

PEI Tourism Tactical Action Plan: Stimulating Demand & Protecting Supply (Winter/Spring 2020/2021)

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The information and data found in this report are current as of the date of submission to TPEI and subject to change given market forces and external variables.

November 24, 2020



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COVID-19 continues to deal an unprecedented blow to the tourism industry.

There has been some economic tourism activity on the Island, but efforts of tourism operators, whether accommodations providers, tour guides, recreational facilities, food and beverage establishments, and others will fall well short of 2020 expectations.

To make matters more challenging, the Atlantic Canadian provincial governments continue to follow a conservative approach to reopen borders beyond the Atlantic Canada bubble which will continue to impact the potential to visit the Island beyond Atlantic Canada.

With the pandemic continuing to afflict destinations and little sign of when it will end or what the tourism landscape will look like in its wake, we recommend a short-term, approach to identify and execute tactical actions to support PEI's tourism industry - namely to protect tourism supply and identify and then develop pockets of tourism where possible (e.g., sports tourism and soft adventure tourism) to appeal to the segment of Canadians most likely to travel during this period.

SECTION 1:

PEI Winter/Spring 2020/2021 Tourism Overview

The purpose of this document is to provide the guidance to support tourism objectives in PEI for the winter/spring 2020/2021 season.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

- At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, PEI endeavoured to address its impact by developing and implementing the COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Strategy that focused on supporting the tourism industry through the summer of 2020, until further detail about the outcome of the pandemic became known.
- Despite some bright spots, the summer season heavily impacted tourism businesses in PEI due to continued restrictions imposed by the preponderance of the virus in provinces outside the Atlantic bubble and the US. As of the time of this report, PEI remains within the bubble, the third of six stages to full tourism (see Appendix for a description of the six stages to tourism resumption).
- As PEI emerges from the summer season and prepares for the winter, and eventually spring, there is little sign of the end of the pandemic, much less what form tourism will take.
- TPEI leadership proposes a season by season approach to support immediate tourism needs, primarily to protect supply and stimulate demand, until future tourism opportunities can be reasonably assessed and planned for.
- The purpose of this document is to provide strategic continuity and the tactical guidance to support tourism objectives in PEI for the winter/spring 2020/2021 season within plausible scenarios for potential visitors.
- We expect the next strategic framework and tactical action plan to be prepared in December 2020 to prepare for summer 2021. At that time, the PEI tourism steering committee and ACOA, led by TPEI leadership, will determine whether a longer-term tourism strategy ought to be developed to ensure continuity of PEI's tourism potential.

TPEI is executing the scope outlined in this report in two “sprints”: the initial one for the winter/spring 2020/2021; and the next in December 2020* for Summer 2021.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK & TACTICAL ACTION PLAN APPROACH PER “SPRINT”



Based on current challenges and opportunities, PEI’s ultimate objective should be to protect the tourism supply during winter/spring 2020/2021.

WINTER/SPRING 2020/2021 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK & TACTICAL THEMES + ACTIONS

01

BOOST LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Actions:

1. Continuous TPEI leadership and industry communication
2. Review and lobby for policies/regulations supporting PEI tourism (including labour policies)

Outcome

Outline options to protect supply and stimulate demand, and keep key stakeholders apprised of actions

02

STIMULATE DEMAND

Actions:

1. Winter/spring market potential research (e.g., target markets, sport tourism, meetings & conventions, etc.)
2. Development and/or enhancement of enticing winter/spring products (e.g. themed programs) with community and business involvement
3. Atlantic bubble campaign
4. Greater region/domestic campaign prep

Outcome

Maximize revenue through marketing programs to build tourism experiences

Tactical actions are further detailed in following section.

03

PROTECT SUPPLY

Actions:

1. Operator inventory/status
2. Tourism Small-to-Medium Enterprise (SME) support
3. Tourism standards and certification

Outcome

Support operators and tourism industry to remaining competitive and viable for full recovery post-COVID-19

Each proposed tactical action is set against a timeline depending on prioritization for its completion based on need, impact and ease of implementation.

