Tourism Industry Association of Canada - Green Party of Canada

QUESTION 1: MARKETING

*Global tourism marketing is fiercely competitive and Canada's national tourism marketer, Destination Canada (DC), has been successful in generating demand in the markets in which it operates. How will your party ensure that DC has the resources it needs to generate interest in Canada as a travel destination?*

Tourism is a fundamental component of Canada's industry and economy. People from around the world come to Canada each year to enjoy our country's natural beauty, engage with our rich cultural history, and experience our vibrant communities. The Green Party will ensure Destination Canada has the resources it needs by significantly investing in advertising for Canadian tourism.

Canada is falling behind in the global tourism sector, as other countries surge ahead. The Harper Conservatives have consistently undermined tourism in this country. Spending on tourism as a portion of GDP has steadily declined, as have the number of international tourists coming to Canada relative to other countries.

As we encounter another recession, Canada must significantly invest in sectors that benefit from the low dollar. The federal government must promote Canadian tourism abroad and maintain our cultural sites, including National Parks, museums, cultural activities, and the service and retail sectors. Advertising is one of the best ways to increase awareness about Canada as an exciting tourist destination. The Green Party will restore tourism advertising to the United States, our biggest tourism market.

A national Department of Tourism, developed under a Green government, will facilitate coordination and ensure robust funding for Canada's tourism sector. We believe Canada can generate economic benefits by transitioning to a sustainable economy, investing in tourism, and supporting seasonal industries.
QUESTION 2: AIR ACCESS

Air travel to and within Canada is considered to be very expensive and is frequently cited as a disincentive to booking travel to Canada. Under the current “user-pay plus” system, the entire operational and security costs of air travel are absorbed by the ticket-buying public through a series of taxes, fees and levies. What is your party’s plan to reduce the burden of fees, taxes and levies on air travel to and within Canada?

The Green Party will incentivize international travel by supporting advertising, creating a national Department of Tourism, and restoring our National Parks System, among other measures. We will consider all options to promote international tourism, including expanding Canadian bilateral air access agreements.

We are committed to promoting sustainable modes of transportation. Greens will support domestic travel by improving train travel in Canada. We will invest in our national passenger rail system to improve infrastructure and service, and phase in high speed rail where it is feasible. The Green Party will also encourage competition and greater ridership on long distance coaches to promote travel within Canada.

QUESTION 3: VISITOR DOCUMENTATION

Despite some progress, Canada continues to struggle with a reputation as having a difficult and complicated visa application system. While ensuring the safety of Canadians, how will your party make it easier for legitimate travellers to visit Canada?

To facilitate ease of access for travellers, Greens will eliminate the requirement for permits to visit Canada for tourists from countries where a visa is not required. The Green Party will balance open access for law-abiding tourists with reasonable security measures to ensure Canadians remain safe.

The Green Party also enthusiastically supports the restoration of the individual GST-HST rebate program for foreign visitors.
QUESTION 4: PRODUCT

Canada is a popular “bucket-list” destination for many international travellers with little urgency to visit in the near future. This urgency can be increased through quality programming and experiences at festivals, events and attractions. How does your party propose to support existing attractions and encourage investment in new and innovative tourism products?

Our proposed federal Department of Tourism would coordinate all aspects of tourism. This ministry will focus on helping the fastest-growing sector of global tourism, ecotourism, become stronger, and through special programs encourage Aboriginal Canadians to assume a bigger role in our tourism industry. Green MPs would also fight to increase funding to the arts, culture, and heritage sector.

In addition to increased advertising in the US, the Green Party will protect and improve tourism infrastructure. Canada’s National Parks and Historic Sites are among Canada’s greatest assets. Conservation and ecological integrity foster respect for our natural and historic areas. The Green Party will vigorously defend our parks against efforts to undermine their protections. Canada must restore its commitment to conservation and establish strong safeguards for our National Parks System and Historic Sites.

To preserve and enhance Canada’s national parks, Green Party MPs will:

- Restore funding to Parks Canada;
- Increase in the number of park rangers and guides with interpretation skills to educate Canadians and visitors on the vast beauty and value of our national parks;
- Amend the Sable Island National Park Act to end seismic testing and oil and gas drilling within its boundaries, and re-affirm that industrial activities have no place in our national parks;
- Establish a budget of $500 million annually to complete our National Parks System by 2030, with emphasis on:
  - Fast-tracking the establishment of 'no take' marine protected areas;
  - Extending, in partnership with provinces, territories, and Aboriginal peoples, Canada’s network of land, freshwater, and marine protected areas;
  - Providing Parks Canada with the funding necessary to protect the ecological integrity of Canada’s national parks;
- Ensure federal funding to meet our Aichi targets – protecting 17 per cent of our land and inland waters and 10 per cent of our coastal areas by 2020; and
- Implement the recommendations of conservation scientists to preserve threatened habitats and species.
Greens have also called for the protection of lighthouses as public assets and part of Canada’s cultural heritage, including the lighthouse at Peggy’s Cove. As Green Party Leader Elizabeth May has said, “Lighthouses are a source of pride for coastal communities and the tourism benefits alone justify their maintenance and indeed, their enhancement.”

**QUESTION 5: PEOPLE**

*Tourism relies on front-line staff to deliver quality service. Current Labour shortages are forcing reductions in business hours and service offerings. By 2030, labour shortages in tourism are expected to surpass a quarter million jobs costing the sector $31.4 B in forgone revenues. What is your Party’s plan to address the labour shortage in several key regions of Canada?*

To address the current labour shortage, we need to both connect Canadians looking for work with available jobs, and establish a program that offers foreign workers pathways to citizenship. Greens will create a domestic employment recruitment program to get willing Canadians to job opportunities. They best way to address the labour shortage is to allow market forces to increase wages, and encourage more Canadian to train for in-demand occupations - not by driving down wages by abusing foreign labour. Greens will invest in extensive apprenticeship and training programs to benefit all workers and industries. We will also expedite certification of foreign credentials and work experience, to connect new Canadians with meaningful jobs.

An overhaul of Canada’s EI system is also needed. Recent changes by the Harper Conservatives penalize those who access EI more frequently. Many local economies depend on seasonal industries, and consequently a robust EI program that supports workers. These changes take aim at the seasonal industries and remote communities where jobs simply do not exist out of season. What Harper fails to realize is that the EI system created structural benefits for seasonal industries and employers as well as employees.

The Green Party will reverse the punitive EI changes that make life more difficult for the tourism industry. An expanded EI system will support seasonal workers fairly and provide job training for those looking for work. These changes will give employers the confidence to hire workers for seasonal employment and the knowledge that their skilled workforce will be available to them when they are needed.