response efforts.



Program Development and Continuous Improvement

Participants highlighted the importance of building on existing initiatives and ensuring ongoing improvement.

Leverage Existing Programs

Expand and align current initiatives rather than creating new, duplicative efforts.

Monitor and Evaluate Progress

Establish mechanisms to track gaps, share outcomes, and improve preparedness over time.

Question Guide:

1. **Tourism's Role in Emergency Preparedness** – How would you define the tourism sector's role in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery?
2. **Understanding Tourism in Emergency Contexts** – How can tourism activity in a community change the risk profile and emergency response demands in your community?
3. **Emergency Response Coordination**
 - a. We hope to learn more about how well tourism operators are integrating with emergency management systems at the community, provincial or territory levels.
 - b. In your experience, what works well—and what may not work well—in coordinating with and integrating the needs of tourism businesses during emergencies?
4. **Infrastructure and Connectivity Gaps** – What transportation infrastructure or system limitations most affect your ability to respond in tourism-heavy or remote areas?
5. **Role of Tourism Assets in Emergency Response** – How are tourism facilities currently used during emergencies, and how could that role be improved?
6. **Recovery and Community Resilience** – From your perspective, what helps communities with a strong tourism sector recover more effectively after a disaster?
7. **Situational Awareness & Information Sharing** – What information about tourism activity do you need—but often don't have—during an emergency?
8. **Emergency Preparedness Resource Needs** – What emergency preparedness tools, frameworks, training or resources are tourism organizations currently using, and where do gaps remain?