

## Questions & Answers

### April 7, 2020 Industry Calls

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You can connect with the TIAO team by calling our toll-free number at: **1-888-436-6441**

You can email us with your thoughts, ideas, best practices and questions at:  
[feedback@tiaontario.ca](mailto:feedback@tiaontario.ca)

Share any community efforts, positive stories or messages of hope on social media **#ontariospirit**

We want to encourage consumers through social media to postpone, not cancel  
**#dontcancelpostpone**

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The following is a digest of the questions asked in the conference calls hosted by TIAO. We've done our best to find the answers you need, provided links where we can, and commit to taking your concerns forward in our discussions with government officials.

#### Key Messages:

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> survey closed at 8 a.m. on Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>. Here are the top line results:
  - 59% of tourism businesses across Ontario have closed temporarily
  - More than 21% are at risk of closing permanently in the next 3 months
  - 59% think they will still be closed temporarily in 3 months' time
  - 38% of tourism businesses have laid off staff; of those, 42% have laid off up to 100% of their staff
  - 66% of tourism businesses have seen a drop in sales/revenue in March 2020 compared to March 2019. Of those, nearly 41% have seen a decrease in sales/revenue of more than 50% for March 2020.
  - 52% of seasonal tourism businesses at this time feel that they be unable to open for the summer season
- In conjunction with the data we've collected through other methods of our Evidence Generation Strategy, including industry calls and consultations, we have identified that tourism operators require the following forms of financial aid. The points are:
  - 1) Mortgage moratorium
  - 2) Commercial rent moratorium
  - 3) Increase access to interest free loans
  - 4) Increase access to direct financial aid
  - 5) Debt forgiveness

We continue to engage with government and our counterparts at the federal level on these files. TIAC is presenting in front of the Finance committee on April 8<sup>th</sup>, specifically on a financial aid package recommendations for the tourism industry.

- Minister Phillips announced on April 6<sup>th</sup> that the provincial land taxes deferment will be in place – each deferment period for the entire year will have a 90 day leeway with no interest or penalties; applicable to approx. 63,000 residential and business property owners in Northern Ontario that are outside of municipal boundaries.

- Ontario Northlander announcement – the responsibility of the rail lines had a transfer of management from the Ministry of Transportation to the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, which will allow for better movement of people and goods post COVID-19.
- Update on some of our partnerships. TIAO is collaborating with:
  - Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB)
  - Ontario Chamber of Commerce
  - Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO)
  - Ontario BIAs

Our advocating efforts are aligned. We are stronger together!

- Check our website and social media channels for updates and access to free webinars across the county. Some will focus on accessing grant programs, communications, and planning for the future.
- TIAO is in discussion with OTEC about training opportunities and how housekeeping standards will need to change going forward (with advice from Public Health).
- TIAO is also in discussion with the following companies about temporary employment opportunities:
  - Ontario Federation of Agriculture have reached about temporarily accessing displaced tourism staff to assist in processing, delivery or farm work.
  - Instacart –Grocery delivery service who have access to 75% of all households in Canada (rural and urban centres); have had an increased demand and will need to hire to meet this temporary surge.
- Updated Essential Services List - seasonal campgrounds and short term rentals are not considered essential services. Short term rentals are only available for someone who is need to self-isolate or working front line.
- A few jurisdictions/cities across the province are closing all city facilities and not issuing permits until June 30<sup>th</sup>, such as Toronto and Ottawa.

## **Northern Ontario Tourism**

**Number of participants:** 43

### **Questions and comments:**

- 1) In terms of aid, have there been any discussions about government bail outs for tourism and asking government to negotiate with insurance companies to pay out business interruption claims?

We heard from Minister McLeod that there is a sector package coming soon from the Federal government that will speak to Tourism and Hospitality.

In regards to Insurance company claims, it will be included in our Asks document.

- 2) For the fishing lodges that are American owned, but obviously Canadian staffed, do you know if any of the wage subsidies will now be available? The original program excluded non-Canadian owned businesses.

We are not aware of any issues for you to access the wage subsidy programs. We will get more details and update you.