WINTER/SPRING 2020/2021 TACTICAL ACTION PLAN

	Next 1 Month	Next 2 Months	Next 3-4 Months
1. BOOST LEADERSHIP SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous TPEI leadership and industry communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and lobby for policies/regulations supporting PEI tourism 	
2. STIMULATE DEMAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Winter/spring market potential research (e.g., target markets, sport tourism, meetings & conventions, etc.) Development and/or enhancement of enticing winter/spring products with community and business involvement Atlantic bubble campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater region/domestic campaign prep 	
3. PROTECT SUPPLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operator inventory/status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Small-to-Medium Enterprise (SME) support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism standards and certification

SECTION 2:

PEI Winter/Spring 2020/2021
Tourism Tactical Action Plan

01. BOOST LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

TACTICAL ACTION 01: CONTINUOUS TPEI LEADERSHIP AND INDUSTRY COMMUNICATION

Description	Timeframe/Trigger
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Especially during times of crisis, no role is more important than that of leadership. In the travel and tourism industry Effective leadership understands the industry's circumstances and challenges, and finds ways to engage and motivate tourism stakeholders, clearly and thoroughly communicating important new paths and information. PEI has already taken the steps to address the pandemic by developing a COVID-19 Recovery Strategy (June 2020), as well as to undertake the initiative to develop a strategic framework and tactical action plan to pave a path for the Island's tourism future by developing a short-term approach until a post-COVID-19 reality becomes evident. This strategic framework and tactical action plan focuses on boosting leadership, stimulating demand and protecting supply for the winter/spring 2020/2021 season. The strategic framework and tactical action plan for Spring 2021 will be developed in December 2020. Through the development of this strategic framework and tactical action plan for the winter/spring 2020/2021 season, TPEI has already taken the steps to engage key industry stakeholders. This tactical action requires that TPEI and partners such as TIAPEI, and the RTAs/DMOs continue to demonstrate leadership by carrying on its engagement with industry stakeholders including operators, food and beverage, accommodations, attractions, and others. Additionally, it is incumbent on TPEI to continuously communicate through its most effective channels with all industry stakeholders the actions that it is taking to address perceptions around winter/spring season tourism and other challenges as well as opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within 1 month of strategy approval/ ongoing
	Responsible
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TPEI (lead) TIAPEI (support) RTAs/DMOs (support)
	Outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of PEI winter/spring 2020/2021 tourism strategy Continuous communication of PEI tourism actions and achievements

01. BOOST LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

TACTICAL ACTION 02: REVIEW AND LOBBY FOR POLICIES/REGULATIONS SUPPORTING PEI TOURISM

Description	Timeframe/Trigger	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the last several months, policies and regulations to address the COVID-19 pandemic have been created, modified or removed by the PEI, Atlantic region, Federal and international governments. Additionally, certain policies and regulations created in 2019 or prior may no longer have the effect initially intended. While policies/regulations may have been created to protect citizens from the impacts of the COVID-19 virus, or in support of the industry prior to 2020, many policies/regulations may not have been developed with a post-COVID view to enable SMEs, particularly in the travel and tourism industry, and specifically for a winter/spring tourism season. This tactical action requires that TPEI assess current governmental policies and regulations to identify those that can be improved or streamlined to support small and medium size tourism businesses. For example, around funding to promote shoulder/winter season tourism, wage subsidy programs, and entry restrictions to identified niche markets. This tactical action further suggests that TPEI and its key partners will continue to have discussions with the federal government regarding assistance and relief programs, and report policy and regulation review findings and recommendation to local government to lobby them to undertake decisions that support PEI tourism businesses in the short and long-term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within 2 months of strategy approval 	
	<th data-bbox="1803 639 2453 701">Responsible</th> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TPEI (lead) 	Responsible
	<th data-bbox="1803 949 2453 1011">Outcomes</th> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations for improvement of PEI policy and regulation Lobbying effort to address policies and/or regulations recommendations 	Outcomes

02. STIMULATE DEMAND

TACTICAL ACTION 01: OPPORTUNISTIC MARKET RESEARCH

Description

- Given the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an opportunity for PEI to enhance engagement or support the pursuit of new relationships to target:
 - Sports teams and enthusiasts
 - Meetings and conventions organizers
 - Leisure market in Atlantic Canada
- Prior to immediately engaging with these potential markets, PEI should conduct research using existing available tools (e.g., Environics, sentiment research, and other) to gain a better understanding of potential visitors, and their behaviours and desires to ensure PEI can offer experiences they are seeking and attract them through effective marketing campaigns.
- While traditional market research such as surveys can be used, they are both time-consuming and costly. In depth digital listening can be a cost-effective way to provide actionable data quickly.
- Additionally, TPEI should make insights accessible to all tourism partners to evaluate opportunities and make the right business decisions.

