
Higher Ground: A Tourism Sector Strategy

Amplifying the Alberta Advantage
for the Visitor Economy



FEBRUARY 2024

Alberta

Message from the Minister



Alberta is one of the most beautiful places on earth, and we have so much to offer in every corner of the province – from majestic natural landscapes, rich cultures as well as urban and rural centres that allow us to showcase the tremendous hospitality of our province to visitors from across the country and around the world.

As the Minister of Tourism and Sport, I'm proud to release this Tourism Sector Strategy, developed over many years and through numerous consultations with the tourism sector to ensure that it reflects the needs of Albertans and aligns with government's goal of growing the province's visitor economy to \$25 billion by 2035. This goal may sound ambitious, but I am confident in the ability of our government and our tourism partners to make it a reality.

This Strategy will guide our province's next steps to grow Alberta's visitor economy through five key pillars which include working across government ministries to develop products and experiences that are sustainable and will enable emerging destinations to shine; to address workforce needs, build capacity for travel and access, and uphold commitments to partner with Indigenous tourism operators to expand their offerings. Our actions will be guided by the principles of sustainable, community-driven economic growth.

Thank you to everyone who provided input into the development of this strategy. As the strategy is implemented, we will continue to engage and collaborate with Albertans, industry experts, entrepreneurs, business operators, municipalities, Indigenous communities, and tourism ministries across Canada.

By working together, we can ensure Alberta remains a THE place to live, work, and visit, and that tourism continues to play a leading role in Alberta's economic future.

Honourable Joseph Schow
Minister of Tourism and Sport

Policy Statement and Vision

Tourism is a major economic driver in our diversifying economy. It supports Alberta's economic growth, provides new opportunities for diversification and, in the spirit of reconciliation, offers pathways for Indigenous Peoples to share their heritage, stories and wisdom with Albertans and the world.

Through our collaborative and innovative tourism strategy, the Government of Alberta is committed to growing Alberta's visitor economy to \$25 billion in annual expenditures by 2035 and in the process — making Alberta THE place to invest, visit, work and live.

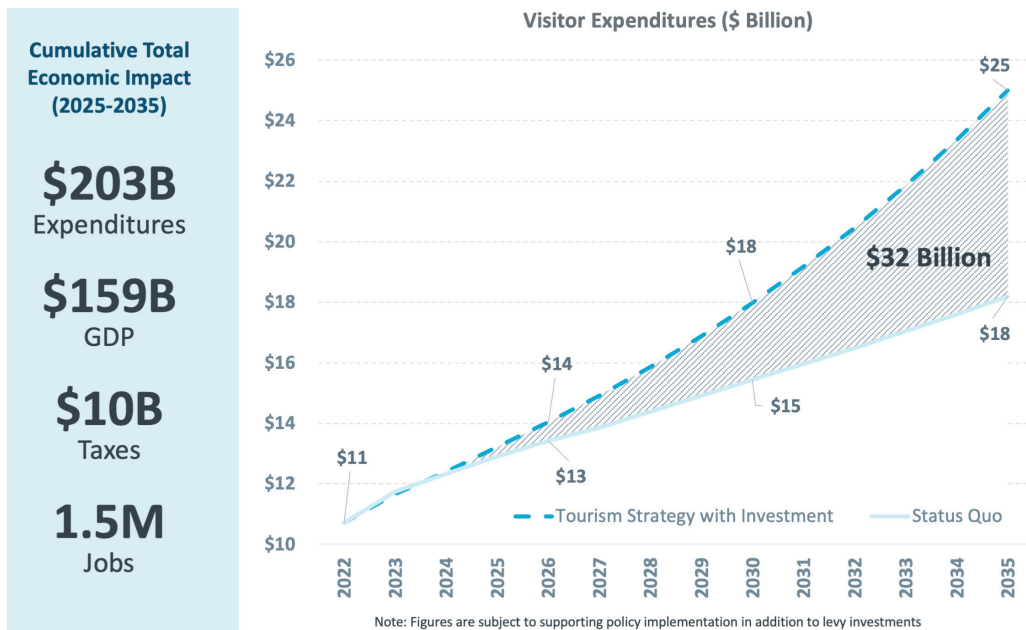
The Case for a Long-term Strategy: Benefiting Alberta's communities now and into the future

Tourism contributes significantly to Alberta's prosperity. In 2019 alone, travellers contributed \$10.1 billion to Alberta's economy and 2.5 per cent (\$8.4 billion) to the province's gross domestic product (GDP). Over 40 per cent of this revenue is "fresh," or export revenue, from the rest of Canada, the US and around the world. Tourism is also the largest service export sector in the province and supports 82,000 direct jobs.

