



# THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT TOURISM

ACTION PLAN

FOR RESPONSIBLE

AND SUSTAINABLE

TOURISM

2020-2025

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For more information:

Direction des communications  
du ministère du Tourisme  
4e étage, secteur 400  
900, Boulevard René-Lévesque Est  
Québec (Québec) QC G1R 2B5

Telephone: 418-643-5959

Toll free: 1-800-482-2433

Fax: 418-643-8499

Email: [communications.ministeredutourisme@tourisme.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:communications.ministeredutourisme@tourisme.gouv.qc.ca)

Website: [Quebec.ca](http://Quebec.ca)

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# Message from the Minister



Let's say it from the outset: the time has come to accelerate our action on sustainable development. The facts speak for themselves. Our industry is already dealing with new realities caused by climate change, and people all over the world are sensitive to environmental and climate issues. Furthermore, reflecting changes in values, tourist clienteles increasingly are turning to human-scaled experiences, ever more in harmony with the communities visited.

The situation we are currently facing – the COVID-19 crisis – can serve as a springboard to revive the tourism industry on even more responsible and sustainable bases in Québec.

Our destination has all the necessary assets to stand out and become an international model of responsible and sustainable tourism. Indeed, Québec has no reason to envy other destinations like Scandinavia, Australia or New Zealand, which rank among the leaders in the field. We have natural riches. Our landscapes are breathtaking. We celebrate and support our culture. We care about territorial development driven by the local stakeholders. And we can count on increasingly advanced expertise and knowhow.

With the following action plan, we provide leverage that will allow us to progress coherently and in concert, so that Québec takes its place among the world's great responsible and sustainable tourist destinations.

The measures we propose will contribute to optimize the beneficial effects of tourism for the regions, cities and local and Indigenous communities. They also seek to minimize the negative impacts of tourism on the environment for the present and future generations.

We are also pursuing the objective of ensuring a prosperous future for tourism businesses, by stimulating innovation and favouring their competitiveness and our destination's sustainability and attractiveness.

This is a shared responsibility between the traveller and the destination, which ultimately will benefit all of our communities. They will benefit, in several regards, from this responsible and environmentally respectful economic change of direction.

I consider that an action plan for responsible and sustainable tourism is essential. I am therefore proud of the mobilization that is beginning to make Québec a destination recognized worldwide for its proactivity and sustainable tourism.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CP', located above the printed name of the Minister.

**The Minister of Tourism,  
Caroline Proulx**

Québec, February 2021

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# A vision

## Setting a course for the Québec of tomorrow: a leader in responsible and sustainable tourism

- A grand natural setting, protected and enhanced by **ecotourism**.
- Rethinking travel, making it **ecologically friendlier** and **healthier**.
- **Engaged communities** that proudly showcase their distinctive heritage and knowhow and take advantage of the economic and social benefits of tourist activity.
- Businesses recognized for their **exemplary and innovative practices** in sustainable tourism.
- **Accountable tourists** who care about their footprint on the environments visited.



## Sustainable tourism

environmentally viable in the long term, and socially and ethically fair.

## Responsible tourism

Tourism in the context of which the tourist avoids committing acts that could have negative effects on the natural and human environment of the places visited.

*Office québécois  
de la langue française*



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# A change of direction that benefits everyone

Responsible and sustainable tourism is becoming increasingly important around the world. Far from a mere trend, the tourism of tomorrow is taking shape – a tourism with practices even more respectful of the environment, ever closer to communities and synonymous with reciprocity – with visitors, citizens and local economic activity, among others.

If this change of direction looks inevitable, this is because it has not only become vital from an environmental point of view, but is also very profitable, for Québec society as a whole.

## An opportunity for better redeployment and innovation

While the pandemic hit the tourism industry hard, and while the needs for support and guidance are present and important, this historical situation also represents an opportunity to review the ways we do things.

Québec also has exceptional comparative advantages that make it a global reference in responsible and sustainable tourism. In addition to its countless natural and cultural riches, Québec benefits from dynamic entrepreneurs, increasingly advanced expertise and knowhow in environmental and sustainable development matters, and tourism associations that can guide businesses in this transition.