- 3) What are other small business tourism operators doing when guests are asking for their deposits back? Many guests are doing just that. Suggestions perhaps to rebook later in season or 2021. Thoughts?

We are hearing a mix. Some rebooking into 2021 and some have had to process refunds.

**Suggestions:**

- I'm apologizing and stating that at this time we cannot refund deposits. We will hold it for them for a future trip 2021 and even beyond.
  - 1. Try to rebook later in the season. 2. No refunds. 3. Partial rollover to future years. Can't roll over 100% of deposits. That would mean entire revenue season lost. We are keeping a percentage of a rolled forward deposit and giving more of it to our guests if they apportion over multiple years.
  - Difficult as it is for all of us, we are refunding 100% of deposits (including merchant fees if we initiate cancellation) as a good will effort with our guests. Many of them are suffering financial difficulties themselves.
- 4) The Algoma public health while saying lodges can open for staff only, they are recommending and might be enforced all staff are from the Algoma district. Any information on that?

TIAO will look into this.

- 5) Please provide clarification regarding provincial closure of trailer parks and campgrounds as it pertains to lodges, resorts and cottage rentals.

If accommodation is not being used right now for those who need to self-isolate or if you're not working in conjunction with your local health authorities to move non covid-19 patients into non-hospital based accommodation, then you cannot open.

You will not be able to open your doors to those who want to stay for leisure purposes while there is a state of emergency.

- 6) A lot of communication/media seems to talk about July lockdowns, meaning self-isolation? Border closure? Non-essential business shutdowns? Have you heard any inkling on the border closure?

Border reopening is not being discussed right now. The state of emergency extended to mid-April, school closures extended until beginning of May, and actions taken by other municipalities across the province have been taken until the end of June.

We will provide updates as soon as we have it.

- 7) A) How are air services being affected? Example float planes  
B) If we don't open I am insuring a fleet that never hits the water. Am I going to see that refunded??

Our understanding if the service is not being used for transportation of essential goods or essential personal, then you would be grounded.

- 8) Regarding deposits there is a new provision in the Travel Industry Act that allows for tour operators to offer credit memos for future travel when they can't accommodate customers on trips they booked. While this applies to the tour operators it could be a good practice for our sector.

Updates to the Travel Industry Act speaks to vouchers and similar programs to carry deposits forward. See website for updates.

- 9) I am trying to rebook guests for later in the season or roll their date to 2021 if not possible. I am unsure of what is late enough to rebook? July or August? We are not sure what to tell them.

We are not sure at this time. We hope that we can welcome guests back in July. Some parts of China are starting to rebound.

- 10) Can we apply for Business financial aid when we have been closed for reservations, but weren't scheduled to open until mid-May?

TIAO is pushing for financial aid. Conversations with the Province has indicated that they are waiting to see what the Feds provide as a financial aid package before we will see a sector specific financial aid or stimulus package.

We will update everyone as soon as we receive that information.

- 11) Some non-essential businesses have been told staff cannot enter the business. Could this apply to lodges who are bringing in staff to ready their businesses for opening and avoid potential vandalism/looting?

As a business owner, you have the right to check on your business and that is safe guarded. Refer to your local public health authority if you are permitted to have more staff on the premises.

- 12) What about nonresident seasonal camp who is not big enough for employee. How can they get up to protect their camps?

We suggest you call the border crossing and speak to them about the ability to cross and what documentation would you need and if you will need to self-isolate once there.

### **Suggestions:**

- Charlene - I heard there is a guy in Northwestern Ontario who is making a business out of checking on remote lodges.
- For those US camp owners, we have had several conversations with them about finding a neighboring camp to check on your facilities.

- 13) Can TIAO, NOTO and others please survey the industry to get an actual number of seasonal tourism outfitters? I believe that the number may surprise the government. If we are left out of bailouts, it will kill many small businesses.

Great Idea. TIAO can work with NOTO and the other sector associations to get a handle on that.

We continue to remind government that seasonal businesses need to be included.

**Comment:**

We already have that information between DNO and NOTO and believe approx. 750 operators on our inventories. We can check and let everyone know.