Timeframe/Trigger

- Within 1 month of strategy approval

Responsible

- TPEI (lead)

Outcomes

- Market intelligence on “new” potential markets
- Research accessibility to tourism stakeholders

02. STIMULATE DEMAND

TACTICAL ACTION 02: DEVELOPMENT AND/OR ENHANCEMENT OF ENTICING WINTER/SPRING PRODUCTS WITH COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Description

- Armed with potential markets research collected in Theme 02, Tactical Action 01, operators can better understand the opportunities they have to amplify product, experiences and packages for the winter/spring or develop new products and experiences altogether.
- This tactical action focuses on working with operators, or groups of operators, across PEI, in both urban centers and rural communities to enhance or develop enticing winter/spring tourism products, experiences and packages that stimulate demand.
- Development of winter/spring products, experiences and packaging may include generating island-wide monthly themes (e.g., Christmas), involvement of rural communities and players beyond tourism like artists, culinary specialists, and other non-tourism businesses, and development of incentives to entice the creation of new food, music, craft brewery, etc. events.
- Product and experience enhancements or new opportunity examples include:
 - A Christmas dinner or holiday lights experience (e.g., <https://www.hersheypark.com/explore-the-park/christmas.php> or <https://lightsonstratford.ca/>)
 - Investment in winter/spring infrastructure such as enhancing facilities/trails for snowshoeing or cross-country skiing
 - Winterized trails (see <https://www.visitingvienna.com/entertainment/sport/wiener-eistraum/>)
 - Development of a winter/spring themed culinary festival potentially focusing on something uniquely PEI: (in this example, the potato: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-11/how-to-prepare-for-a-coronavirus-winter?mc_cid=48cac0e2c0&mc_eid=a03bf5db2c)

Timeframe/Trigger

- Within 1 month of strategy approval

Responsible

- TPEI (lead)
- RTAs/DMOs (support)
- Regional product development working groups (support)

Outcomes

- Amplification/development of new winter/spring products and experiences

02. STIMULATE DEMAND

TACTICAL ACTION 03: ATLANTIC BUBBLE CAMPAIGNS

Description

- Historically, while travellers to PEI visited from Ontario, Quebec and other parts of Canada and the US with some international visitation, the vast majority of travellers to PEI visited from the Atlantic Canada region.
- Focusing marketing campaigns on targeted markets as defined by research addressed in Theme 02, Tactical Action 01, PEI may be able to entice those travellers in Atlantic Canada to stay longer, with more family members or friends, and spend more.
- This tactical action revolves around development of an integrated campaign, armed with the research conducted in Theme 02, Tactical Action 01, aimed at specific aimed at identified target areas within the Atlantic region', leveraging appropriate messaging, channels and influencers where necessary.

Timeframe/Trigger

- Within 1 month of strategy approval

Responsible

- TPEI (lead)

Outcomes

- 2-3 new Atlantic region campaigns

02. STIMULATE DEMAND

TACTICAL ACTION 04: GREATER REGION/DOMESTIC CAMPAIGNS PREP

Description

- After Atlantic Canada, most visitors arrived from regional destinations such as Quebec and Ontario. However, while travellers from these places may include targeted markets as defined by research addressed in Theme 02, Tactical Action 01.
- These campaigns should be developed for eventual launch when restrictions ease and travel channels become more widely accessible.

Timeframe/Trigger

- Within 2 months of strategy approval

Responsible

- TPEI (lead)

Outcomes

- Preparation of 1-2 new greater regional campaigns

03. PROTECT SUPPLY

TACTICAL ACTION 01: OPERATOR INVENTORY/STATUS

Description

- While some tourism operators in PEI have had a successful summer and are planning to continue to conduct business through the winter/spring, others have been less successful and have decided to shutter their businesses until the next summer season, and yet others who have had to permanently stop operations.
- Without an adequate understanding on the status of tourism stakeholders across the Island, it is difficult to create packages that will entice target markets and provide the support needed to businesses to maximize future opportunities.
- For this tactical action, TPEI must work with its key partners (TIAPEI and RTAs/DMOs) across the Island to update the operator inventory and their status for operation in the winter/spring tourism season.

Timeframe/Trigger

- Within 1 month of strategy approval

Responsible

- TPEI (lead)
- TIAPEI (support)
- RTAs/DMOs (support)

Outcomes

- Listing of operators and impact that COVID has had on their business

03. PROTECT SUPPLY

TACTICAL ACTION 03: TOURISM SMALL-TO-MEDIUM ENTERPRISE (SME) SUPPORT

Description

- The small and medium size tourism enterprises (SMEs) are the bedrock of the tourism industry in PEI. With the intelligence garnered from the operator inventory/status (Theme 03, Tactical Action 01), along with independent research conducted to directly understand the challenges (and opportunities) that SMEs face, PEI will be able to develop programs and tools to ensure that those businesses that are the most vulnerable, have the ability to continue their businesses into the winter/spring season and beyond.
- The first step in this tactical action is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges that SMEs are facing to inform a program gap analysis.
- With that knowledge, PEI should then develop the programs and tools that would best support SMEs in developing strategies to address operational impacts. Programs and tools may include but are not limited to:
 - Frameworks to support business strategy, financing, operations, etc.
 - Toolkits to provide SMEs with tools to address specific pain points within their businesses
 - Mentorship program to assist with operator adaptation and recovery
 - Creation of an SME support group or buddy system for SMEs to team up and address challenges together
 - Networking opportunities for SMEs to work together to develop solutions to address their most pressing needs