Tourism is a primary employer of new and young Albertans and drives progress and vibrancy in rural communities. It boosts local economies, preserves cultures and languages, and raises international awareness of Alberta as a competitive destination to visit, play and work. A robust visitor economy contributes to a positive image of Alberta, supports cultural exchange, expands trade opportunities, drives foreign direct investment, and attracts students, workers and immigrants.

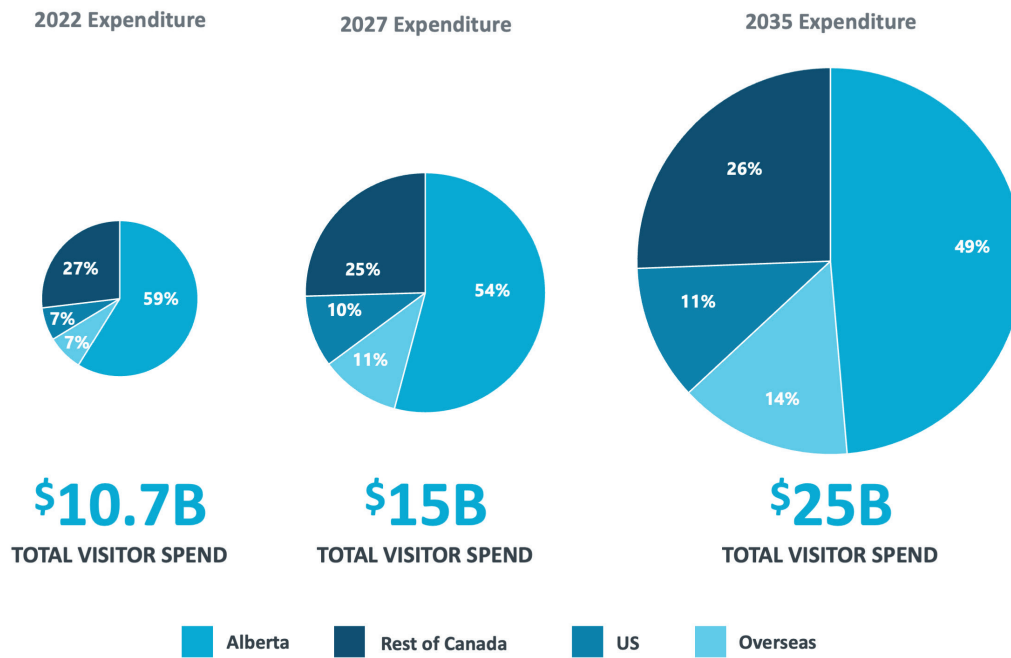
Here in Alberta, tourism represents incredible potential:

THE OPPORTUNITY



The time for action is now. The competition to attract tomorrow’s visitors, both domestic and international, intensifies by the day. This strategy outlines a bold, visionary approach to create new provincial mountain destinations, unleash tourism’s potential and accelerate responsible and sustainable growth of the industry.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN 5 AND 13 YEARS



Travellers who arrive at a destination by air spend more and stay longer than those who arrive by car. And since most US and overseas travellers fly to Alberta, they greatly impact our economy and generate increased tax revenue.

The benefits of tourism go beyond its economic contribution. Tourism plays a significant role in other areas Albertans care about, such as environmental protection and stewardship, civic pride, cultural awareness, and reconciliation.

- Sustainable and regenerative tourism, as a means of economic development in concert with local initiatives, develops pride of place and an improved sense of community in developing destinations.
- Authentic Indigenous tourism experiences present opportunities for sharing and celebrating culture between Albertans and with visitors, furthering understanding of, and support for, reconciliation.