## **QUÉBEC'S ASSETS**

### **Québec nature is:**

- Over 4000 protected areas, totalling more than 250 000 km<sup>2</sup> of preserved natural settings
- 27 Québec national parks, 1 Québec and Canadian marine park and more than 180 large regional and municipal parks
- 796 vertebrate species, including 95 mammal species and 456 bird species
- A river 1100 kilometres long, tens of thousands of rivers and 3.6 million freshwater bodies
- 12 000 kilometres of bicycle paths
- Unique geological phenomena, capes, cliffs and mountains of the greatest diversity
- A vast and diverse northern territory

### **Québec is also a memorable human experience:**

- Regions with distinctive landscapes, flavours and histories
- 11 Indigenous nations with a wealth of lessons and cultures to share
- A world-renowned cultural scene

### **Entrepreneurial Québec in tourism is:**

- Over 30 000 tourism-related businesses
- 33 regional and sectoral tourism associations
- About 420 000 workers in the sectors associated with tourism in 2019
- \$16.4 billion spent by 35.9 million tourists who visited Québec in 2019
- Well established workforce training establishments
- A fast-growing innovation ecosystem

## For a competitive industry in a changing world

Given a clientele increasingly concerned about the environment and seeking authentic experiences, projecting the image of a responsible and sustainable tourist destination becomes a pledge of attractiveness and leadership. Québec must be able to stand out as an avant-garde destination, respectful of the communities visited and its environment, and innovative in the ways it enhances and preserves its natural and cultural heritage.

For businesses, this is an opportunity to act now, make a change of direction that has become inevitable and benefit from the competitive advantages this creates. It is also increasingly recognized that the cost of inaction, particularly in adapting to climate change, will be much higher in the long term than the cost of taking action starting now. It is likely that businesses that choose to be proactive will emerge as winners.



# A structuring action plan

This action plan seeks to stimulate and support the adoption of innovative and sustainable practices by businesses and other key stakeholders in the tourism sector, in order to accelerate the transition to responsible and sustainable tourism. In phase with the government policy directions and international trends, this plan is built around the following five lines of intervention:

1. Support the transition to a circular economy
2. Favour sustainable means of transportation
3. Develop nature and adventure tourism in an ecotourism approach
4. Promote tourism that benefits individuals and respects communities
5. Support businesses in adaptation and innovation regarding climate change

This plan capitalizes on structuring measures that favour mobilization and collaboration of the tourism industry's different stakeholders. It will contribute to consolidating the position of the Québec tourism industry of tomorrow and making it a dynamic and innovative economic sector, profitable for all regions, from Gaspésie to Nord-du-Québec, including all the cities and communities that make the province a unique destination.

## Engagement and collaboration: the conditions for success

The success of this change of direction to responsible and sustainable tourism notably depends on the engagement and collaboration of the partners, the tourism businesses and the different clienteles. The mobilization of all the players in the tourism sector is essential to accelerate the deployment of best practices.

The Ministère du Tourisme has a key role to play in the development and promotion of responsible and sustainable tourism in Québec by adopting its programs and policy directions, and by stimulating the partnership of the stakeholders associated with it. The tourism associations, strongly rooted in the realities of the different regions and economic sectors, can make a major contribution to the mobilization of businesses and other key players, and to the deployment of adapted solutions. The regions, cities, local communities and Indigenous communities are also essential stakeholders, particularly to ensure the consistency of tourism development with their vision of the territory and thus have them benefit from the full potential of this activity as a vector of socioeconomic dynamism.



We should also note that the engagement of other government departments and bodies is fundamental and that interdepartmental collaboration is crucial, particularly to ensure sharing of information and the coherence of government action.

Finally, a skilled workforce and stimulating, rewarding, quality jobs are an integral part of the tourism of tomorrow. It is therefore essential to work closely with the partners and universities that develop the training and strengthen the workforce's competencies.



# COLLABORATION COMMITMENT

## LINES OF INTERVENTION

### LINE 1

## Support the transition to a circular economy

#### The circular economy

is defined as a “system of production, exchange and consumption that seeks to optimize the use of resources at every stage of the lifecycle of goods or services, in a circular logic, while reducing the environmental footprint and contributing to the welfare of individuals and communities”.