- 14) In regards to small operators with no employees (there are a lot of us) - At the moment we are not eligible for the subsidies that are dependent on payroll, e.g. the \$40,000 interest free loan. Will there be any aid available to us?

This will be raised with the Minister.

- 15) Can we have a specific letter developed that we can send collectively to the MP and MPP's?

We will put a list of MP and MPPs on our site. We encourage you to let them know how this pandemic and state of emergency is affecting you. The more we get the message across to our elected officials, the easier it will be when they're around their cabinet and caucus tables to make decisions in your favour.

## **RTOs**

**Number of participants:** 11

### **Questions and comments:**

No questions put forward at this time.

## **DMOs**

**Number of participants:** 66

### **News & Best Practices shared:**

- Oxford County – partnered with their RTO and offered a series of panel discussions; resources will be available online. Topics such as:
  - How to engage online
  - Product to Porch
  - The Egg industry
  - Food
- Waterloo Region has partnered with their BIAs and gathered information on restaurants offering takeout and delivery and any stories offering online shopping.

Also engaging with the community and getting recommendations from cinemas, independent book store owners, the symphony and libraries on books, movies, documentaries and music. Making it more fun to stay home

- Tourism Brantford just launched a campaign called "Brantford Together". Focused on what Economic development staff and small business resource centres are doing- sharing general good news stories, retrofitting machinery locally, donations, two workshops a week, daily information about local businesses on what they are doing that is unique and sharing of local businesses that are offering takeout.
- Peterborough Kawartha's Tourism – partnered with local Chamber of Commerce, BDC, and the BIAs. Meet on a daily basis to update each other on the answers they received.
  - Focus on helping tourism businesses on how to navigate these programs.
  - Creation of a weekly update for Municipal governments – what TIAO is doing – which then goes to local Chamber of Commerce so they can include in their advocacy efforts.
- Niagara Falls Tourism – Niagara Falls virtual tour has gone live (themed).

## **Sector Association**

**Number of participants:** 26

### **Questions and comments:**

- 1) Any sense of when we can start gathering again? Any directive on size of gathering?

We don't have a definitive answer at this time. Everyone is operating on the advice of the medical officers, who are learning as they go.

The week of April 13<sup>th</sup> government will revisit the number of people allowed to gather.

- 2) How are TIAO and others handling planned conferences? Many are on hold but for how long?

Some moving to virtual meetings / events. Some are being postponed to fall or 2021. This is even the case for wedding venues such as McMichael.

Others trying to be innovative/creative when offering alternatives.

TIAO looking at taking their AGM virtual. More details to come.

## **Tourism Operators and Educators**

**Number of participants:** 107

### **Questions and comments:**

- 1) a) The province announced that there was going to be some funding available through the Tourism Development and Recovery fund. Are there any further details?  
b) Are they looking at opening it back up to the private sector, or will it continue to be for the non-profit and public sector applicants only?

a) We believe it's coming soon. TIAO will be discussing this with the Deputy Minister. Their priority was trying to get other grants processed.

b) We are not aware of the parameters at this point but it will be raised.

- 2) What is going to be done to advocate for the businesses that require the \$40K loan that do not pay out wages between 50 thousand and one million?

It is one of our Asks and will provide further updates.

- 3) Is it already available, or when will there be guidelines as it relates to the Small business loans?

Canada Emergency Business Account - <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2020/03/additional-support-for-canadian-businesses-from-the-economic-impact-of-covid-19.html>

- 4) Is there is any extra funding for events that have to be cancelled? We were not successful with grants.

We are not aware at this time. Minister McLeod has communicated to stakeholders that there is a federal stimulus fund coming.

- 5) Any word about the business interruption service?

We are continuing the conversation with our colleagues around the county as well as TIAC about getting some answers around business interruption insurance through the insurance industry. We have also made our Federal Ministry of Small Business as well as Tourism aware of this.

- 6) With the latest essential service announcements, campgrounds and recreational accommodations are closed until we are notified. Would we be allowed to rent cabins for long term summer rentals?