Timeframe/Trigger

- Within 1 month of strategy approval

Responsible

- TPEI (lead)

Outcomes

- Thorough understanding of SME challenges due to COVID-19
- Programs and tools to support SME businesses

03. PROTECT SUPPLY

TACTICAL ACTION 02: TOURISM STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION

Description

- In the PEI COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Strategy (June 2020), leadership identified the development of post-COVID-19 standards and certifications as a priority to improve traveller and resident confidence in PEI's tourism products and experiences, as well as to leverage it as a promotional tool in messaging to target markets interested in visiting PEI.
- While the project to develop travel and tourism standards and certifications has already begun, this tactical action reinforces the need to develop such a program prior to the end of 2020 in order to hit the ground running in 2021 - when it is expected that global authorities will begin to control the virus in a manageable way. In this context, the program's objectives should be to produce:
 - A 'made for PEI' certification program that leverages best-practice travel and tourism certification standards including from international destinations and organizations
 - A program that meets or exceeds PEI's public health and safety policies, but is grounded in Canadian Federal health and safety guidelines
 - A program that is simple to understand, adopt and communicate by both industry, residents and travel consumers

Timeframe/Trigger

- Within 3-4 months of strategy approval

Responsible

- TPEI (lead)
- TIAPEI (support)
- RTAs/DMOs (support)

Outcomes

- Development of a standards and certification program
- Implementation of the standards and certification program

“It’s delightful when
your imaginations
come true, isn’t it?”

Appendix

Engagement with PEI stakeholders informed the PEI winter/spring tourism strategic framework and tactical action plan.

CHALLENGES IMPACTING TOURISM IN THE WINTER/SPRING OF 2020/2021*



PRODUCT AVAILABILITY

Lack of market-ready winter-specific products and “must attend” events and activities



OPERATOR PERCEPTIONS

View of PEI as a leisure summer destination



STAKEHOLDER CONFIDENCE

Unknown nature of COVID-19 and timeline for further re-opening provincial and national borders



OPERATOR LIQUIDITY

Financial concern about ability to re-open



COVID-19 ADAPTATION

Restaurant, accommodation, festival, events, meetings and conventions, and sports tourism regulations



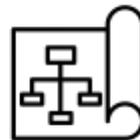
MARKETING CHALLENGES

- Geographic market restrictions
- Local tourism advocacy
- Competition and lack of compelling unique winter selling proposition (USP)



LABOUR GAPS

Increasing challenge to fill positions during winter and spring



PLANNING ENVIRONMENT

Difficulty planning strategically and long-term



ACCESSIBILITY

Severe restriction of air accessibility and closure of ferries in winter (only accessible by bridge - subject to weather)

Engagement with PEI stakeholders informed the PEI winter/spring tourism strategic framework and tactical action plan (continued).

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE TOURISM IN WINTER/SPRING 2020/2021*



SPORTS TOURISM

Potential to capitalize on sports tourism with Charlottetown and Summerside already recognized as successful sporting hosts



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- New and/or enhanced Christmas-related product
- Sport tourism products and experiences
- Local winter culinary themed festival
- Support and enhancement of the Jack Frost festival
- Craft alcohol-themed campaign
- Winter/spring season monthly themes that bring together urban and rural communities



PROMOTION & PACKAGING

- Focus on staycation model (“Activate our Island”) and visitors within the bubble and create winter packages
- The Canada Food Island Gift Card program
- Hosting meetings and small regional conventions
- Contesting to generate winter leisure tourism activity



NON-TRADITIONAL NICHE MARKETS

- Sports teams and enthusiasts
- Winter leisure travelers
- Family winter vacation and march break



MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

- Targeted sport tourism and niche markets campaigns
- Hosting media like ET Canada or CTV morning live to showcase PEI winter product
- Messaging around being a safe travel alternative
- Build winter tourism assets (e.g., video/photo)
- Continued operator education



OPERATOR SUPPORT

- Lobby government for stimulus funds to promote meetings and conventions, tradeshow, sport tourism and incentive travel in the shoulder/winter season (e.g. winterizing businesses not originally built for winter, plowed parking lots, heating, etc.)
- Lobby government to extend wage subsidy program (especially with operators that employ staff in shoulder/winter seasons)
- Lobby government to waive entry restrictions to identified niche markets

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