Voices of the Industry: What we heard from tourism stakeholders

Over the past four years, we talked with hundreds of entrepreneurs, communities, and organizations throughout the province to ensure this strategy reflects the needs of our stakeholders. That feedback fell into five categories:

- **New/Enhanced Products:** Develop year-round products/experiences that attract visitors.
- **Improving Access:** Increase access to land for investment and robust transportation systems.
- **Competitive Marketing:** Invest in brand and marketing to compete globally.
- **Supportive Operating Environment:** Address challenges, ensure clear processes and create favourable conditions for growth.
- **Indigenous Tourism:** Partner with Indigenous communities to develop authentic Indigenous-led experiences.

The Strategy



Pillar 1: Leadership and Alignment



Objective:

To drive growth of the visitor economy through coordinated government action and an industry-leading, commercially focused Travel Alberta.

How?

1. Improve cross-ministry coordination and collaboration

- Establish a tourism senior leadership cross-ministry committee to provide direction and approval for key tourism projects and priorities.
- Establish a cross-ministry Implementation working group to ensure implementation of the strategy moving forward.

2. Foster an industry-leading, commercially focused Travel Alberta, capable of:

- Competitive marketing to grow US and international opportunities;
- Developing and enhancing rural tourism marketing and development initiatives;
- Expanding air access into and connectivity throughout the province; and
- Investing in Indigenous tourism and Indigenous-owned product development.

3. Consumer protection regarding destination fee governance

- Develop a best practice governance approach to ensure predictable and stable funding for the visitor economy.
- Ensure consumers are protected and destination organizations are supported through the transparent collection of local destination marketing fees.



Pillar 2: Competitive Product



Objective:

Drive increased private capital for world-class, year-round nature-based tourism experiences, creating sustainable economic opportunities and increasing tourism revenues across the province.

How?

- 1. Create an all-season, year-round resort development policy**
 - Establish all-season resort development zones and expand current seasonal recreational areas to all-season resorts.
- 2. Institute clear and commercially viable land use policies**
 - Create and implement supportive policies, processes and timelines for tourism.
- 3. Develop new products and experiences**
 - Invest in high-demand products throughout the province, using market-based intelligence.
- 4. Increase private sector investment**
 - Work collaboratively with partners and the private sector to improve access to capital.



Pillar 3: People and Careers



Objective:

Develop and implement policies that address short- and long-term labour challenges for employers, enabling communities to retain and attract residents.

How?

1. Address immediate workforce and labour challenges

- Develop a Tourism and Hospitality Stream as part of the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program.
- Work with private sector partners and industry associations to address immediate needs, including skills and training, immigration, workforce housing, and transportation.

2. Long-term training and career development

- Work with industry to design training and apprenticeship programs to develop skills, knowledge, and competencies for careers in tourism and hospitality.



Pillar 4: Expand Access



Objective:

Ensure visitors have safe, affordable and convenient access to and throughout Alberta, in all seasons.

How?

1. Support commercial aviation connectivity

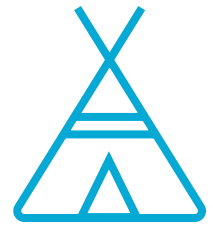
- Build flight capacity and frequency from target international markets to Alberta through strategic air access investments.
- Increase air access to smaller community airports across the province.
- Address federal aviation policies impacting access and affordability.

2. Improve safe access to destinations across the province

- Introduce high-priority tourism infrastructure and destination needs into provincial road network and capital planning processes.



Pillar 5: Indigenous Tourism



Objective:

Support Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs to deliver authentic experiences and share stories of their lands, cultures and peoples.

How?

1. Invest in Indigenous entrepreneurs and operators

- Support Indigenous Tourism Alberta's strategic framework.
- Foster Indigenous-led partnerships for product and experience development.
- Collaborate with Indigenous focused economic development organizations to include tourism in future investments.



Measuring Success: Going farther, together

The Government of Alberta, Travel Alberta, tourism industry partners, Indigenous communities, and entrepreneurs across the province will be integral in the success of this strategy. Business plans and annual reports for the Ministry of Tourism and Sport and Travel Alberta will outline goals, metrics and performance against this strategy.