See the note regarding essential service list – if not being used for self-isolating or health care workers, you are not eligible to be open.

**Comment:**

Rentals are currently not permitted. They are very tight on snowbirds isolating only,

- 7) Any update on border closures to US Canadian business owners?

We suggest you call the border crossing and speak to them about the ability to cross, what documentation you will require, and if you will need to self-isolate once there.

- 8) Is there a current date when they will re-evaluate the essential service list or is it currently just indefinite?

We are not aware when the next updates to the list will take place.

The current state of emergency is in effect until April 18th. We will get an update then if this will continue or if it will be lifted. Government is being guided by Public Health authorities.

- 9) How will they handle the RV Seasonal permanent camp owners that now have to make sites available to the snowbirds that are required to have access that use the permanent sites as their summer homes?

We are aware that campground owners require their seasonal guests to provide a permanent address of record which would protect them from the landlord and tenant act.

For this particular circumstance, we don't know the answer at this time but will provide updates once we learn more.

**Comment:**

In reference to the snowbirds, my parents do not have anywhere to go and their permanent address is their seasonal campground. They are one of 12 trailers allowed back in, everyone else is not permitted.

- 10) Border closures to camp owners?

See response to #7

- 11) What are other operators doing when guests are asking for their deposits back? It is difficult to keep their deposit, even though our policies (prior to Covid-19) say they would forfeit their deposit if they cancelled. Suggestions and wondering what others are doing

We have heard a mix from operators. Offers for refunds, vouchers, or changing their dates to the fall or beyond.

**Comment:**

We are asking them to convert to gift cards and/or hold the reservation for a later date.

- 12) What measures and plans are being formulated to recover from this? We're in it now - we are shut down - accept it. What is more important is to making the plan to thrive past this.

With respect to financial assistance: TIAO, along with its counterparts across the country, have been feeding industry input and expectations into TIAC. TIAC is the industry voice at the federal table. At the same time, TIAO is feeding that same input and expectations into the provincial government.

With respect to marketing: The Minister has shared that Destination Ontario is working on a phased in marketing plan for when we, as a province, are ready to turn the welcome sign back on. The approach will address the domestic market (Ontario), the Canadian market, and the international market - in phases that are appropriate. What the exact time frame for this is still unknown at this time.

- 13) If I am a camp owner who is not able to open, can I still hire staff for maintenance?

According to the province's Essential Services list, seasonal campgrounds and other accommodation providers are not considered essential services and therefore must be closed. If you have additional questions about maintenance of your business, please contact your local health authority.

14) How we can find out about your next meeting? Where do you post information about upcoming meetings?

Details for our next call will be posted on our website and social media channels. Those in our database will continue to get notices. As well, sharing it through our sector associations who will then forward it to their members.

**Thank you for participating. We look forward to speaking with you again soon.**

### **Additional Resources:**

- Stop the Spread Business Information Line - 1-888-444-3659 or <https://www.ontario.ca/page/stopping-spread-covid-19>
- Updates to Essential Workplaces: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/list-essential-workplaces>
- Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>
- Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan: Support for Canadians and Businesses: [https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2020/03/canadas-covid-19-economic-response-plan-support-for-canadians-and-businesses.html#Support for Businesses](https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2020/03/canadas-covid-19-economic-response-plan-support-for-canadians-and-businesses.html#Support%20for%20Businesses)
- Canadian Federation of Small Businesses (CFIB) - <https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/advocacy/federal-government-banks-small-business-relief-measures-covid-19>
- Contact Destination Ontario – [do.partnerships@ontario.ca](mailto:do.partnerships@ontario.ca)
- Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association - <http://www.orhma.com/>
- Ottawa/Gatineau Hotel Association (OGHA) – <https://ogha.ca/contact/>
- Greater Toronto Hotel Association (GTHA) - <http://www.gtha.com/>
- Travel Industry Act - [www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r20101?search=101%2f20](http://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r20101?search=101%2f20)
- World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTTC) - <https://www.wttc.org/members-hub/>
- Canadian Federation of Small Businesses (CFIB) - <https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/small-business-resources-dealing-covid-19>