*Source: Pôle québécois de concertation sur l'économie circulaire.*

The integration of the circular economy concept into the tourism industry's practices represents an opportunity to make optimum use of resources and minimize the environmental impacts, while favouring local procurement. The COVID-19 crisis shed light on the importance of increasing local procurement for production of goods and services, both to improve the security of supply and contribute to the economic and social vitality of communities. Furthermore, this circular economy concept integrates into a more comprehensive approach of corporate social responsibility, which presents many advantages for businesses, including better risk management, a reduction of operating costs and greater attractiveness for labour.

#### Stimulation of innovation and adoption of responsible practices

In the tourism sector, there are multiple circular economy perspectives: green buildings, optimum water management, purchasing policy that favours local, reconditioned, recycled or ecologically designed products, mutualization of equipment and sharing of goods between businesses, etc. By supporting integration of circular economy processes and strengthening corporate social responsibility in tourism, the Ministère du Tourisme can stimulate innovation and creation of new sustainable business modules that will have added value for the clientele and for local economic development. The Ministère therefore must ensure that its policy directions, intervention priorities and funding programs reflect this intention, while ensuring that the businesses can be supported in their approaches, whether this involves improving the ways things are done or creating technological solutions.



## A recognized destination for leadership of its businesses

Supporting the industry in its transition to the circular economy, and in improving its performance in corporate social responsibility, contributes to the attractiveness of the destination to current and potential clienteles, increasingly aware of environmental and social questions. This also allows creation of fertile ground for multipartite collaborations on issues such as waste management. In addition, many businesses stand out for their sustainable business model, their innovative practices or the rigorous certifications they obtain. This leadership accelerates the transition to responsible and sustainable tourism. It is therefore wise to put these inspiring initiatives in the spotlight and extend their influence in the industry.

### Line 1 – Objectives and measures

#### BUDGET 2020-2025: \$6 M

##### **OBJECTIVE 1.1** | Support the development of responsible and sustainable tourism products and businesses

**1.1.1** Under the government program addressing the tourism industry, introduce criteria allowing improvement or deployment of funding that encourages responsible practices.

**1.1.2** Support businesses in the implementation of eco-responsible business practices and clean technologies.

##### **OBJECTIVE 1.2** | Stimulate the development and deployment of innovative environmental solutions in the tourism sector

**1.2.1** Support an “innovation incubator and opportunity accelerator approach in sustainable tourism”.

##### **OBJECTIVE 1.3** | Build an eco-responsible reputation for the destination

**1.3.1** Enhance the value of businesses that stand out in responsible and sustainable tourism.

**1.3.2** Support the relevant certification initiatives in the tourism sector.

**1.3.3** In collaboration with the partner, support the development of the agrotourism and gourmet tourism offering.



## LINE 2

### Favour sustainable means of transportation

Travel is an integral part of the tourist experience. Visitors make choices, both in their means of transportation and their route, that modulate the way they experience, see and feel the destination and its many facets. Transportation can even become a tourism experience in itself. For example, tourists can consider bicycle excursions or a self-guided architectural walking tour.

The trend of Québec society toward active and public transportation offers the tourism industry an opportunity to stand out and be in the forefront of the movement for more sustainable mobility.

#### Active, public or electric transportation: choices facilitated for tourists

Reducing the ecological footprint of transportation is a shared concern. At the same time, the questions of access to territories remain an issue for several regions of Québec, particularly regarding tourism. Over the next few years, many actions will be carried out to achieve the ambitious objectives Québec has adopted for sustainable mobility and transportation electrification. This represents an excellent opportunity for the tourism industry to rethink tourist travel and invest in the development of sustainable modes of transportation.

The Ministère will work with its partners to favour options that will allow travellers to minimize the environmental impacts of their trips, and to facilitate the discovery of Québec by electric transportation.

To be sustainable, mobility must be efficient, safe, permanent, equitable, integrated into the environment and compatible with human health and ecosystems. Sustainable mobility limits consumption of space and resources, provides and facilitates access, favours economic dynamism, is socially responsible and respects the integrity of the environment.

Source: Sustainable Mobility Policy  
– 2030, Gouvernement du Québec

## Line 2 – Objectives and measures

### BUDGET 2020-2025: \$7.5 M

#### **OBJECTIVE 2.1** | Promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions linked to tourist travel

**2.1.1** Deploy incentives so that tour operators and travel agencies propose a tourism offering with a low carbon footprint.

**2.1.2** In collaboration with the regions, the tourist destinations and the transportation companies, promote the use of active and public transportation by tourists.

#### **OBJECTIVE 2.2** | Encourage the development of tourist routes by electric transportation

**2.2.1** Support the partners in the establishment of tourist routes by electric transportation (bicycle, car, bus) and installation of charging stations along these routes complementary to the existing government programs.



## **LINE 3**

### **Develop nature and adventure tourism in an ecotourism approach**

Given the growing attraction of natural spaces and the growing demand for responsible and sustainable destinations and practices, ecotourism stands out as a promising approach. It is also one of the segments of the tourism industry that shows the most interesting growth over the past twenty years. Because it emphasizes preservation of nature and the local heritage, the ecotourism approach can strengthen the viability of the tourism sector, while contributing to the vitality and welfare of the host communities.

#### **Nature and adventure tourism that respects the environment**

Like the other types of tourism, if it is not developed, managed and practiced wisely, nature and adventure tourism can result in major environmental impacts: degradation of the natural landscapes, consequences for wildlife species and biodiversity, pollution of watercourses and shorelines, etc. This is why it is important to strengthen this sector's good practices by applying the principles of ecotourism both within businesses and with tourists.

#### **Nature in Québec, an asset to enhance and preserve**

When enhanced while remaining adequately protected, natural settings can become a precious source of socioeconomic development for regions and communities, both for present and future generations. In addition, many natural spaces are associated with a rich cultural heritage, particularly due to the historical presence of local and Indigenous communities. It is therefore important to put these measures in place to preserve and enhance these settings.

## Line 3 – Objectives and measures

**BUDGET 2020-2025: \$1.5 M**

**OBJECTIVE 3.1 | Strengthen the practice of ecotourism in Québec**

**3.1.1** Continue working with the partners to make businesses and clientele aware of the best practices in ecotourism.

**OBJECTIVE 3.2 | Enhance and preserve nature and its biodiversity thanks to tourism in concert with the host communities and the Indigenous peoples**

**3.2.1** Establish partnerships with the key stakeholders to showcase the natural settings, including the protected areas of Québec, for tourism purposes.

**3.2.2** Document and publicize the economic potential of natural settings in a tourism development perspective.

**3.2.3** Support the preservation of natural spaces for tourism purposes.



## LINE 4

### Promote tourism that benefits individuals and respects communities

An undeniable source of economic development and diversity, the growth of tourism can sometimes pose challenges related to social acceptability pressure on natural resources and respect for the local natural and cultural heritage. However, these challenges can be addressed. Sometimes it is enough to think of tourism in a different way.

#### Tourism that is part of the DNA of communities

The involvement of communities in planning and management of tourism, as well as the collaboration and concerted action of the stakeholders, are two recognized approaches that can maximize the economic, social and environmental advantages of tourism for communities. In particular, these approaches make it possible to improve integration of tourism into the local and regional economies, enhance the natural and cultural heritage of local and Indigenous communities, and favour an equitable distribution of the positive effects of tourism. It is therefore important to have a better understanding of the impact of tourism on the destinations, and then support the deployment of participatory and multipartite approaches for more sustainable management of destinations.

#### The inspiration to travel differently: for individual and collective welfare

To ensure the transition to responsible and sustainable tourism, the ways of travelling must also be changed. Slow the pace, take time to explore a destination in greater depth, favour encounters with other people and participation in the local economy, look for more meaningful experiences... These are some key elements of a tourism more in phase with sustainable development principles, sometimes defined as “slow travel”.<sup>1</sup> This more contemplative and admiring approach combines well with active transportation modes, such as cycling and walking.

<sup>1</sup> “Slow travel” is the English term for “*tourisme lent*”.

Various measures will be deployed to favour this type of tourism, which benefits both tourists and the local economy. Finally, to allow the greatest number of tourists to access a wide range of experiences, it is important to diversify the tourism offering for people with reduced mobility.

## Line 4 – Objectives and measures

### BUDGET 2020-2025: \$7 M

#### **OBJECTIVE 4.1** | Support the cities, regions and Indigenous communities in the transition to sustainable tourism

**4.1.1** Document and disseminate the best practices related to sustainable tourism.

**4.1.2** Support the initiatives for concerted sustainable planning and management of tourist destinations.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4.2** | Promote slow travel, local shopping and soft mobility<sup>2</sup>

**4.2.1** Orient promotion and tourist information tools to encourage and facilitate the slow travel, local shopping and soft mobility experience for travellers.

**4.2.2** Support these initiatives to increase retention of tourist spending in the local economy.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4.3** | Diversify the tourism offering for people with reduced mobility

**4.3.1** Support the development of innovative solutions regarding the tourism experience for people with reduced mobility.

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<sup>2</sup> “Soft mobility” means travelling by an active mode transportation (e.g. walking, cycling, canoeing).



## LINE 5

### Support businesses in adaptation and innovation regarding climate change

Strongly dependent on natural resources and weather conditions, the tourism sector is particularly vulnerable to climate change. Some businesses are already confronted with adaptation issues, associated, for example, with more variable winter conditions, a longer and hotter summer season and the proliferation of extreme climate events. These changes will be increasingly pronounced and could be accompanied by the growth of indirect impacts, including the disruption of supply chains. It is therefore advantageous for businesses in this sector to account for the new climate context by adapting their business model and their practices. This will allow them to minimize the risks they face, but also stimulate innovation and profit from new business opportunities.

#### A better understanding for better intervention

The different research and popularization initiatives conducted over the past fifteen years have contributed to raising the sector's awareness. Certain regions and certain associative players have even started to explore adaptation solutions. However, this mobilization is variable. In addition the level of knowledge differs from one region or sector to another, which may hinder informed decision-making. The different industry players also need to be better equipped and supported in their adaptation approach.

In such a context, it is wise to pursue the development of knowledge and tools allowing the industry players to better assess the risks and business opportunities linked to climate change, and analyze the adaptation solutions. Support in experimentation with innovative, sustainable solutions, rooted in business realities, and the deployment of mechanisms favouring mobilization of the players will also make it possible to accelerate the adaptation of this key economic sector and ultimately strengthen its resilience in response to climate change. These measures will be implemented in line with the 2030 Plan for a Green Economy.

## Line 5 – Objectives and measures

**BUDGET 2020-2025 : \$8 M**

**OBJECTIVE 5.1 | Acquire and share knowledge on responding to climate change for the tourism industry**

**5.1.1** Support research and appropriation of knowledge by the different players in the tourism sector.

**OBJECTIVE 5.2 | Support the partners in experimentation with innovative solutions**

**5.2.1** Support pilot projects in prevention and adaptation linked to climate change in the tourism sector.

**5.2.2** Support innovation initiatives with the partner from the field with the aim of proposing, developing and experimenting with concrete solutions for adaptation to climate change.

**OBJECTIVE 5.3 | Stimulate mobilization of the regional and sectoral players for a tourism industry that is resilient in response to climate change**

**5.3.1** Deploy consultation and discussion mechanisms on adaptation to climate change, in collaboration with the tourism associations.

# Implementation, follow-up and accountability

This action plan illustrates the commitment of the Ministère du Tourisme to responsible and sustainable tourism. It is part of the background of government intervention to support the industry over the next few years.

To guarantee the successful implementation of this action plan, transparent and rigorous follow-up of the objectives and measures will be done. The Ministère du Tourisme will perform this follow-up, in collaboration with the partners of the action plan. Focused on achieving results, the follow-up will be based on the accountability that the partners and the Ministère will provide for each measure of the action plan.

In addition, the transition to responsible and sustainable tourism will be monitored. It is important in this regard to keep informed of the world's best practices and the possible certifications, and to favour Québec's international position as a choice eco-responsible destination. This will make it possible to assess the tourism sector's situation in this matter, monitor progress and ensure informed decision-making to improve government programs, policies and strategies.

